

Syllabus – Fall 2017

COMM 312: The Business and Culture of Celebrity

Professor: Chris Smith

Day/Time: Tues/Thurs, 12:30 – 1:50 p.m.

Classroom: ASC 231

Office Hours: Thursday, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., ASC 227D

Contact Info: christhs@usc.edu, 213-821-5243 (office)

T.A:

Xin Wang, wang386@usc.edu; Office: ASC G6; Thurs., 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Course Description

The circulation of celebrity images in global communication networks—and the efforts to package and monetize these flows in consumer society—are defining features of contemporary times. This course seeks to place these central dynamics of everyday life within broader historical perspective so as to better appreciate their role in reproducing – and challenging – the dominant social order.

Readings will include a classic essay by philosopher Walter Benjamin; a selection from *The Image* by Daniel Boorstin; more recent work on the psychology of celebrity from *The Mirror Effect*, by Dr. Drew Pinsky; and various approaches to utilizing celebrities for the marketing of consumer brands as found in recent legal, marketing, and PR literature. These readings will be bolstered by additional social-scientific analyses of celebrity, including those that seek to appreciate its role in social identity formation, its connection with networks of economic, juridical, and political power, and its impact on inter- personal communication.

Course Goals

1. To familiarize students with a representative range of social scientific research on celebrity – spanning sociology, media effects, and cultural studies.
2. To formulate the celebrity as a useful tool for introducing students to the study of (post-) modern communication networks.
3. To offer students opportunities to reflect and write critically about the role of celebrity in contemporary cultural experience.
4. To offer students practical exposure to media and corporate industry professionals who work to create, manage, and extend celebrity capital within the commercial marketplace.

Competencies and Evaluation

Participation	10%
Blog Posts	30%

Midterm Papers	30%
Final Group Presentations	30%

Participation

In a highly interactive seminar such as this, unabated and prompt attendance is an imperative. Furthermore, each student is required not merely to attend, but also to participate in each class session. To make meaningful contributions to our twice-weekly gatherings, each student must have completed all of the assigned readings and assignments and devoted time toward critical reflection about each of those readings and assignments. All students must be prepared to share their ideas, interpretations, and critical perspectives of the subject matter and be ready to add value to the class through their vocal participation.

Good contributions are:

- thoughtful
- analytical
- constructive to the group effort
- topically relevant
- linked to the readings assigned for that day*

Poor contributions:

- simply restate what someone else has already said
- take the discussion on a tangent
- do not respect the other participants
- show that the individual has not done the assigned readings*

This 10% will be based on **overall contributions throughout the semester based on my judgment of overall frequency and quality**. If you skip class, don't expect a high participation grade. If you want to know how you are doing on class participation, don't hesitate to ask me.

Blog Posts

Class participation will be augmented by course blog contributions. The course blog is located on blackboard and will be an opportunity to present and discuss current topics in marketing communications outside of class. Everyone will contribute at least six unique posts on a topic related to the course, and will make a substantive response to at least four blog entries posted by other students during the semester. Be creative and showcase your insights. Your contributions should be concise, insightful, and provocative.

Here are two good resources for writing effective blog entries:

<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/how-to-write-effective-blog-posts/>

<http://gilllin.com/blog/2009/12/five-tips-for-effective-blog-writing/>

Midterm Papers

You will receive details about each assignment separately. All assignments must be completed and handed in on time to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to

be excused, or discuss your situation with me in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out. Remember: this is YOUR responsibility.

Final Group Presentations

Students will work in small groups on a project to develop a case study related to the topics covered in class. The theme you select may be commercial, cultural, social scientific, or another area proposed by the group. Tailor it to your shared interests, and to practical real-world situations and concerns. A one-page synopsis of the project should be submitted by the midpoint of the term. Students will present their projects to the class during the last two weeks of the semester. Presentations must be business-like (20 min, 10 min Q&A), and include visual aids.

Class Policies

1. Academic Rigor

You should come to every class prepared to learn and to commit significant time outside of class toward mastery of the material and completion of the assignments in a way that demonstrates analytical and creative aptitude. You should expect to be graded according to your demonstrated mastery of the material as reflected on your assignments, including weekly class preparation and discussion.

2. Completion of Assignments

Assigned papers, exercises and exams must be completed on time; they will be marked down if submitted after the due date (1/2 letter grade deduction per day). *Please note: make-up exam accommodations are not permitted.* Papers must be typewritten with a readable font. Papers should include proper citations and bibliographies in APA format.

3. Discussion protocol

Because a seminar of this nature can bring up controversial and politically charged issues, it is important that we interact courteously during class discussions and presentations. The classroom should be a safe space for the open exchange of ideas and the exploration of various ideological issues. Heated debate is encouraged, but not at the expense of denigrating other students. Please refrain from making sarcastic or hostile comments when other are speaking, dominating every class discussion, and otherwise undermining the unfettered exchange of ideas.

4. In-class use of laptops, smartphones, and electronic devices

Laptop computers and other devices such as tablets, e-readers and smartphones may be used only for class-related purposes – i.e., taking notes, fact-checking references, etc. While class is in session, students may not access the Internet (including email and social media accounts) or use these devices in any other way for any non-class-related purpose. Recording (audio, video, or both) of class sessions is also prohibited. The professor reserves the right to prohibit altogether the use of any of the aforementioned devices in the classroom, whether generally, or for particular students who misuse them. This right may be exercised at any time. Failure to follow directions in this regard can subject students to the same range of penalties to which they might be subject for failing to follow any other requirement regarding classroom attendance and participation. Violations of this policy are, by definition, examples of extremely unprofessional behavior and therefore will adversely affect final grades.

5. Email Communications

The professor will make all types of announcements and assignments through the email address you have provided. Email will be, apart from class meetings, our principal means of communication and notification. All students will be expected to keep up to date on developments and will be responsible for all assignments notified via email.

6. Communicating/Meeting with the Professor

The Professor will be readily accessible via email: christhs@usc.edu. Before our course

begins, you are free to contact me to discuss the class generally or the reading materials specifically. Once our course begins, you are welcome to visit the Professor before or after class, and always by email at the aforementioned address. Meetings during regularly scheduled office hours are on a first-come, first-served basis. Notice will be given in-class and via email for those rare occasions when office hours are suspended. The Professor reserves the right not to accommodate unannounced office drop-ins.

7. Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. You will be notified by email when the evaluations are open, typically in the last two or three weeks of the semester. Summary results are available to you and the public.

Grading Scale and Standards

A	= 94-100%	B	= 83-86	C	= 73-76
A-	= 90-93	B-	= 80-82	C-	= 70-72
B+	= 87-89	C+	= 77-79	F	= 59% and below

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- A+/A outstanding, insightful work and analysis, showing an understanding beyond the basic course material
- A-/B+ above average work, demonstrates effort and understanding
- B/B- average work, needs improvement on ideas and argument
- C+/C shows little effort, lacks clarity and/or argument
- C- and below meets the bare minimum, shows little understanding of material

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must first wait 24 hours (cooling off period) before appealing it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate. All concerns should be addressed within 7 days of receiving the graded assignment. After that, no appeals will be accepted for review and the grade will be considered final.

"Incompletes" are strongly discouraged and will only be given if the student makes specific arrangements with the instructor before the end of the semester.

Special Accommodations

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213)740-0776.

ESL Student Accommodations

Please inform me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations based on your understanding of the English language.

Academic Integrity

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in is your own and no one else's, and that you have not turned in any work for which you have received credit in another class. Do not take this policy lightly!

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section

titled “University Sanction Guidelines.” These policies, procedures and guidelines will be enforced. It is important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself.

Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any doubts about any of these practices, you must confer with the professor.

Course Readings

Required (available at USC Bookstore):

1. *Starstruck*, Elizabeth Currid-Halkett
2. *Celebrity Capital*, Barrie Gunter
3. *Public Parts*, Jeff Jarvis
4. *Paparazzi*, Kim McNamara
5. *Dishing Dirt in the Digital Age*, Erin A. Meyers
6. *Celebrity, Inc.*, Jo Piazza
7. *The Future of Reputation*, Daniel J. Solove

Course Reader (via University Graphics – Quick Pix, 2820 S. Vermont Ave, #12.)

COURSE CALENDAR

** While we'll make every effort to follow the schedule outlined in this syllabus, please be advised that modifications may be made as needed.**

Reading Schedule

(Course Reader= CR); (Blackboard=BB); (Handout=HO)

Week 1

Tues, 8/22: Introduction – Roundtable Meet & Greet

Screening: *Sellebrity: Fame Has Its Price*

Thurs, 8/24: Historical Background & New Debates

Reading:

(BB) L. Braudy, “Introduction,” *The Frenzy of Renown*

(BB) W. Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”

(BB) L. Friedman, “Thoughts on the Horizontal Society”

(CR) T. Kessner, *The Flight of the Century*, Editor’s Note, Introduction, Chs. 5, 7

Screening: *The Secret Lives of Charles Lindbergh*

Week 2

Tues, 8/29: Celebrity Critique. Pt. 1

Reading:

(BB) S. Douglas, “Narcissism as Liberation”

(CR) D. Boorstin, *The Image*, “From Hero to Celebrity”

(CR) C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, “Changing Modes of Making It”

(CR) S. Doonan, “Kim Kardashian: Why Does She Fascinate Us?”

(CR) C. Hedges, “The Man in the Mirror”

Thurs. 8/31: Celebrity Critique, Pt. 2

Reading:

(BB) N. Kulish, et al., “Among Navy SEALs, a Split Over Cashing In On the Brand”

(CR) M. Rowlands, *Fame*, Chs., 1, 6

(CR) N. Gabler, “Celebrity: The Greatest Show on Earth”

(CR) P. Noonan, “Is ‘Octomom’ America’s Future?”

(CR) B. Stephens, “Celebrity Culture vs. the Right Stuff”

(CR) J. Queenan, “Icons Aren’t What They Used to Be”

***Paper #1 Assigned; Due Friday, Week 5**

Week 3

Tues. 9/5: Celebrity Capital, Pt. 1

Reading:

B. Gunter, *Celebrity Capital*, Ch. 1: “What is Celebrity Capital

(BB) G. Trebay, “Frida’s Moment”

Thurs. 9/7: Celebrity Capital, Pt. 2

Reading:

E. Currid-Halkett, *Starstruck*, Chs. 2-3

(BB) C. Dougherty, “In Gaming, He’s No. 1 With a Bullet”

(BB) E. Elcessor, “Tweeting @feliciaday...”

Week 4

Tues. 9/12: Celebrity Capital, Pt. 3 – A Case Study

Reading:

(BB) R. Ricard, “The Radiant Child”

(BB) G. Tate, “Flyboy in the Buttermilk”

Screening: *Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child*”

Thurs. 9/14: The Psychological Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 1

Reading:

B. Gunter, *Celebrity Capital*, Ch. 2: “The Psychological Capital of Celebrity

(CR) K.O. Ferris and S. R. Harris, *Stargazing: Celebrity, Fame, and Social Interaction*, Chs. 2-3

Week 5

Tues. 9/19: The Psychological Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 2

Reading:

E. Currid-Halkett, *Starstruck*, Ch. 4

(BB) C. Rotella, “Profiling ‘Money’”

(BB) A. Lane, “Her Again: The unstoppable Scarlett Johansson”

(BB) G. Wettach, “For the love of Jodie Foster...”

Thurs. 9/21: The Psychological Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 3

Reading:

K. McNamara, *Paparazzi*, Chs. 3&4

Erin A. Meyers, *Dishing Dirt*, Chs. 2&3

(BB) Molly Knight, “The Hollywood Fast Life of Stalker Sarah”

(BB) Seija Rankin, “What Happened to to the Young Hollywood Club Scene?”

Week 6

Tues, 9/26: Celebrity, Privacy and Reputation, Pt. 1

Reading:

D.J. Solove, *The Future of Reputation*, Chs. 2-3; 7-8

(CR) J. Cheney-Lippold, *We Are Data*, “Preface”

(CR) A. Marwick, *Status Update*, Ch. 5, “Lifestreaming”

(CR) E. Gould, “Exposed”

Thurs, 9/28: Celebrity, Privacy and Reputation, Pt. 2

Reading:

J. Jarvis, *Public Parts*, pp. 2-14; 43-77; 115-161

J. Piazza, *Celebrity, Inc.*, Ch. 2

(BB) N. Fry, “The Reality-TV Star, Spencer Pratt on America’s Addiction to Drama”

(BB) K. Murphy, “We Want Privacy, but Can’t Stop Sharing”

(BB) M. Garrahan & A. Nicolaou, “Digital Publishers Grapple with Hogan Verdict”

Week 7

Tues, 10/3: Democratic Celebrity in the Age of YouTube, Pt. 1

Reading:

E. Currid-Halkett, *Starstruck*, Ch. 8

(BB) J. Gould, “The Secret World of Lonelygirl”

(BB) J. Zinoman, “Cultivating Stardom in Cyberspace”

(BB) Kathy Chi and Menglin Huang, “How a Toddler Who Loves Eating Transfixed China”

(BB) “Playing with fire turns YouTube poster-child into pariah”

(CR) D. Pinsky & S.M. Young, *The Mirror Effect*, Ch. 3

Thurs, 10/5: Democratic Celebrity in the Age of YouTube, Pt. 2

Reading:

(BB) A. Marwick, “Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy”

(BB) Brendan Lemon, “Everyone’s a tastemaker”

(BB) T. Brodesser-Akner, “Turning Micro-Celebrity into a Big Business”

(BB) G. Trebay, “Luka Sabbat, the 18-year-old Fashion Influencer”

(BB) J. Miller, “Keeping Up, on Camera...”

(BB) Andrew Hutchinson, “Instagram Influencer Rates and Engagement”

(CR) A. Marwick, *Status Update*, Ch. 3, “The Fabulous Lives of Micro-Celebrities”

(CR) B. Erin Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love*, Preface, Ch. 4

Week 8

Tues, 10/10: Democratic Celebrity in the Age of YouTube, Pt. 3

Reading:

(BB) S. Marcus, “Celebrity 2.0: The Case of Marina Abramović

(BB) L. Grindstaff and S. Murray, “Reality Celebrity...”

(CR) T. Burr. Ch. 20: “Pixel Persona: Stardom in the Internet Age,” *Gods Like Us: On Movie Stardom and Modern Fame*

Thurs, 10/12: The Consumer Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 1

Reading:

B. Gunter, *Celebrity Capital*, Ch. 3: “The Consumer Capital of Celebrity”

E. Currid-Halkett, *Starstruck*, Ch. 7

(CR) K. Miloch, “Introduction to Branding”

Week 9

Tues, 10/17: The Consumer Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 2

Reading:

J. Piazza, *Celebrity, Inc.*, Introduction, Chs. 3, 5

(BB) I. Sanders, "The Search for another Hit"

(BB) A. Kauffman, "The Power of Celebrity IPs for App Monetization"

(BB) G. Trebay, "Capitalizing on Her Leap to Stardom"

(BB) M. Schneier, "Keeping Up with Kendall"

(BB) L. Stoppard, "The Vital Statistic"

Thurs, 10/19: The Consumer Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 3

Reading:

(BB) C. Kripalani, "Trendsetting and Product Placement in Bollywood Film..."

(BB) Sheila Marikar, "The Move From Celebrity to Ubiquity"

(BB) K. Hung, K. Chan, C. Tse, "Assessing Celebrity Endorsement Effects in China"

Week 10

Tues, 10/24: The Consumer Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 4

Reading:

B. Gunter, *Celebrity Capital*, Ch. 4: "The Corporate Capital of Celebrity"

(CR) D. Carter, "Athlete Branding"

(CR) M. Futterman, "...Pele Awaits His Payday"

(BB) Tariq Panja, "Pele Scores World Cup Jackpot"

(BB) S. Kuper, "He Shoots, He Scores, He Shares!"

(BB) A. Elberse & M. Golod, "Maria Sharapova: Marketing a Champion"

(BB) B. Harris & J.M. Brown, "Brands Drop Sharapova After Star Admits Failing Drugs Tests"

Final Group Presentations Assigned

Thurs, 10/26: The Consumer Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 5

Reading:

(BB) J. Summer & M. J. Morgan, "More Than Just the Media..."

(BB) K. Hung, "Nike and Liu Xiang: Crisis Management in Celebrity Endorsement"

(BB) F. Miller & G. Lacznik, "The Ethics of Celebrity-Athlete Endorsement"

(BB) R. Arthur, "The Selling Power of Star Athletes"

(BB) J. Branch, "A Sponsor Climbs Down"

(BB) E. Emmerentze Jervell, "Puma's Top Star Ponders Retirement"

(BB) B. Cohen, "LeBron James's Media Empire Is Out Front..."

Week 11

Tues, 10/31: The Political Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 1

Reading:

(BB) L. Erenberg "More Than a Prizefight"

(CR) J. Fiske, *Media Matters*, "Figuring People," pp. 67 – 74

(BB) S. Cottle, "Mediatized Rituals"

***Paper #2 Assigned; Due Monday, Week 13**

Thurs, 11/2: *CLASS SUSPENDED*****

Week 12

Tues, 11/7: The Political Capital of Celebrity, Pt. 2

Reading:

B. Gunter, *Celebrity Capital*, Ch. 5: “The Political Capital of Celebrity”

(BB) M. Bechloss, “How TV Commercials Made America Like Ike”

(BB) T. Raphael, “The Body Electric”

(BB) D. Kellner, “Barack Obama and Celebrity Spectacle”

Thurs, 11/9: Celebrity Diplomacy & Philanthropy

Reading:

J. Piazza, *Celebrity, Inc.*, Ch. 10

(BB) A. Trope, “Mother Angelina: Hollywood Philanthropy Personified”

(BB) B. Jopson, “Pop Star Adds Voice to White House Criticism of Early Learning Provision”

(CR) J. Traub, “The Celebrity Solution”

(CR) S. Malcomson, “Shakira’s Children”

(CR) S. Paternoso, “Shakira’s Colombian War”

Week 13

Tues, 11/14: The Health Capital of Celebrity

Reading:

B. Gunter, *Celebrity Capital*, Ch. 6: “Health Capital of Celebrity”

(BB) S. Chapman & J. Leask, “Paid Celebrity Endorsement in Health Promotion”

(BB) Anne Easton, “Positive Propaganda,” *NY Observer*, 2 Nov 2015, p. 40-41.

(BB) Case studies of celebrity health campaigns

Thurs, 11/16: Group Presentations

Week 14

Tues, 11/21: Group Presentations

***Wed, 11/22: All authored blog posts due**

Thurs, 11/23: Thanksgiving Holiday – Class Suspended

Week 15

Tues, 11/28 & Thurs, 11/30: Group Presentations

***Fri, 12/1: All blog engagement due**

**Final Case Study Write-up Due:
Fri., December 8th 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m**