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Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00 - 5:00 pm, Humanities Gateway 2118

## SYLLABUS

### FMS 139W, Writing on Film & Media, “Fan Studies”

Fall 2021, hybrid learning, in-person meetings Mondays or Wednesdays 11:00 am - 12:20 pm, HH 156

#### Course description

This course is designed to help upper-level Film & Media Studies students develop their skills in the areas of writing and analytical critique. It does so through the theme of “Fan Studies,” focusing on the academic study of media fans and how fandom responds to and shapes media, both in the present day and across media history. Fandom is not only the subject matter that we will address in our writing, however. Media fans are among some of the most prolific and creative producers of content that responds to contemporary media. In this sense, fans are engaged in their own forms of critique and analysis, informed by their passion for (or against) a media franchise. In this course, we will take inspiration from fans by drawing from our own personal fannish experiences and producing a wide range of written content, including fan fiction and fan zines, that goes beyond traditional academic essays. This will allow us to explore alternate ways of engaging in analysis, bringing feeling and even fun into the writing process.

Some of the Fan Studies topics we will be covering include: defining fans, fan practices and production, histories of media fandom, fandoms and identity, issues of race in fandom, issues of gender and sexuality in fandom, the impact of fans on the media industry, fan fashion and cosplay, fan tourism and theme parks, anti-fandom and what it means to specifically dislike a media franchise. For more details about topics, reading, and screenings, please see the schedule below.

#### Course logistics

Our course is using a **hybrid learning model**, with some instruction taking place in the classroom and some instruction taking place online. There are many different possible hybrid learning models. Here are the key aspects of the model we will use in our course:

- Instruction will take place **50% in-person and 50% online**. Rather than attending in-person class twice a week (on Mondays and Wednesdays), all students will attend class in-person once a week (on either Mondays or Wednesdays, depending on which "section" they sign up for). All students have been asked to submit their preferences for joining the **Monday or Wednesday groups** and will be assigned to a group with consideration for their preferences.
- In effect, this means that the class will be broken down into two "discussion sections," each of which meets once a week. So, on any given day, the **classroom will only be at 50% capacity** - which will give us more of a chance to social distance, sitting every other seat, being exposed to fewer people, etc. Our **in-class time will be used for discussions**, workshoping interactive activities, and answering questions. You may hear this approach referred to as a “flipped classroom.”

- To compensate for your missed in-person class time, I will be releasing **weekly asynchronous learning bundles**. These will contain videos and materials that cover the lecture and logistical components of the course. You can watch and engage with these on your own time, as long as you do so before attending class. Weekly learning bundles will be released by Thursday of the previous week, allowing students time to review the materials before the next week of instruction.

### **Flexibility & safety precautions**

Because the current situation with the COVID pandemic is constantly changing, we must remain open to the possibility that our plan for our course this quarter may shift. If the university issues any new guidelines that will affect our class, the professor will notify you promptly about updates to course logistics or the syllabus. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

As per university guidelines, all students and instructors are required to wear masks in the classroom, with the exception of students with official accommodations from the Disability Services Center. Students who do not wear masks will be asked to do so. Students who do not put on masks when asked will be instructed to leave class and will be reported as per university protocol. You can read more about the university protocol about safety in the classroom [at this link](#).

In addition, our class has been split into two groups (a Monday group and a Wednesday group) so that our in-class meetings will be smaller, allowing us to social distance in the classroom. Students are asked to please sit at least one seat apart from other students. We will do our best to ensure that students participating in group work or collaborative workshopping do not come in close physical proximity with other students unnecessarily. If you have additional concerns about safety, please feel free to contact the professor via email at [bruberg@uci.edu](mailto:bruberg@uci.edu).

### **Assignments**

Because 139W courses are designed to strengthen your writing skills, this course incorporates numerous assignments that approach writing and critical thinking from different perspectives. The only way to get better at writing is to write! If this list of assignments looks daunting, remember that most are graded for effort and many are creative in nature - and hopefully even fun:

- **Reading questionnaires:** Each week, students will complete a questionnaire about their most recent readings. These will include questions that help students identify important elements of their readings and prepare them to engage in discussions. These are study tools, not quizzes. Reading questionnaires are due on Mondays at 11:00 am via Canvas.
- **“Bad essay” assignment:** To kick off our reflection on academic writing, students will be asked to write a brief essay about their own media fandom in a style that they consider to be “bad.”
- **Fan fiction assignment:** In order to engage with fan production first-hand and to experiment with creative writing as a form of academic critique, students will be asked to write an original work of fan fiction that serves as a critique of an existing media franchise.
- **Fan zine assignment:** Continuing our first-hand exploration of fan production, students will be asked to use the software tool Electric Zine Maker to create original digital fan zines. They will also write brief reflections on their zines and how they function as a form of analysis.

- **Mini student presentation:** In week 5, students will be asked to each present a 5-minute in-class presentation about one article that they have chosen to read from the “Fans of Color, Fandoms of Color” special issue of *Transformative Works and Culture*.
- **Final project proposal:** Before embarking on their final projects, still will submit a short proposal that outlines their project plans. Students will receive feedback on these proposals to help guide them in the creation of their final projects.
- **Final project:** Students will have multiple options for final projects, including both traditional academic essay prompts and prompts related to creative, fanish production. In traditional essays, students will examine and write about a specific fan culture. In creative projects, students will have the opportunity to work on projects like proposing their own: fan fashion line, fan theme park, travel tour for fans, or their own fan-run social media campaign.

Assignment sheets will be provided for all assignments the week before their due date, if not sooner. These will provide detailed instructions about how to complete the assignment. Reading questionnaires will be made available as part of the weekly learning bundles. For the final project, students will receive a grading rubric by week 10 so that they know the criteria on which they are being graded.

## Grading

Most of your assignments for this course will be graded for effort and completion. This means that you will receive a grade of “full credit,” “partial credit,” or “no credit.” The only assignment that will receive a letter grade is your final essay. You will receive a grading rubric for your reference in advance of submitting your final essay to help you understand how your essay will be graded.

Here is a breakdown of the components that make up your final grade:

- 25% reading questionnaires (roughly 3% each)
- 5% “bad essay” assignment
- 10% fan fiction assignment
- 15% fan zine assignment
- 5% mini presentation
- 5% final project proposal
- 25% final project
- 10% participation

Please note that the grading tool on Canvas may not reflect a fully complete or up-to-date version of your overall course grade. If you would like to know your current course grade, please email the professor ([bruberg@uci.edu](mailto:bruberg@uci.edu)), being sure to follow the [email etiquette guidelines](#) also listed below.

## Late work and extensions

I will do my best to work with you to accommodate your needs during this challenging time. However, depending on the circumstances, know that submitting work late may negatively impact your grade. As a general rule, if you have not received an extension, assignments graded using letter grades (A, B, C, etc.) will be reduced by one letter grade for each day they are received late. Assignments graded for completion (full credit, partial credit, etc.) will receive a grade of “partial credit” if they are received late.

Whenever possible, I am happy to grant extensions on assignments. Please feel free to email me to request an extension ([bruberg@uci.edu](mailto:bruberg@uci.edu)) for any reason. Most extensions will be for 2 days, but longer extensions may be available depending on your situation. However, because of the structure of the course, please be aware that some assignments cannot be turned in late and/or are not eligible for extensions. For example, weekly reading questionnaires cannot be submitted after the due date, when we begin our group discussions about those readings.

If you miss assignments or turn them in late, you will have opportunities to make up the points that you have missed. For example, each student is allowed to miss one weekly questionnaire with no penalty to their grade; if they complete all questionnaires, they will receive extra credit. Other extra credit opportunities may be announced later in the quarter, depending on student interest.

### **Platforms and access to course material**

Materials for this course will be posted to Canvas. This includes all lecture videos, assignment sheets, readings, etc. There are no books or materials to purchase for this course. Canvas will also be our platform for course announcements; please keep an eye out for these announcements, which will keep you up to date as we progress through the quarter. Note that, if you are attempting to access course materials from off campus, some materials may require you to use off-campus VPN. More information about connecting from off-campus can be found at the [UCI library website](#).

### **Classroom expectations**

Returning to learning in the classroom is challenging after so much time away. It is normal for it to take some time to become comfortable again with in-class learning. We will all do our best to be patient and understanding with one another.

With that said, participation is key to our course. During our in-person meetings, we will be engaging in discussions, doing group activities (while socially distanced), and workshopping each other's materials. These elements of our course are crucial for your learning and the development of critical skills.

Here are some ways that you can demonstrate your participation during class:

- Contribute to conversations. Share your thoughts or ask questions. We will be a small group, which is great for discussion.
- Be an active participant in group activities. Talk with your classmates and respond to their ideas.
- Engage closely with the readings and viewings before class. Come prepared to discuss them.
- If you are uncomfortable participating in class discussions, contact the professor ([bruberg@uci.edu](mailto:bruberg@uci.edu)), who can suggest alternate ways of demonstrating engagement, such as writing emails to the professor about your ideas or attending office hours.

### **Attendance**

In fall 2021, with students returning to campus for the first time in more than a year, the question of attendance is especially tricky. For our course this quarter, students only need to attend in-person once per week. Hopefully, this will cut down on the burden and anxiety of attending class during this difficult

time. Students are generally expected to attend all in-person meetings for their group (either the Monday or Wednesday group). In-person discussions and activities are integral to the learning experience.

You may miss 1 weekly meeting for any reason at no detriment to your grade. You do not need to provide any explanation to the professor for your absence. If you need to miss additional classes due to illness or other personal issues, please email me ([bruberg@uci.edu](mailto:bruberg@uci.edu)) and I will mark your additional absences as approved; these will also not impact your grade. Each additional unapproved absence lowers your quarter grade by 2%. Students who miss 3 class meetings or more (3 out of 10 weeks) without working with the professor to secure appropriate accommodations may be issued an incomplete or a failing grade.

### **Contacting the professor**

I appreciate hearing from you regarding your experience in our course. If you have a logistical question, please be sure to double check the syllabus and/or relevant course assignments before getting in touch. If your question has not been answered in our course materials or you would like to discuss a different topic, please feel free to get in touch. The best way to **reach me is via email ([bruberg@uci.edu](mailto:bruberg@uci.edu))**. Canvas messages often get caught in my spam filters and may go unanswered.

When emailing me, please follow these [email etiquette guidelines](#), which help set a friendly, professional tone. Please anticipate that it will take me between 24 hours and three business days to respond to your email. Emails will not be answered on Saturdays or Sundays, nor after the hour of 5:00 pm PST.

### **Meeting with the professor**

You are encouraged to attend office hours, which are an opportunity to build connections with professors and deepen your learning. In fall 2021, I will hold office hours from 4:00 - 5:00 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. You do not need an appointment to attend office hours; you can simply stop by. However, you are also welcome to email me ([bruberg@uci.edu](mailto:bruberg@uci.edu)) to schedule an office hours appointment and guarantee a time slot. If you are unavailable during these time slots, you can also email me to find an alternate time to meet.

By default, I will be holding my office hours in-person on campus. Provided it is not raining, we will meet outside at a location near my office in Humanities Gateway, in order to reduce risks related to the COVID pandemic. If you would prefer to meet remotely via Zoom, please send me an email to this effect and we can schedule an online meeting rather than an in-person one.

### **Graduate school recommendations**

If you think you may apply for grad school in the future, please schedule or attend at least one individual office hours appointment with the professor this quarter. This will allow me to get to know you and your interests. I cannot write grad school recommendation letters (now or in the future) for students whom I have not spoken with individually. If you have met with me and would now like to request a recommendation, please contact me with all necessary information at least one month before the letter of recommendation is due.

### **Plagiarism**

UC Irvine's code of conduct states that students who plagiarize may face a variety of serious consequences, ranging from a "0" on an assignment or an "F" for the course to disciplinary action at the

university level. Plagiarism is presenting somebody else's words, work, or ideas as your own. The writing that you do in this course must be 100% yours. It is alright to reference other people or quote them, but you must cite them. Be especially careful with language from "common knowledge" sources, such as Wikipedia. If you are concerned that you may accidentally plagiarize, seek out an online university guide about how to avoid plagiarism. Students suspected of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct.

### **Lab fees**

*Message from the Department of Film and Media Studies:* There is a mandatory non-refundable lab fee of \$20.00 for all Film & Media Studies courses, including cross-listed and concurrently scheduled courses. Upon enrollment, lab fees are posted automatically to a student's ZOT Account. Students dropping before the second week drop deadline may request a lab fee cancellation or refund in writing by contacting the Film and Media Studies lab fee Administrator, Sylvia Meza-Tallada at [smezatal@uci.edu](mailto:smezatal@uci.edu). No cancellation or refund will be made for an unpaid lab fee that goes to a collection agency.

## **SCHEDULE (FMS 139W fall 2021)**

### **WEEK 0** (9/23 & 9/24):

- Friday, September 24: week 1 learning bundle released via Canvas

### **WEEK 1** (9/27 - 10/1):

*Topic:* What are fans? What is Fan Studies?

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*

- Read: "Introduction" to *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture*, by Mark Duffett (2013)  
*\*Note: the full book PDF is in your Canvas folder but you only need to read pages 1 - 31 of the introduction\**
- Watch: "[We Are One: A Short Documentary on the Culture of K-Pop.](#)" Keith Rodriguez (2020); "[How K-Pop and the BTS Army Disrupted U.S. Politics](#)" (2020)

*Assignments due:*

- None

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, September 27 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm in HH 156
- Wednesday, September 29 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm in HH 156
- Thursday, September 30: week 2 learning bundle released via Canvas

**WEEK 2** (10/4 - 10/8):

*Topic:* Fan practices and production

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*

- Read: "Fan Practices," chapter 6 from *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture*, by Mark Duffett (2013)  
\***Note:** the full book PDF is in your Canvas folder but you only need to read chapter 6\*
- Watch: "[The Case for Fan Fiction.](#)" Lindsay Ellis and Princess Weekes (2020); "[But I Love the Zine.](#)" KQED Truly CA (2019)

*Assignments due:*

- Monday, October 4 by 11:00 am: **reading questionnaire #1** due via Canvas
- Monday, October 4 by 11:00 am: **"bad essay" assignment** due via Canvas

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, October 4 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm in HH 156
- Wednesday, October 6 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm in HH 156
- Thursday, October 7: week 3 learning bundle released via Canvas

**WEEK 3** (10/11 - 10/15):

*Topic:* Fandom across history

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*

- Read: "Loving Music: Listeners, Entertainment, and the Origins of Music Fandom in Nineteenth-Century America," Daniel Cavicchi (2017)
- Watch: "[Nancy Baym - Artists Relationship with Fans.](#)" Deep Cuts i.e. Microsoft Research (2019)

*Assignments due:*

- Monday, October 11 by 11:00 am: **reading questionnaire #2** due via Canvas

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, October 11 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Wednesday, October 13 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Thursday, October 14: week 4 learning bundle released via Canvas

**WEEK 4** (10/18 - 10/22):

*Topic:* Identity and intersectionality in fandom

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*

- Read: "Yes, the Evil Queen Is Latina!": Racial Dynamics of Online Femslash Fandoms. Rukmini Pande and Swati Moitra (2017)
- Watch: *Once Upon a Time*, season 1 episode 1, "Pilot" (2011)

*Assignments due:*

- Monday, October 18 by 11:00 am: **reading questionnaire #3** due via Canvas
- Monday, October 18 by 11:00 am: **fan fiction assignment** due via Canvas

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, October 18 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Wednesday, October 20 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Thursday, October 21: week 5 learning bundle released via Canvas

**WEEK 5** (10/25 - 10/29):

*Topic:* Race in fandom and Fan Studies

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*

- Read: "Fans of Color, Fandoms of Color," special issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures* edited by Abigail DeKosnik and andré carrington (2019). Please read the editorial introduction also titled "Fans of Color, Fandoms of Color" and the other article you have signed up to present on.
- Watch: NA; no screening this week

*Assignments due:*

- Monday, October 25 by 11:00 am: **reading questionnaire #4** due via Canvas
- Monday, October 25 or Wednesday, October 27: in-class **mini presentation** due

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, October 25 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Wednesday, October 27 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Thursday, October 28: week 6 learning bundle released via Canvas

**WEEK 6** (11/1 - 11/5):

*Topic:* Gender and masculinity in fandom

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*



- Read: "(Un)covering Masculinities in Cover Song Videos," Frederik Dhaenens (2018)
- Watch: "[Let It Go Sing-along](#)," (2014); "[INNER KIDS - LET IT GO](#)" (2019), 00:00 - 2:10; "[Brita & Aiden Zhane's 'Let It Go' Lip Sync](#)" (2020); "[Channing Tatum Performs Frozen's 'Let It Go'](#)" (2018); "[11-Year-Old Luke Chacko Performs 'Let It Go' for Idina Menzel](#)" (2017)

*Assignments due:*

- Monday, November 1 by 11:00 am: **reading questionnaire #5** due via Canvas

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, November 1 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Wednesday, November 3 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Thursday, November 4: week 7 learning bundle released via Canvas

**WEEK 7** (11/8 - 11/12):

*Topic:* Impact of fans on media industries

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*

- Read: "Hacking Xena: Technological Innovation and Queer Influence in the Production of Mainstream Television," Elena Maris (2016)
- Watch: *Xena: Warrior Princess*, season 1, episode 1, "Sins of the Past" (1995)

*Assignments due:*

- Monday, November 8 by 11:00 am: **reading questionnaire #6** due via Canvas
- Monday, November 8 by 11:00 am: **fan zine assignment** due via Canvas

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, November 8 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Wednesday, November 10 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Thursday, November 11: week 8 learning bundle released via Canvas

**WEEK 8** (11/15 - 11/19):

*Topic:* Expressing fandom through fashion and the body

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*

- Read: "Fan Fashion: Re-enacting Hunger Games through Clothing and Design," Nicolle Lamerichs (2018)
- Watch: "[The Double Standards of Cosplay](#)," Vice (2021); "[Why Disney World Bans Adults From Dressing Up](#)," Refinery 29 (2019)

*Assignments due:*

- Monday, November 15 by 11:00 am: **reading questionnaire #7** due via Canvas

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, November 15 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Wednesday, November 17 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Thursday, November 18: week 9 learning bundle released via Canvas

**WEEK 9** (11/22 - 11/24; Thanksgiving break 11/25 & 11/26):

*Topic:* Fans out in the world

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*

- Read: "'Fan Tourism and Pilgrimage," Rebecca Williams (2018)
- Watch: *We Are Wizards* (2008)

*Assignments due:*

- Monday, November 22 by 11:00 am: **reading questionnaire #8** due via Canvas
- Monday, November 22 by 11:00 am: **final project proposal** due via Canvas

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, November 22 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Wednesday, November 24 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Wednesday, November 24 - week 10 mini learning bundle released via Canvas

**WEEK 10** (11/29 - 12/3)

*Topic:* Anti-fandom

*Read &/or watch by the start of class:*

- Read: "How Do I Dislike Thee? Let Me Count the Ways," Jonathan Gray (2019)
- Watch: *Cats*, dir. Tom Hooper (2019)

*Assignments due:*

- Note: no assignments due

*Day-by-day schedule:*

- Monday, November 29 - Monday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm
- Wednesday, December 1 - Wednesday group meets 11:00 am - 12:20 pm

**FINALS WEEK (12/6 - 12/10):**

- Wednesday, December 8 by 11:59 pm: **\*final projects due via Canvas\***