

## **School of English, Film, Theatre and Media Studies**

### **MDIA 103 Popular Media Culture**

Trimester 3, 2007

#### **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the study of popular media culture, with reference to the relationship between cultural theory and selected popular media forms. Particular attention is paid to issues relating to production (of meaning, of texts) and consumption (active audiences, taste). The course critically examines the production and consumption of mass/popular media culture in society.

#### **Lecturer**

##### **Damion Sturm**

42-44 Kelburn Parade, Rm. 103

Office Hours: Mon 1-3pm

Phone: 463-6728

Email: [damion.sturm@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:damion.sturm@vuw.ac.nz)

#### **Course Coordinator**

##### **Dr. Joost de Bruin**

42-44 Kelburn Parade, Rm. 207

Office Hours: by appointment

Phone: 463-6846

Email: [joost.debruin@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:joost.debruin@vuw.ac.nz)

#### **Postal Address**

Media Studies Programme  
School of English, Film, Theatre and Media Studies  
Victoria University of Wellington  
PO Box 600  
Wellington 6005  
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#### **Tutor**

##### **Dr. Shelly Dixon**

42-44 Kelburn Parade, Rm. 102

Office Hours: Tues 1-2pm

Email: [shelley.dixon@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:shelley.dixon@vuw.ac.nz)

#### **Course Format**

Once weekly, two-hour lecture  
Once weekly tutorial (to begin Week Two).

#### **Meeting Time and Location**

Tuesday, 2.10-4pm  
Kirk 301

## **Tutorials**

Wednesday – all Tutorials in MY 103

Times:

11-11.50am - Tutor: Damion Sturm

12-12.50pm - Tutor: Damion Sturm

1.10-2pm - Tutor: Shelley Dixon

2.10-3pm - Tutor: Shelley Dixon

\* 3.10-4pm (to be confirmed on Blackboard and in first lecture if required)

In tutorials, students will be expected to discuss each week's readings in a group setting. Keeping up with readings is therefore an important part of your commitment to the course. Debating and discussing the lectures as well as the readings in a tutorial setting is key to the course and Media Studies generally.

Tutorials begin in the second week of class and attendance is **mandatory**. If you are unable to attend, you must supply your tutor with a medical certificate or equivalent. **Tutorial participation is worth 5% of your final grade**, please refer to course assessment outline.

Please register for tutorials via Blackboard: <https://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz/>. Tutorials will be limited to 15 persons. Please read instructions carefully when signing up for tutorials on Blackboard. Detailed instructions for signing up for tutorials are available on the MDIA 103 site on Blackboard – go to 'Course Information', and then follow the instructions under the Tutorial Enrolment link.

## **Course Aims and Objectives**

- This course is designed to introduce students to issues and ideas that relate to popular culture and the various forms it takes in the media.
- Culture and the media are defined broadly here, which will allow the student to explore issues that relate to both the production and consumption of popular media texts.
- The course will concentrate on examples of how certain media studies theories are put into practice, by way of specific examples.
- The students will be introduced to differing approaches in order to provide an overview of some of the issues which define media studies and its relation to popular culture.
- Students will be expected to understand and put into use critical terms and concepts they are presented with in the course.
- The ultimate goal of the course is to increase the students' media competency by exposing them to a variety of perspectives on popular media culture.

## **Workloads**

The following approximate guidelines for average number of hours per week **including class contact hours** have been recommended for an undergraduate paper:

1-trimester      18 points 12 hours

### **Course Texts**

There is one required text for MDIA 103, in the form of a course reader. This is available from Student Notes (ground floor of Student Union building).

### **Course Assessment**

**You must complete all four assignments described below to pass the course.**

#### **1) Tutorial Participation 5%**

Your tutorial participation over the course of the trimester will contribute to 5% of your final grade. Your attendance will have some relevance here, so if you cannot attend a particular tutorial you should give your tutor a note to explain your absence so that this can be taken into account. **The criteria for tutorial participation will be discussed in the first tutorial (Week 2), with the participation assessment commencing in Week 3.**

#### ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR TUTORIAL PARTICIPATION

**5 %:** High quality participation based on thorough preparation. Able to see links between different issues, and provide examples. A supportive group member who listens to others, asks appropriate questions of the group, the tutor and individual members. Works to keep the tutorial on track, and involves other people.

**4 %:** Good preparation and participation. Demonstrates reasonable comprehension of the concepts and issues under discussion. Can see links, and can often provide examples. Good listening skills, responds thoughtfully and sensitively to other members of the group.

**3 %:** Varying levels of participation. Generally successful in answering questions, but in a patchy way. Can often relate issues and concepts, and can sometimes provide examples. May show evidence of very good preparation and knowledge, but either dominates discussion or only speaks if called on.

**2 %:** Inconsistent preparation. Contributions are unclear, illogical or irrelevant. Cannot provide examples. Some participation, but not much, or talks over other people.

**0-1 %:** Participation virtually non-existent. Little preparation apparent. Unable to answer questions, or to clarify vague answers. Lack of commitment to the course.

#### **2) Reading Report 25%    Due: Monday, December 10th @ 2 PM**

Length: 1200 - 1500 words

Choose **one (1)** article from the course reader from between Weeks **2-6** (inclusive) and provide a report of it. Your report should be written in an essay format, structured around **two** themes.

**First**, you need to provide a summation or close reading of the article. Through your close reading, you will demonstrate your ability to synthesize the author's

main argument, as well as their key terms, concepts and ideas by providing a clear overview of the content of the article.

**Second**, you also need to critically engage with the article, critiquing the key ideas and concepts presented, as well as offer an application of these ideas to an example other than those used in the reading itself. For example, questions to ask yourself might include (but are not restricted to):

- does this reading increase your understanding of media and popular culture (and if so, how or why)?,
- in what other areas of the media and/or popular culture might the ideas and method of analysis of the reading be applied – e.g., if the critical analysis focuses on television, could it also be applied to the film industry, music, video games etc?
- In a critical and theoretical manner, can you apply the key ideas provided in the article to your own experiences in or around popular media culture? (e.g., see De Nora's application of subjectivity to experiences of music)

Please be aware you must restrict yourself to an article from between Weeks **2-6**. Additionally, you should be considering a reading which is of good length; the works on 'subjectivity' by Hartley and Mansfield; as well as Hills' on 'fandom' and Baudrillard on the Gulf War are not appropriate for you to provide a strong reading report.

### **3) Essay 30% Due: Tuesday, January 22nd @ 2 PM**

Length: 1500 words. A list of topics will be made available in class and on Blackboard in week 5. The essay will cover material dealt with in weeks 1-7.

**Both the Reading Report and Essay** need to include a bibliography (not included in word count), of which no more than 20% can be Internet sources.

**Please note that Wikipedia is not an appropriate academic source.**

Additionally, the Reading Report and Essay are expected to be proper research assignments and should demonstrate that the student has created and supported a thesis with a well-thought out argument. Please take care with grammar and spelling. Proofread your essays before handing them in.

### **4) Take-Home Exam 40% Handed out: Tuesday, January 29th IN CLASS Due: Tuesday, February 5th @ 2 PM**

Length: 3 Short essays, 1800 words. The Take-Home Exam will be handed out in the lecture on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> January.

Discussions regarding the take-home exam will be moderated through Blackboard. Please post questions to Blackboard, **the instructors cannot answer questions on a one-on-one basis.**

All information regarding the course will be made during class and announcements will also be made on Blackboard. Please be sure to check Blackboard regularly.

The following are the standards by which assignments (e.g., essays, reading reports and take-home exams) are graded in Media Studies. Take some time to read this section before you begin your written assignments and read it once more, when you're done.

## **Assessment Criteria**

### **A+ (85-100%)**

Excellent work showing sophisticated and independent thought. Superior analysis, comprehensive research, good theoretical or methodological understanding and impeccable presentation.

### **A (80- 84%)**

Work is distinguished by their clarity of thought and argument. Question is answered skilfully, is meticulously structured and the argument is convincing. Demonstrates sophisticated comprehension of the topic, a familiarity with scholarship & research in the area, and a clear understanding of related theoretical issues. A high standard of critical analysis. Presentation and organization are excellent with correct use of citation conventions when required.

### **A- (75- 79%)**

Work of a high standard: ideas could be of 'A' quality material but the overall effect was undermined by limitation or inconsistency in one area. It could also be 'A' material that was flawed by the quality or consistency of its technical presentation, research support, or theoretical understandings. Demonstrates independent thought, good writing skills, effective selection/structuring of material, and a general clarity and sense of purpose.

### **B+ (70% - 74%)**

Work which exhibits a good standard of research and of writing. Contains some perceptive analysis, and effective research, preparation and planning. This work may demonstrate insight and perception but this standard is not maintained through the whole work. The argument, technical quality, and other elements may be inconsistent in quality. May require greater integration of theoretical or empirical analysis. Demonstrates some independence of thought.

### **B (65% - 69%)**

Consistently good work and still above average. May demonstrate strong analysis, theoretical reading or contextual knowledge, but without integrating these elements into a balanced argument. May be well researched and documented but in the 'B' range there could well be a deficiency in some aspect of research or understanding. May have problems with technical presentation, structure, argument and/or research.

### **B- (60% - 64%)**

Good work but may not be consistent and thus falls short of 'B' quality in one or more respects. In this grade area the work will have exceeded the standard expected for passes at this level. Question is satisfactorily answered and has been appropriately informed by research, but there is less attention to the detail and complexity of issues. There may be problems with the essay structure, the writing style, the selection of material or the argument. There may also be problems with presentation, expression, and grammar.

### **C+ (55% - 59%)**

The essay is limited in achievement due to an overall incapacity for independent research or thought – hence it will tend to demonstrate a reliance on lecture material. Work in the C range will have paid insufficient attention to critical sources and not be widely researched. Work in this category may have deficiencies in structure and organization, the quality of argument, and/or the writing style.

### **C (50% - 54%)**

Satisfactory completion of set tasks only. Basic engagement with the subject matter, and lacking in critical analysis or a considered conceptual approach. May be poorly planned and constructed, with serious problems of clarity and expression. May not have used or have acknowledged an appropriate range of sources. May be purely descriptive. There may be some significant problems with writing, research or organization.

### **D (40% - 49%)**

Misses the point of the exercise or has failed to respond adequately to it. The work is deficient in important respects to the extent that it cannot be regarded satisfactory at this level. A 'D' grade essay may contain some elements of attaining a pass grade.

### **E (0% - 39%)**

This category implies that the essay is well below the achievement minimum (in a range of respects) for work at this level. A E essay will demonstrate not one, but several of the 'D' essay's deficiencies - it may be well short of the prescribed length, badly written, poorly conceived, ill structured, hastily prepared, full of technical or other inaccuracies, and/or lacking in even a basic understanding of the concepts.

## **Presentation of Written Work**

All written work must be in an acceptable academic format. In Media Studies, students taking the first year courses (and MDIA 201) will receive the Media Studies Essay Guidelines, a document which you should consult throughout the term. In it, you will find helpful information on how to go about essay writing, along with tips on where to go to research your assignments.

## **Extensions and Late Assignments**

Extensions should be requested only in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. If you require an extension, write an e-mail to the Lecturer, Damion Sturm ( [damion.sturm@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:damion.sturm@vuw.ac.nz)), as soon as possible, explain what your unforeseen and exceptional circumstances are, provide relevant documentation where appropriate (e.g., a doctor's certificate, a note from a counselor, etc.), and specify how much of an extension you require. Only Damion Sturm has the authority to grant extensions.

## **Penalties for Late Assignments**

The following penalty for late assignments will be applied:

- Each piece of assessment submitted late will incur a 5-points deduction per day on the assignment (weekends only count for one day)

The University does not permit us to accept any work after the end of the examination period and students who cannot complete their work by this date for medical or similar reasons should consult the aegrotat provisions in the Calendar.

### **Mandatory Requirements**

The minimum course requirements, which must be satisfied, include completion of all in-term assessment pieces by the required date and attending tutorials. Failure to satisfy the course requirements will leave you with a fail grade. If you are concerned that you might be unable to meet these requirements see the lecturer, Damion Sturm, as soon as possible.

### **Using the Course Reader**

A good habit to start in your first year is taking notes as you read. As one of the first assignments will be a close reading, you should get as much practice in as early as possible.

When doing a reading, make notes in the margins of the article, on a notepad or even onto your computer (always remember to note the page number in the article). Highlight key ideas, terms and concepts. Do the same for those ideas, terms and concepts you are having trouble with. Think of examples, or even counter examples, that might prove or disprove the author's thesis. Have a look at the bibliography where possible as this can provide you with other readings you might want to use in your assignments.

If you start doing this from your first reading, your tutorials and all your assignments will come much easier to you and your ideas will come into focus in ways that will serve your essay writing and critical thinking skills well.

### **Forming Study Groups and Using Blackboard**

We would like to encourage students to begin working with other students as soon as possible. Think about forming study groups. You can book a room at the library for this purpose. You can meet once a week, or at your discretion, to talk about issues relevant to the course.

Blackboard should also be used to discuss issues, concepts, terms that you might find complicated. We would recommend working through examples to tease out some of the ideas in the readings. We encourage debate and discussion wherever possible as this helps ideas sink in, and sees them put to good use in contexts outside the classroom.

### **General University Policies and Statutes**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hard copy or on the VUW website at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx>

### **Student and Staff Conduct**

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and

participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps are to be taken if there is a complaint. For information queries about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor or refer to the statute on the VUW policy website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx)

The Policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/staff.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/staff.aspx)

### **Academic Grievances**

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned; class representatives may be able to help you in this. If you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean; the VUWSA Education Coordinator is available to assist in this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievance Policy which is published on the VUW website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx)

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

*The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.*

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

*Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.*

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct. All cases will be recorded on a central database and severe penalties may be imposed. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx)

### **Students with Impairments** (see Appendix 3 of the Assessment Handbook)



The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities the same opportunity as other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, please contact the course coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services (DSS) to discuss your individual needs and the available options and support on a confidential basis. DSS are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building:

telephone: 463-6070

email: [disability@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:disability@vuw.ac.nz)

Dr. Joost de Bruin is the Disability Liaison contact for Media Studies. He can be contacted either by email ([joost.debruin@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:joost.debruin@vuw.ac.nz)) or phone (+64-04-463-5233 ext. 6846).

### **Student Support**

Staff at Victoria want students to have positive learning experiences at the University. Each faculty has a designated staff member who can either help you directly if your academic progress is causing you concern, or quickly put you in contact with someone who can. Assistance for specific groups is also available from the Kaiwawao Maori, Manaaki Pihipihinga or Victoria International.

In addition, the Student Services Group (email: [student-services@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:student-services@vuw.ac.nz)) is available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/)

VUWSA employs an Education Coordinator who deals with academic problems and provides support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office (tel. 463-6983 or 463-6984, email at [education@vuwsa.org.nz](mailto:education@vuwsa.org.nz)) is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building.

### **Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme**

This programme offers:

- Academic mentoring for all Māori & Pacific students at all levels of undergraduate study for the faculties of Commerce & Administration and Humanities & Social Sciences. Contact [Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz) or phone 463 6015 to register for Humanities & Social Science mentoring and 463 8977 to register for mentoring for Commerce and Administration courses
- Postgraduate support network for the above faculties, which links students into all of the post grad activities and workshops on campus and networking opportunities
- Pacific Support Coordinator who can assist Pacific students with transitional issues, disseminate useful information and provide any assistance needed to help students achieve. Contact; [Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz) or phone 463 5842.

Manaaki Pihipihinga is located at: 14 Kelburn Parade, back court yard, Room 109 D (for Humanities mentoring & some first year Commerce mentoring) or Room 210 level 2 west wing railway station Pipitea (commerce mentoring space). Māori Studies mentoring is done at the marae.

### **Course Readings List:**

You are expected to do the readings **before** the lecture and you should be prepared to discuss them in tutorials which commence in week two.

#### **Week One - Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November: Introduction/Ideology**

Williams, Raymond. "Culture," "Media," "Popular," in Keywords, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. pp. 87-93; 203-204; 236-238.

Hartley, John. "Ideological State Apparatuses," "Ideology," in Communication, Cultural and Media Studies (Third Edition), New York: Routledge, 2002. pp.102-106

Storey, John. "What is Popular Culture?," in An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture (Second Edition), Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998. pp. 1-20.

#### **Week Two - Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> November: Ideology/Hegemony**

White, Mimi. "Ideological Analysis and Television," in Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism (Second Edition). Robert C. Allen, ed., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992. pp. 164-170.

Devereux, Eion. "Ideology and Dominant Ideology," in Devils and Angels: Television, Ideology and the Coverage of Poverty, Luton: University of Luton Press, 1998. pp. 9-17.

Storey, John. "Gramscian Cultural Studies, Popular Culture and Cultural Consumption," in Cultural Consumption and Everyday Life, London: Arnold, 1999, pp. 149-150; 166-171.

#### **Week Three - Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> December: Signification/Discourse**

Matheson, Donald. "Introduction" and "The Performance of Identity in Consumer Magazines," in Media Discourses: Analysing Media Texts, Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005. pp. 1-3; 9-11; 58-62; 65; 70-73; 77; 80-81.

Pringle, Richard. "Competing discourses: Narratives of a fragmented self, manliness and rugby union," in International Review for the Sociology of Sport Journal 36 (4) 2001. pp. 425-439.

#### **Week Four - Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December: Subjectivity/Identity**

Hartley, John. "Subjectivity," in Communication, Cultural and Media Studies (Third Edition), New York: Routledge, 2002. pp. 221-223.

Mansfield, Nick. "Introduction," in Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway, Sydney: Allen and Urwin, 2000. pp. 1-3.

DeNora, Tia. "Music and Self-Identity," in The Popular Music Studies Reader, Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, Jason Toynbee, eds., New York: Routledge, 2006. pp. 141-147.

### **Week Five - Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December: Audiences/Fandom**

O'Sullivan, Tim, Brian Dutton and Philip Rayner. "Audiences," in Studying the Media: An Introduction (Third Edition), London: Arnold, 2003. pp. 112-129.

Hall, Stuart. "Encoding/Decoding," in Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords, Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner, eds., New York: Routledge, 2005. pp. 166-176.

Hills, Matt. "Fandom and Fan Studies," in Tele-Visions: An Introduction to Studying Television, Glen Creeber, ed., London: BFI, 2006. pp. 100-106.

### **BREAK (Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December – Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008)**

### **Week Six - Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> January: Postmodernism**

Weinstein, David. "Of Mice and Bart: *The Simpsons* and the Postmodern", in Postmodernism in the Cinema, Cristina Degli-Esposti, ed. New York: Berghahn, 1998. pp. 60-72.

Baudrillard, Jean. "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place," in Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings (Second Edition), Mark Poster, ed. Cambridge: Polity, 2001. pp. 231-234.

Lutzka, Sven. "Simulacra, Simulation and *The Matrix*," in The Matrix in Theory, Myriam Diocaretz and Stefan Herbrechter, eds., Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2006. pp. 113-129

### **Week Seven - Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January: Representations of Gender**

Branston, Gill and Roy Stafford. "Questions of Representation," in The Media Student's Handbook (Fourth Edition) London: Routledge, 2006. pp. 141-143; 147-153.

Hopkins, Susan. "Girl Power and Popstars: From Madonna to the Spice Girls" and "Girl Fights: Female Action Heroes", in Girl Heroes: The New Force in Popular Culture Christchurch: Hazard, 2002. pp. 23-29; 32-39; 130-140.

Smart, Barry. "Cultures of Sport Stardom: David Beckham and Anna Kournikova", in The Sport Star. Modern Sport and the Cultural Economy of Sporting Celebrity London: Sage, 2005. pp. 162-168; 177-184.

### **Week Eight – Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January: Networks and New Media**

Castells, Manuel. "Virtual Communities or Network Society," in The Internet Galaxy, London: Oxford University Press, 2001. pp. 116-136.

McLuhan, Marshall. "The Medium is the Message," in Media Studies: A Reader, Paul Marris and Sue Thornham, eds., New York: New York University Press, 2004. pp. 38-43.

Consalvo, Mia. "From Dollhouse to Metaverse: What Happened when *The Sims* went Online," in J. Patrick Williams and Jonas Heide Smith, eds., Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and CO, 2007. pp. 203-222.

**Week Nine - Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> January: Summary/Applying the Concepts**

Take-Home Exam Handed Out

**Week Ten - Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> February: Hand in Take-Home Exam**