

## Media English Syllabus, Winter 2006

Instructor: Gord Sellar

### Course Overview:

The purpose of this course is for students to interact with various kinds of popular "media" in English. There are several reasons why this is advantageous to non-native speakers interested in developing their English:

1. Popular media presents English as a living language, ie. in ways that textbooks never demonstrate, and which many native speakers use the language daily.
2. Media communicates not only linguistic content, but also cultural concepts taken for granted in popular media production, but which may not always be obvious to a nonnative speaker of English.
3. Media is pervasive and powerful, and students should be given the opportunity to interact with in such a way as to develop a critical facility with it, to learn to question and speak back to media. Empowerment is basic goal of this course.
4. Media tends to be interesting in and of itself, and its use therefore can help make language study more interesting and fun.

For the purposes of this course, "media" includes print media (magazines, newspapers, and photographic advertisements); video (movies, television programs of various types, documentaries, and television commercials); audio media (radio content, books on tape); and perhaps other forms. Students will be expected to develop some ideas about how these forms of media communicate with us, as well as what any media sample specifically communicates.

However, this will not be a Let's-Watch-TV class. Students will explore media actively by participating in activities such as summaries, reviews, group discussions in class, presentations, and more. It is very important that you actively participate in all of these activities. The final project in the course will be a creative project in which you will get a chance to show what you have learned, both in terms of English, and in terms of familiarity with popular media. We will discuss this final project after the midterm examination.

### Homework

Homework for this class falls under several different categories.

*Basic preparations* for classes should be performed by students regularly. I can tell when you haven't done the reading or done other preparatory work, and I will take it into account when assigning you a homework mark.

All students will keep a *Personal Media Diary*, in which they will reflect on media they have been exposed to in the past week. This will include English-language media, but also reflections in English on Korean or other media that students would like to discuss. I expect students to make 2-3 entries (each of 250 words or more) per week in their diary, which may be hosted online so that students can share discussions as the semester progresses.

Occasional *homework assignments* -- for example, a review of a movie, television program, or advertisement, or a summary of a magazine article -- will be assigned. Students will normally have 7-10 days to complete one-page assignment, or longer for bigger assignments. All assignments submitted to me must be typed (double-spaced) and include your name, student number, my name,

and the course name and number. Submissions consisting of multiple pages should be stapled or paperclipped, but I prefer that students not use plastic folders or binders to submit their work. Any work failing to meet these criteria will be returned to the student immediately for resubmission within 3 days.

Your *final creative project* will necessarily be different from student to student or group to group. We will discuss my expectations for this project after the midterm exam.

### **Textbook**

There will be no textbook for this course. However, there will be readings projects, listening projects, and more. Students will be able to sign out materials from my office, and those materials should be returned in a reasonable and timely fashion.

Should you wish to explore media not encompassed in this course, please feel free to ask me for recommendations. I will be more than happy to help you find materials which are suited to your needs and worth exploring.

### **Assessment**

As you can see below, course assessment is not heavily focused on examinations.

Class Participation – 15%  
Personal Media Diary – 15%  
Homework/Quizzes – 20%  
Midterm Exam – 20%  
Final Project – 30%

However, a 0% in any of the above marks will result in an incomplete grade. Students must at least attempt all homework assignments in order to complete the course.

### **Contact Information**

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