Mission Statement:

The Major in Popular Culture Studies provides WKU undergraduates with a broad understanding of the arts and culture of everyday life and its multiple uses and meanings. Through innovative interdisciplinary coursework and community events, the Major helps students critically analyze the wide range of cultural productions and practices they encounter daily in such areas as television, film, music, sports, advertising, customs and rituals.

Goals:

• Provide a thorough and rigorous grounding in the study of popular culture from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (including but not limited to English, Film Studies, Folk Studies and Anthropology, History, Journalism and Broadcast Communications, Philosophy and Religion, Political Science, and Sociology).
• Help students make connections between everyday popular culture and cultural forms more traditionally studied in these and other liberal arts disciplines.
• Develop the skills essential for students to become informed consumers and engaged participants in the global community in an age in which cultural industries play a central role in shaping the international social, political and economic landscape.
• Prepare students for a wide variety of careers in media and culture industries, in the analysis, promotion, or preservation of these productions, or for graduate studies in a range of liberal arts disciplines, business, or law.
• Organize special events that will promote a more critical understanding of popular culture and its significance among the WKU community.
• Promote students’ international engagement by studying and reporting on the ways popular culture shapes and is shaped by communities on the local, national and global level.

Why Major In Popular Culture Studies At WKU?

• You want to be on the cutting edge and be a part of the second major of its kind in the country.
• You are interested in an interdisciplinary liberal arts education that includes the study of history, philosophy, sociology, film, literature, folklore, and mass communication among other fields.
• You wish to study the arts and culture of everyday life including television, film, music, sports, advertising, and folklore now and in the past, in the U.S. and around the world.
• You want to understand the complicated ways producers, marketers, and audiences constantly negotiate the purposes and meanings of popular culture.
• You want to differentiate yourself from the thousands of other liberal arts majors graduating college each year.

What Can you Do With a Major in Popular Culture Studies?

• Popular Culture Studies offers a well-rounded liberal arts background that prepares you to read and write critically and to think analytically, skills that employers look for in college graduates.
• In tandem with other coursework, you will know not only the “how” but also the “why” and the “so what.”
• By giving you a deep understanding of those aspects of culture that have the greatest impact on the most people, majoring in Popular Culture Studies prepares you for a wide array of career paths including:
  • media production, research, and analysis in such areas as journalism, radio, music, TV and film.
  • business, advertising, marketing, public relations and publishing
  • work in museums, archives and cultural collections
  • government service, secondary school teaching and administration, and creative writing
• An undergraduate Popular Culture Studies major also prepares you for graduate study in a variety of disciplines including American Studies, Folklore, History, Law, Media Studies, and, of course, Popular Culture!

“Once you ‘got’ Pop, you could never see a sign the same way again. And once you thought Pop, you could never see America the same way again.”
—Andy Warhol
Major in Popular Culture Studies

Program Outline

This 34-hour major is composed of three levels of required courses plus electives designed to ensure that students gain an interdisciplinary perspective on the subject of Popular Culture but still have the opportunity to pursue their particular interests. A minor or a second major in another discipline is required.

REQUIRED COURSES (19 Hours)

1) POP 201 - Introduction to Popular Culture
   (3 hours)
   An interdisciplinary introduction to Popular Culture Studies.

2) CORE COURSES (12 hours)
   Students must take one course from each of the following four category options:
   Category 1
   HIS 430 Western Pop Culture since 1450 OR HIS 447 History of American Popular Culture
   AND
   Category 2
   FLK 371 Urban Folklore OR FLK 373 Folklore and the Media OR FLK 281 Roots of Southern Culture
   AND
   Category 3
   BCOM 300 American Popular Arts OR JOUR 201 Media and Society OR ENG 366 History of Narrative Film OR ENG 465 Film Genres
   AND
   Category 4
   PHIL 207 Philosophy & Pop Culture OR SOC 245 Sociology of Pop Culture OR PS 372 Politics and the Mass Media

3) POP 498 - Senior Seminar in Popular Culture Studies
   (4 hours)
   A capstone independent study resulting in a substantial research project or creative work.

ELECTIVES COURSES OPTIONS (15 hours)

African American Studies

• AFAM 190 African American Experience

Art

• ART 312 Art of the United States to 1865
• ART 313 Art of the United States since 1865
• ART 325 Asian, American and African Art
• ART 334 Survey of Graphic Design
• ART 390 Contemporary Art
• ART 405 Theory and Criticism
• ART 408 European Art, 1700-1848
• ART 409 European Art, 1848-1900
• ART 410 European Art, 1900-1945
• ART 445 American Architectural History

English

• ENG 320 American Studies I
• ENG 321 American Studies II
• ENG 340 Speculative Fiction
• ENG 365 Film and Literature
• ENG 366 History of Narrative Cinema
• ENG 368 Japanese Cinema in Translation
• ENG 370 Multi-cultural Literature in America
• ENG 465 Film Genres
• ENG 466 Film Theory

Film Studies

• FILM 201 Introduction to the Cinema
• FILM 369 World Cinema

Folk Studies and Anthropology

• ANTH 129 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
• ANTH 277 Introduction to World Music
• ANTH 342 Introduction to Cultures of the Caribbean
• ANTH 350 Peoples and Cultures of Africa
• ANTH 448 Visual Anthropology
• FLK 276 Introduction to Folk Studies
• FLK 281 Roots of Southern Culture
• FLK 350 Peoples and Cultures of Africa
• FLK 371 Urban Folklore
• FLK 373 Folklore and the Media
• FLK 379 Topics: Foodways
• FLK 379 Topics: American Roots Music
• FLK 379 Topics: Horror and the Supernatural
• FLK 410 African American Music
• FLK 445 American Architectural History
• FLK 464 Vernacular Architecture
• FLK 478 Folklore and Literature

Geography

• GEOG 430 Cultural Geography

History

• HIS 320 American Studies I
• HIS 321 American Studies II
• HIS 340 History of Western Pop. Culture since 1450
• HIS 391 History of Sport
• HIS 447 History of American Popular Culture

Journalism and Broadcasting

• JOUR 201 Media and Society
• BCOM 201 Process and Effects of Mass Communication

Modern Languages (taught in foreign languages)

• FREN 323 French Civilization and Culture
• FREN 450 Topics in Francophone Cinema
• GER 333 Germanic Civilization and Culture
• GER 335 Contemporary Culture and Civilization
• GER 437 German Literature and Film
• SPAN 373 Spanish Civilization and Culture
• SPAN 376 Literature and Culture of Latin America
• SPAN 490 Hispanic Cinema

Philosophy/Religious Studies

• PHIL 207 Philosophy and Popular Culture

Political Science

• PS 303 Politics and Film
• PS 320 American Studies I
• PS 321 American Studies II
• PS 372 Politics and the Mass Media

Popular Culture Studies

• POP 399 Special Topics in Popular Culture

Sociology

• SOC 245 Sociology of Popular Culture
• SOC 324 Sociology of Sport
• SOC 345 Sociology of Popular Music

Theater and Dance

• THEA 431 Musical Theatre History & Repertoire

Women’s Studies

• WOMN 375 American Masculinities

• BCOM 300 American Popular Arts
• BCOM 401 History of Broadcasting in America

• FREN 323 French Civilization and Culture
• FREN 450 Topics in Francophone Cinema
• GER 333 Germanic Civilization and Culture
• GER 335 Contemporary Culture and Civilization
• GER 437 German Literature and Film
• SPAN 373 Spanish Civilization and Culture
• SPAN 376 Literature and Culture of Latin America
• SPAN 490 Hispanic Cinema

• PHIL 207 Philosophy and Popular Culture

• PS 303 Politics and Film
• PS 320 American Studies I
• PS 321 American Studies II
• PS 372 Politics and the Mass Media

• POP 399 Special Topics in Popular Culture

• SOC 245 Sociology of Popular Culture
• SOC 324 Sociology of Sport
• SOC 345 Sociology of Popular Music

• THEA 431 Musical Theatre History & Repertoire

• WOMN 375 American Masculinities