

TCORE 114 A & B Win 2014

The King of Pop: Reading Michael Jackson

(Intro to Humanities: Visual, Literary, and Performing Arts)

Instructor	Professor Ingrid Walker
Time and Location	T/Th 8:00-10:05; 10:20-12:25 Joy 207
Office Hours	Wednesday 12:10-1:10, GWP 224 (& by appt.)
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The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.

- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 1972 (7)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Michael Jackson was one of the most recognized and celebrated global icons and entertainers in the world. This course explores why by examining his work and its popular culture context: Jackson the boy and the man; his artistic and cultural influences and his impact and legacy; and the corresponding affect his unique celebrity seems to have had on him.

As we pose questions through a cultural studies framework, we'll explore aspects of Jackson's identity, artistry, and influence. The course employs Jackson as a springboard to consider broader cultural issues of blackness and whiteness, gender and sexuality, performance and identity, artistic agency, the power dynamics of the music industry in the 1970's-present, the rise of music video, celebrity, and that white, sequined glove, among many things. Using critical reading and research skills, we'll create focused analyses of Jackson's work and the complex dynamics of his cultural context

This class is an introduction to the Humanities, the study of the human condition. We'll explore aspects of the human experience through our examination of video, music, and lyrics, dance, cultural history, etc. By the end, you'll understand some of the social issues typical of the late 20th and 21st century arts and culture in America, how they resonated across the world, and how they have relevance in your life.

The Freshman Core program consists of a coordinated series of courses that represent the various disciplines in the university. This course, along with the others in your cohort, fulfills one of the university's general education requirements in each of the areas of knowledge plus composition. The courses are designed to both support and challenge you to develop the critical thinking, writing, research, and analytical skills you'll need at UWT while introducing you to relevant topics in the social sciences, humanities, and sciences.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Inquiry and Critical Thinking Process

- Information Gathering - Collect, evaluate, and analyze information and resources to solve problems or answer questions
- Synthesis and Context – Make meaningful connections among assignments and readings in order to develop a sense of the 'big picture'

Communication and Self-Expression:

- Analysis - Identify, analyze, and summarize / represent the key elements of a text

- Argumentation – Formulate an original thesis-driven argument and sustain it in both written and verbal communication
- Disciplinary Awareness – Place yourself into an existing dialogue (intellectual, political, etc.)

Global Perspective:

- Think outside of cultural norms & values, including their own perspectives, to critically engage the larger world

The above learning objectives will be demonstrated through the following skills you will learn and employ regularly. (See the **Assignment Rubric** for how the goals fit the skills.)

- Reading a text critically (summarizing its argument effectively and accurately, and/or constructing an analysis of a text’s key features, including socio-historical and ideological context)
- Articulating the significance of those observations in an original argument substantiated with evidence
- Finding and exploring the “so what?” factor in your analysis (i.e., why your analysis has significance and relevance)
- Through these analyses, demonstrating the various ways in which you understand that culture and its products have meaning in our lives

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation

Class time is where we *acquire* and *practice* the skills of the class: make observations, pose questions, find evidence, and construct analyses. Just showing up won’t help you develop these skills. This may differ from your other class experiences, so read your obligations carefully:

1. Come to class: a) having done the homework and your Field Notes, b) ready to contribute, c) ready to actively engage with your own learning, the course material, your classmates, and me. That last part, active engagement, is the key to participation.
2. Practice the art of being a scholar in class: listen & seek through active thinking about the discussion. Collect ideas and evidence. Ask questions. Take detailed notes. We’ll say and do a lot of things but if you don’t make notes of them, you’ll forget them later. *Just because it isn’t written on the board doesn’t mean it’s not important.* Listen for what’s significant in discussion—comments from your peers and me. Keep track of our observations and connections every day; this is essential to your learning in the class.
 - You should have a written record of each class as well as every reading in your Field Notes. Refer to previous discussions as you prepare the next set of readings. Your ability to draw connections and synthesize is essential to your success.

Because most of our learning is developed in class, you miss a lot when absent. Quizzes and in-class writing are part of your participation grade and are another reason to be present.

If you tend to be quiet in class, this is a chance to try to take some steps toward being less quiet. We hold discussions in big and small groups. Everyone should contribute in order to practice the complex skills of critical reading and analysis. See **Participation Criteria**.

Discussion Board

There will be several DB prompts throughout the quarter. I will let know when one is up and you can use your ideas/observations from Field Notes to answer. Extra credit for substantive responses to other’s posts. This counts as discussion participation.

Homework / Field Notes

Prepare the reading/viewing/listening in advance of every class. Adequate preparation takes time after you've done the viewing/reading/listening. See the **Study Guide** as a "how to" prepare your Field Notes (active reading, compiling observations, and synthesizing to articulate ideas and employ evidence).

Your Field Notes will include brief summaries and engaged analyses of topics explored in class discussions. All class notes and Field Notes go in a single bound composition notebook.

I will randomly spot-check your homework/Field Notes notebook in class, but the entire collection of FN will be assessed a single grade at end of term. This is a high-stakes ongoing assignment. I have examples in my office; come by.

Quizzes

Quizzes and in-class writings are "open note" (Field Notes and books).

Formal Assignments:

Short Analyses: You will write two short critical analyses of our reading. We'll prepare for these by practicing the skills in class and in homework/Field Notes.

Exam: On the last day of class, there will be an open-note short essay exam in which you will demonstrate the skills and knowledge acquired over the term. We will create a review guide, together, the week before from your Field Notes. *Bluebook required.*

Grading

Your final grade will be determined by the following:

15%	Participation, includes Quizzes, Discussion Board & In-class projects
20%	Field Notes
20%	Analysis 1
20%	Analysis 2
25%	Exam

UWT grading policies and grading scale:

<http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/enrollment-services/grading-policies>

POLICIES

Late Work - *I do not accept late work.* Your work is still due on time if you are absent. If I make a rare exception, the work will be awarded partial credit (decreasing a letter grade for every day it's late). If absent, contact me to find out what you missed.

Contacting Me - The best way to reach me outside of class and office hours is by email. Contact me to make an appointment, discuss class work, etc.

Academic Honesty - Scholars take ownership of ideas very seriously. It's essential that you give full credit to the words and ideas you quote or borrow from other sources. We consider citing sources to be required as well as a mark of credible work. Outside of crediting others' ideas, your work should be your own. Presenting others ideas, words, or images without citation is plagiarism and the consequences for plagiarized work are severe. I will report it and you will fail the assignment. See: <http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/enrollment-services/academic-honesty>

Electronic Devices - Laptop / phone use is allowed during breaks only, unless an assignment requires web access.

COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS

All of the texts listed below are required.

Class texts are in four places: **Course Reader**, **The Theory Toolbox**, **E-Reserves** and **Catalyst** site. You will need to navigate all four regularly.

Primary Resources - Spend time viewing, reading, and listening to these texts, many of them *several times* (videos, songs, and articles). You'll find things you didn't see on your first viewing/reading/listening, especially after class discussion. (See Study Guide)

Secondary Resources – Provide sociological, historical, and popular culture context, specifically to help you understand the history in which MJ performed.

Course Reader - Required reading materials are in a course pack at the campus Copy Center. This is required; bring it to all class sessions.

Electronic Reserves – Videos, films, and songs. Access to e-reserves is your responsibility. If your home computer set-up doesn't work, plan to view videos and films in the library. *Not viewing material due to technical difficulties is not an excuse.*

See below for access instructions. Firefox is the recommended browser. If you don't use it and have problems, download it and try, again. Problems: contact media librarian Justin Wadland.

Library E Reserve page link: <https://ereserves.tacoma.washington.edu>

Log in with your UW NetID and acknowledge the copyright statement to access electronic reserves online. Then enter the password to access the webpage with links to videos: [tcore114walkerwi14](#)

Primary Reading

The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Jeffrey Nealon and Susan Searls Giroux, 2nd edition (UWT Bookstore)

Course Reader, selected readings (UWT Copy Center)

Primary Viewing

Film

Bamboozled, Spike Lee

This is It!, Kenny Ortega

Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity, Jackson Katz

Music Videos

Jackson 5: see youtube list, below

Michael Jackson, solo: "Don't Stop 'til You Get Enough," "Billie Jean," "Thriller," "Beat It!," "Bad," "Man in the Mirror," "Black or White," "Smooth Criminal," "Dangerous," "Scream," "They Don't Care About Us," (official release; youtube link = unreleased Spike Lee version) "Earth Song"

Primary Viewing

Youtube videos (in addition to above):

"Moonwalking in Baghdad: Discovering the King of Pop on Foot Patrol," Dan Gomez

<http://iava.org/blog/moonwalks-baghdad-discovering-king-pop-foot-patrol>

"My American Dream Sounds Like the Jackson 5," Jack Hamilton

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/therecord/2012/09/11/157673079/my-american-dream-sounds-like-the-jackson-5https://>

"Cultural Studies and Transformation," bell hooks

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQUuHFKP-9s&feature=related>

Tough Guise (short excerpt, youtube), Jackson Katz

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3exzMPT4nGI>

"They Don't Really Care About Us" unreleased prison version

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97nAvTVeR6o>

"Funny MJ Moments" (compilation)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaCNLA858T8>

Jackson 5

“It’s Your Thing,” Miss Black American Pageant (before TV debut, 1968)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxqiKYzD7mQ>

“ABC,” American Bandstand (1970)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ho7796-au8U&feature=related>

“Dancing Machine,” Soul Train (1974)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHJUPm8X8I0>

(same song, Merv Griffin)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lwamqJRrBq>

Michael Jackson, solo

“Billie Jean” at Motown 25, 1983 (first moonwalk)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rlqp2qAj4gw>

“They Don’t Care About Us,” unreleased original Spike Lee version

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97nAvTVeR6o>

“The Way You Make Me Feel,” and “The Man in the Mirror” at Grammy Awards, 1988 (iconic and new dance choreography)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OR5OAS2Px-s>

Pepsi Generation Commercial (1984)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=po0jY4WvClc>

Secondary Resources

Viewing/listening on youtube:

Influences – dancers / singers

James Brown dance compilation (1950’s-90’s)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgbpucWLfpE>

Little Richard, “Lucille” (two eras – 1950’s, 70’s)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3-OaNevkfg>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzB_Up0hIMw

Jackie Wilson, “Baby Workout” (1965)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdbIFsqbGkI&feature=related>

Gene Kelly, dance compilation (1940’s-60’s)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfYRYRR0stY>

Jets vs. Sharks song/dance, *West Side Story*, 1961

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twbuT1V5mFE>

Bill “Bojangles” Robinson

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8JUwdziLGQ&feature=related>

Sammy Davis, Jr.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvYmL5KsvYA&feature=related>

Scene from *Stormy Weather* (National Tap Dance Day)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/25/national-tap-dance-day-2012_n_1539969.html#s=1020047

Historical Context

Minstrel shows, African-American music, racial stereotypes:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kc4EwD5hoA>

Spike Lee on making “They Don’t Care About Us”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khPj5AijWr0>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Cultural studies – a way to view the world

T Jan 7: Class Introduction

Humanities and cultural studies – methodology and practice

Class Focus - What is Popular Culture? Why Michael Jackson?

"Moonwalking in Baghdad: Discovering the King of Pop on Foot Patrol," Dan Gomez

<http://iava.org/blog/moonwalks-baghdad-discovering-king-pop-foot-patrol>

"My American Dream Sounds Like 'I Want You Back,'" Jack Hamilton

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/therecord/2012/09/11/157673079/my-american-dream-sounds-like-the-jackson-5>

How to "read" popular culture texts – practice (image, video, passage)

Context - MJ history

Class overview - the syllabus (read for every class), policies, expectations

Homework and time management

Homework:

- a. Read entire syllabus – bring Qs.
- b. Access e-reserves - configure Quicktime, use password to access videos/songs
- c. Listen to all Jackson 5 songs and screen videos.
- d. Screen Motown 25 "Billie Jean" video under MJ solo videos.
- e. FN: Read Study Guide and write FN for one of the videos. Optional FN topic: engage Jack Hamilton's observations while talking about a different song/video (re-screen Hamilton's video on Catalyst class site).

Th Jan 9:

MJ, the early years - Review videos and Motown history

Student self-evaluation

Homework:

- a. Screen "Don't Stop," and "Bad" videos & listen to all songs from *Off the Wall* and *Bad* on reserve. Complete FN for the group of texts. Compare the two videos in analysis.
- b. Read "Authority" & "Reading" chapters in *The Theory Toolbox*. Bring your Qs.
- c. FN: Apply one concept from "Authority" or "Reading" to a brief analysis of one of MJ's songs. You may need to reread those chapters if you didn't get them the first time.
- d. Scan background chapters 20, 33, 34 - *Pop Rock and Soul* and pp. 239-241, 305-309 - *American Popular Music* (course reader). FN: Note relevant context/history.
- e. Discussion Board Post by Monday, 7 p.m. (Catalyst)

Week 2: Cultural observations and context

T Jan 14

Authority & Reading –key points; how to apply them

Semiotic reading of images or text

Homework:

- a. View "Thriller" video/lyrics.
- b. Finish all historical/contextual readings: chps. 66, 67 plus pages 421-426 on MTV and *Thriller* from *Pop Rock and Soul*, pp. 369-375, 384-387 from *American Popular Music*.
- c. FN: focus on "Thriller" and historical/contextual readings: discuss important observations about the song, video, and its use of the new visual medium.
- d. Also in FN: link to issues, themes, and /or images in MJ's lyrics, videos, dance, and/or music—see your class notes and the topics list). Write about why they are significant in FN (3 paragraphs).

Th Jan 16

Thriller album and "Thriller" video phenomenon

Handout assignment for Analysis #1

Homework:

- a. Read "Subjectivity" in *The Theory Toolbox*, make notes and bring Qs.
- b. Read passages by David Gauntlett on "Performing Gender" (reader)

- c. FN: Choose/study a song we've not yet focused on from MJ primary reading. Analyze it with ideas from "Subjectivity" in mind. Link with images/themes/issues we've worked on.
- d. Finish all primary MJ work (*Thriller*, *Dangerous*, *HIStory*). Do FN for them as a set discussing patterns, themes, images, and different issues raised.
- e. Discussion Board Post by Sunday, 7 p.m. (Catalyst)

Week 3: Subjectivity and Culture

T Jan 21

Communities Exercise

Subjectivity – review chapter, questions, key ideas

Gender and Performance – develop understanding of subjectivity

Homework:

- a. Re-screen *Tough Guise* excerpt, Jackson Katz
- b. Re-read excerpt "Performing Gender," David Gauntlett
- c. FN using both texts to discuss the performance of gender in MJ's work.

Th Jan 23

Subjectivity, continued: ethnicity

In-Class writing: What are other axes of identity/subjectivity? Synthesizing.

Participation and FN

Homework:

- a. Read: the four remaining excerpts in reader (Jackson, Morrison, DuBois, & Ellison) AND "Stranger in the Village," James Baldwin essay
- b. FN: Comment/analysis on DuBois and Baldwin.
- c. Screen *Bamboozled*. FN on specific aspects of subjectivity the film focuses on.
- d. Discussion Board Post by Sunday, 7 p.m. (Catalyst)

Week 4: Reading / Contextualizing

T Jan 28

Bamboozled

Context, history, and subjectivity: DuBois and Baldwin

History of African-American music and Minstrel shows

- a. Read "That's the Funny Thing About Race," Anthonia Akutunde (Catalyst)
- b. FN on minstrel show, black entertainment now, and subjectivity
- c. Write full draft, Analysis #1. 3 copies for Peer Review.

Th Jan 30

Bamboozled, continued

Minstrel shows, subjectivity, and black entertainers in U.S.

→ Peer review, Analysis #1

Homework:

- a. "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination," bell hooks
- b. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," Peggy McIntosh
- c. Bring your Qs: you are responsible for summarizing each argument.
- d. FN: Reflect on hooks / McIntosh's perspectives. Where do you experience difference? Why? What cultural "unearned privileges" or lack of them, do you experience?
- e. Revise Analysis #1 – final version due in class.
- f. Discussion Board Post by Sunday, 7 p.m. (Catalyst)

Week 5: Reading / Synthesizing

T Feb 4

Review hooks and McIntosh's arguments

Performance, subjectivity, and ethnic difference in American culture

→ Analysis #1 due in class

Homework:

- a. Read "Culture" in *The Theory Toolbox*. Bring Qs and do FN.
- b. Review FN and bring forward issues that are most relevant. Write a summary of the key issues/images/themes you find most important thus far. Develop your sense of them, look for / discuss connections.

Th Feb 6

Review "Culture" chapter: Jackson's body of work through this lens

Homework:

- a. FN: Identify two strong, specific cultural norms that you see operating in media. Refer to a particular example and discuss these norms applying the ideas we've read/viewed in Katz, Gauntlett, hooks, McIntosh, and Nealon/Giroux.
- b. Also FN: Identify 3 passages / quotations from our reading that are central to your understanding of the ideas in class. Prepare to cite source, page, and what they mean.
- c. Read assignment for Analysis #2 and bring questions.
- d. Discussion Board Post by Sunday, 7 p.m. (Catalyst)

Week 6: Subjectivity and Culture, continued

T Feb 11

Culture cont. - subjectivity, blackness & whiteness, gender & sexuality, other relevant themes

Homework:

- a. Read, carefully, Chinn, "Michael Jackson's Panther Dance." Bring questions.
- b. FN for Chinn: focus your analysis on a particular passage that illuminates issues of artistic subjectivity. Also, be prepared to summarize her argument, key points.
- c. How does her argument understand "subjectivity?"

Th Feb 13

Review Chinn's argument

Ethnicity, culture, subjectivity (hooks, McIntosh, Jackson, Baldwin, DuBois, Ellison)

Homework:

- a. Read, carefully, Clay, "Working Day and Night: Black Masculinity and the King of Pop" in course reader.
- b. FN for Clay, focus your analysis on a particular passage that has to do with performing gender. Also, be prepared to summarize her argument, key points.
- c. Screen "In the Closet"
- d. Discussion Board Post by Sunday, 7 p.m. (Catalyst)

Week 7: Culture and Ideology

T Feb 18

Review Clay's argument

"In the Closet" and performing gender, culture, subjectivity (Katz, Gauntlett)

Homework:

- a. Read "Ideology" in *The Theory Toolbox* – bring questions
- b. See Ryan excerpts on ideology (Reader)
- c. Screen: "They Don't Care About Us" original link above (prison) and released version on

- e-reserves (Rio de Janero)
d. FN: Analyze an example of ideology in one of the videos

Th Feb 20

Review “Ideology” and Ryan excerpts: ideology, culture, popular culture
Scenes from “They Don’t Care About Us” and “Earth Song”

Homework:

- Read Susan Fast, “Difference that Exceeded Understanding”
- FN – Discuss what issues she identifies as indictments of U.S. culture and audiences as much as indictments of Jackson? Focus on how culture and ideology shape subjectivity.
- Revise Analysis #2 – final version
- Discussion Board Post by Sunday, 7 p.m. (Catalyst)

Week 8: Ideology, Culture, and Popular Culture

T Feb 25

Work on Group Presentations

Review Fast – the social construction of the King of Pop

Homework:

- Screen *This is It!*
- Comments in FN: What do you notice about MJ, subjectivity? How does (and doesn’t) MJ perform subjectivity in the film?
- Discussion Board Post by Sunday, 7 p.m. (Catalyst)

→ **Analysis #2 due**

Th Feb 27

Group Presentations on Ideology in MJ’s work

This is It!, culture, performance

Discussion – performing subjectivity, stage/film as social constructs, identity

Homework:

- Read “Agency” in Nealon/Giroux, 255-267.
- Review all of your FN. Sift, synthesize, write. Come up with the top issues we’ve explored and how/why they are significant.
- Develop and bring, typed, two “big questions” that address the complexity of some of the major themes and cultural dynamics involved in studying Jackson’s work.

Week 9: Review – Synthesizing What We Know

T Mar 4

Discussion: Agency, performance, subjectivity, ideology

Th Mar 6

What are the key elements that inform in cultural analysis of a figure like Jackson?

Exam Review - build new knowledge, synthesize, apply what you know. (“Scream”)

Homework:

- Continue synthesis of FN and start exam review (see handout/guide). Identify areas you want to discuss further on Monday.

Week 10: Bringing it All Together - Concluding

T Mar 11

Exam Review – how to take an essay exam

Self-evaluation, Course Critique, and Course Evaluations

Th Mar 14

In class exam
→ Field Notes Due

Resources:

Teaching and Learning Center

The Teaching and Learning Center is the best-kept secret at UWT. Make an appointment in advance and the TLC will help you with your assignments. Consultation is most effective through draft stages. Appointments: <http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/tlc/>

Library

The library, particularly e-reserves (below) is your access many useful material for this class, including books, music, DVDs, and academic journals. There are librarians who can help you with research, quiet study spaces, group study rooms, computers, and printers, etc.

<http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/library/>

Additional University Information

Inclement Weather: Call (253) 383-INFO or go to <http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/security/alert/> to determine whether campus operations have been suspended.

Campus Safety Information: Put Campus Safety's number on your cell phone (253) 692-4416 in case you need it: http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/safety/emergency/Emergency_plan.pdf

Campus Safety Escort Service: Safety Escorts are available Monday - Thursday 5:00pm - 10:30pm. They can be reached through the duty officer or by calling (253) 692-4416.

Student Health Services

Student Health Services (SHS) is committed to providing compassionate, convenient, and affordable health care for University of Washington Tacoma students, from care for illness and minor injury to women's health and preventative medicine, including vaccination services. Insurance is not required. For more information, please visit www.tacoma.uw.edu/shs or email at uwtshs@uw.edu. If you have questions or would like to schedule an appointment, please call (253) 692-5811 or stop by SHS at the Laborer's Hall on Market Street.

Disability Support Services: Access and Accommodations: Disability Support Services (DSS) offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through any interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DSS. If you have not yet established services through DSS, but have, or think you have a temporary or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this can include mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DSS at 253-692-4522 V/ 253-692-4413 / DSSUWT@UW.EDU

http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/studentaffairs/SHW/dss_about.cfm

Fire Alarm: In case of a fire alarm, take your valuables and leave the building. Plan to return to class once the alarm has stopped. Do not return until you have received an all clear from somebody "official," the web or email.

Earthquake: DROP, COVER, and HOLD. Once the shaking stops, take your valuables and leave the building. Do not plan to return for the rest of the day. Do not return to the building until you have received an all clear from somebody "official," the web, or email.