

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Communications Studies COMS 401, L02**  
**SPECIAL TOPICS IN COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES: DRUGS IN POPULAR CULTURE**

**FALL 2015**

**Thu., Sept. 10 – Thu., Dec. 3 (excluding Nov. 12)**

**R 14:00-16:45**

**Instructor:** Shane Halasz  
**Office:** SS 301  
**Office Phone:** N/A  
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**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** M 13:30 – 14:30; F 9:30 – 10:30; or by appointment

**Course Description**

Over the past century and a half, authority figures have defined the social problem of drugs in a manner characterized by sickness, moral weakness, and criminality. Moreover, these constructions often rest upon assumptions about race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and social class. This course will explore how notions of drugs and addiction have been created, recreated, and contested in various media, including news reports, literature, music, and film.

By tracing the historical development of modern dialogues about drugs, drug use, and drug users, this inquiry-based class will ask students to unpack and critique the dominant discourses of drug issues and explore creative alternatives to these seemingly “commonsense” constructions. In-class exercises and activities will augment our discussion of drug cultures and representations thereof and seek to engage students via experiential learning and personal reflection.

**Additional Information**

This course will employ a team-based learning strategy in which students work together in groups of 5 to 7 (groups to be determined in the first class and will remain intact for the semester) in order to unpack, discuss, and make sense of the assigned readings. Therefore, it is essential that students not only complete the readings prior to class but also attend class regularly and fully participate during in-class exercises and assignments. Students will be held personally accountable for their level of preparedness and contributions to group discussion and exercises by way of a peer evaluation form to be completed at the end of the term. Group assignment scores will be adjusted according to these peer evaluations (see Assignments and Evaluation section below).

## Objectives of the Course

By the end of this class students will:

- Be exposed to a variety of historical and contemporary debates about drugs
- Develop analytic tools that enable an informed, critical discussion of drug issues
- Be able to discuss the relationship between representations and cultural discourses
- Learn to refine critical thinking and research skills
- Strengthen collaboration and problem solving skills via ongoing team discussions, debates, and class exercises

## Textbooks and Readings (any edition of these texts will do)

Baudelaire, C. (2010). *On wine and hashish*. Trans. A Brown. London: Hesperus.

Huxley, A. (2009). *The doors of perception and Heaven and hell*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

Leary, T., Metzner, R., & Alpert, R. (2007). *The psychedelic experience: A manual based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead*. New York: Citadel.

Wolfe, T. (1968). *The electric Kool-Aid acid test*. New York: Picador.

Additional readings will be made available on Desire2Learn.

## Internet and Electronic Communication Device information

No restrictions on use of laptops in class if they are used to take notes or perform sanctioned research during an in-class activity and if there is no disturbance of other students by visiting inappropriate web sites. Cell phones must be POWERED OFF and put away during class time.

## Assignments and Evaluation

1. Reading Quizzes (Individual)                      15% (best 8/9 scores)      Every Thursday

At the beginning of each module (refer to schedule below) students will complete a brief readiness assessment test based on that day's assigned readings. The format will include some mix of multiple choice, true/false, and quotation identification. The goal with these quizzes is to ensure that students have completed the assigned readings and are coming prepared to participate in whatever group activities and class discussion are planned for that day. The quizzes will take place in the first 10-15 minutes. They cannot be written at another time nor made up for any reason, so please ensure that you attend class regularly and arrive on time. Arriving more than 5 minutes late for the beginning of class will result in a penalty on that day's quiz. Students arriving 15 minutes late or more will not be permitted to write that day's quiz. There are 9 quizzes scheduled, but only your 8 best scores will be counted.

2. Reading Quizzes (Group) 10% (best 8/9 scores) Every Thursday

As soon as students submit their individual reading quizzes, they will receive another copy of the same quiz to be completed collaboratively by their group. The intention here is that students will learn from hearing each other support their arguments as to which is the correct answer, and thereby enrich their understanding of the material covered that class. These group quizzes will be collected, scored, and immediately returned along with the individual quizzes. The instructor will then address by way of mini-lecture or discussion areas that need clarification or elaboration before moving to scheduled activities. As with the individual quizzes, your lowest group quiz score will be dropped.

3. Presentation (Group) 20% November 26

The bulk of class time will be spent in teams working to answer questions or respond to prompts posed by the instructor. At the end of the semester student groups will distill and briefly present (10 minutes) what they feel is the most important thing that they have learned based on class discussions and activities. Particular attention should be paid to where individual differences of opinion existed, the extent to which consensus could be reached, and where and why differences persisted following the discussion. More information will be provided in class and on Desire2Learn.

4. Reflections (Individual, 4 @ 5%) 20% Throughout

At four points during the semester students will submit a one-page single-spaced reflection on the assigned readings for that day, including AT LEAST ONE of Baudelaire, Huxley, Leary, or Wolfe. Reflections are due at the beginning of class on the day the readings are assigned. More details will be provided in class and on Desire2Learn.

5. Research Paper (Individual) 35% December 3

For the major assignment, students will research and write a 12-page double-spaced term paper in which they explore some aspect of drug discourse or drug culture that they find important and interesting. Papers must be rooted in an appropriate theoretical framework, reflect a significant amount of outside scholarly research, and provide some form of primary textual analysis. More details will be provided in class and on Desire2Learn.

**NB:** At the end of the semester all students will fill out a peer evaluation form for everybody in their group (except themselves). Each student's scores for the group reading quizzes and group presentations will be adjusted based on peer evaluations so that those who contributed most and collaborated best will be rewarded accordingly, and those who contributed least or hindered collaboration will likewise receive less.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

**NB:** All assignments and exams (except quizzes) must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

**Submission of Assignments:** Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox. Some assignments may specify to be submitted electronically to Desire2Learn.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

### **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Quizzes cannot be made up for any reason.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

### **Writing Skills Statement**

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

### **Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film**

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using

- letter grades
- percentage grades
- raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)
- GPA values (using any value on the 0 to 4.0 scale, including, e.g., 3.2 or 2.8)
- a combination of the above.

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

<b>Grade Point Value</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Department grade scale equivalents</b>	<b>Letter grade % equivalent for calculations</b>
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>		<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>		<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good—clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>		<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>		<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>		<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>		<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	00 - 49.99%	0%

### **Plagiarism**

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people’s words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

### Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

### Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Police Service</li> <li>• Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• Safewalk Program</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a> If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort ( <b>220-5333</b> ). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>
<b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b>	<b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Counselling Services</b></li> <li>• <b>Health Services</b></li> <li>• <b>Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</b></li> <li>• <b>Online resources and tips</b></li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a></p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a></p> <p><b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b></p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a></p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>
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## Schedule of Lectures and Readings

### September 10

#### *Course Introduction*

- What is this course about?
- Class structure: Team-Based Learning (TBL)
- Key Concepts
- Team formation
- Practice Readiness Assessment Test (BASED ON COURSE OUTLINE)

### September 17

#### *Talking the Talk: Constructing the Drug Problem Part I*

Dingelstad, D., Gosden, R., Martin, B., & Vakas, N. (1996). The social construction of drug debates. *Social Science & Medicine*, 43(12), 1829-1838.

Reinarman, C. (2005). Addiction as accomplishment: The discursive construction of disease. *Addiction Research and Theory*, 13(4), 307-320.

### September 24

#### *I Read The News Today, Oh Boy: Constructing the Drug Problem Part II*

Chermak, S. (1997). The presentation of drugs in the news media: The news sources involved in the construction of social problems. *Justice Quarterly*, 14(4), 687-718.

Elliot, A. & Chapman, S. (2000). 'Heroin hell their own making': Construction of heroin users in the Australian press 1992-97. *Drugs and Alcohol Review*, 19, 191-201.

### October 1

#### *Trafficking Stereotypes: Racist Dimensions of Drug Discourse*

Hickman, T. (2000). Drugs and race in American culture: Orientalism in the turn-of the century discourse of narcotic addiction. *American Studies* 40(1), 71-91.

Poyntz, S. (1997). Homey, I shot the kids: Hollywood and the war on drugs. *Emergency Librarian*, 25 (2), 8-13.

**October 8**

*Altered States: Baudelaire's Artificial Paradise*

Baudelaire, C. (2002). *On wine and hashish*. Trans. A Brown. London: Hesperus.

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**October 15**

*Opening the Doors: Aldous Huxley and the Dawn of the Psychedelic Age*

Huxley, A. (2007). *The doors of perception and Heaven and hell*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

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**October 22**

*Further: LSD, Ken Kesey, and the San Francisco Scene in the 1960s*

Wolfe, T. (1968). *The electric Kool-Aid acid test*. New York: Picador.

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**October 29**

*The Revelation Revolution: Psychedelic Drugs and the Quest for Mystical Experience*

Leary, T., Metzner, R. & Alpert, R. (2010). *The psychedelic experience: A manual based on the Tibetan book of the dead*. New York: Citadel.

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**November 5**

*Rave On: MDMA, Techno-shamanism, and Re-enchanting a Disenchanted World*

Tramacchi, D. (2000). Field tripping: Psychedelic *communitas* and ritual in the Australian bush. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 15(2), 201-213.

Ott, B. & Herman, B. (2003). Mixed messages: Resistance and reappropriation in rave culture. *Western Journal of Communication*, 67(3), 249-270.

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**November 19**

*Just Say Know: Ecstatic Pedagogy and Transformative Learning*

Tupper, K. (2003). Entheogens & education: Exploring the potential of psychoactives as educational tools. *Journal of Drug Education and Awareness*, 1(2), 145-161.

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**November 26**

Group Presentations (No readings)

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**December 3**

Course Conclusion (No readings)