

SOUTH PARK AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL ISSUES: SIS-2010 – Spring 2012

Meeting Times:

Monday and Wednesday: 12:40 p.m. – 2:10 p.m.

Location:

Hill Hall, Room 104

Instructors:

Dr. Josh Baron (jbaron@mcdaniel.edu) and Dr. Sara Raley (sraleym@mcdaniel.edu)

Dr. Raley's Office Hours:

TBD

Dr. Baron's Office Hours:

TBD

Course Website:

www.joshuajbaron.info

Course Description:

Over 12 seasons and more than 180 episodes, the cartoon show South Park has never avoided discussing controversial contemporary social issues. Often controversial itself, South Park uses humor to explore issues such as immigration, gay marriage, terrorism, and hundreds more. This course is an interdisciplinary approach towards extending and deepening the discussions already present in the show. Using historical and contemporary texts, theories, and concepts from sociology and philosophy, this course will address issues such as race, gender, sexuality, consumerism, and many more. Ultimately, students will gain a deeper understanding of how to analyze and critically think through the very real social problems addressed by the television show as well as gain new knowledge of the benefits of applying an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary social issues.

Course Objectives:

- ✧ Analyze contemporary social issues from multiple perspectives using creative mediums (South Park Episodes)
- ✧ Learn and apply philosophical, ethical, and sociological theories.
- ✧ Analyze and critique philosophical and sociological texts and their arguments.
- ✧ Identify and reflect on conflicting ideas and principles within and between philosophy and sociology.
- ✧ Communicate clearly and effectively in both oral and written form.

Course Expectations/Policies:

We expect you to attend class, participate in class discussion and activities, and complete your assignments on time. All readings should be completed prior to class so that we share the same information base during class discussions/activities. You are responsible for all material covered in the course including episodes, lectures, readings, discussions, and learning exercises. You are also responsible for being present when assignments are distributed and for obtaining any information, assignments, or schedule changes that you may have missed. Finally, we expect you to conduct yourself in a manner that is respectful to your classmates, guest speakers, and us at all times.

Classroom Conduct:

We will examine sensitive, political, and controversial issues in this course. As part of the course requirements, you are expected to read, view, reflect upon, and discuss materials addressing these topics in an intellectual manner. This does not mean you are not allowed to have emotional reactions to these materials. There may be ideas that deeply challenge your value system and perhaps even anger you. We encourage you to reflect upon those materials that are most disturbing and to clarify for yourself exactly what is upsetting. As you grapple with the materials and the emotions the readings/discussions may raise, please remember to be respectful (particularly of those whose opinions differ from yours). The classroom will be a space in which opinions and beliefs are often challenged and discussions may become heated. Please see us immediately if you find any of the course material excessively offensive. We should discuss in advance any special situations that you feel would be in conflict with these course goals.

Grading:

Group Project/Presentation.....	250 points or 25%
Homework Assignments (10)....	400 points or 40%
Reflection Papers (15).....	300 points or 30%
Participation.....	50 points or 5%
TOTAL.....	100%

Grading Scale:

A+ 1000 or more points	A 940 to 999 points	A- 900 to 939 points
B+ 870 to 899 points	B 840 to 869 points	B- 800 to 839 points
C+ 770 to 799 points	C 740 to 769 points	C- 700 to 739 points
D+ 670 to 699 points	D 640 to 669 points	D- 600 to 639 points
F 599 and below		

In this class, an A is reserved for truly excellent work. If you earn an A, you did work that was far beyond the course requirements. A grade of B indicates very good work over and above the course requirements. A grade of C means you did average work—you met expectations satisfactorily. A grade of D reflects work that did not meet the course requirements but completed assignments and showed effort in the course. An F indicates you did not complete assignments or failed to show effort in the course.

Required Readings/Texts:

There is no required textbook for the course. Most readings are available online on the course website. All additional readings will be provided in a course packet that will be distributed during the first week of class. A list of reading assignments and due dates are available on the course website.

Class Participation:

Your active participation and attendance are important to the success of the course for both you and your classmates. Note the adjective, —active. Just showing up to class does not constitute active participation, although attendance is an integral part of participation because you can not participate if you are not in class. We will take attendance daily and absences will only be excused if you submit formal written documentation of an extraordinary situation. So, unless you get trapped in an avalanche or taken hostage, plan on coming to every class.

Academic Honesty:

The McDaniel College community believes strongly in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited. Essential to intellectual growth is the development of independent thought and a respect for the thoughts of others. The prohibition against plagiarism and cheating is intended to foster this independence and respect. The penalty for academic dishonesty can vary from a reprimand and receiving a failing grade for a particular assignment, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or expulsion from the College. Please familiarize yourself with McDaniel's policy concerning plagiarism, academic cheating, and the honor code found in the undergraduate student handbook. All classroom work assumes student acceptance of the McDaniel Honor Code posted in every classroom. Additionally, all written work is required to be submitted with the signed honor pledge: —I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this piece of work, nor have I knowingly tolerated any violation of the Honor Code.

Disabilities:

McDaniel College, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities of 1990 (ADA) and the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973/ Section 504, will provide reasonable accommodations for eligible students with disabilities. If you require special assistance, please see me and the Student Academic Support Services Office (SASS) on the first floor of Academic Hall suite 117 or call at extension 2504 within the first week of classes. You are responsible for initiating arrangements for accommodations for tests and other assignments with the SASS office and me.

Group Projects/Presentations:

You will form a small group, choose a South Park episode, and develop a class presentation that applies the methods of analysis and evaluation that you have learned throughout the semester. Detailed instruction will be provided in class as well as on the course webpage. This is a large and challenging assignment. Please contact Dr. Raley or Dr. Baron with any concerns or questions as soon as they arise.

Reflection Papers:

At the beginning of each class with an assigned reading, we will have you complete short, in class reflection papers based on the assigned reading for that day. You will be responsible for completing 15 reflection papers based on the 15 reading assignments. Papers will be primarily graded on the basis of content. **No electronic submissions of homework will be accepted.**

Homework Assignments:

Besides the reading assignments for each class, you must also complete 10 homework assignments. Homework assignments are due at the beginning of class the day the reading is due. All homework assignments should be 1 typed page or less and should be as clear, concise, and complete as possible. Details are provided on the course webpage.

Study Habits:

The time necessary to devote to this class will vary from student to student. However, a general guideline to follow for all undergraduate level courses is two hours of studying outside of class for every one hour in class. Thus, on average you should be devoting six (6) hours a week to preparing for this class.

Holidays:

Students with religious holidays that conflict with the course calendar dates should notify us within the first week of the semester.

Tentative Course Calendar – subject to change as course needs dictate:

Week 1

Monday, January 23 – Facebook and *You Have 0 Friends*: Introduction to Philosophy

Wednesday, January 25 – Social Construction of Reality and *Mr. Garrison's Fancy New Vagina*

Week 2

Monday, January 30 – Simulation and *Guitar Queer-O*

Wednesday, February 1 – Questioning Reality and *Make Love, Not Warcraft*

Week 3

Monday, February 6 – *On Bullshit* and Eric Cartman

Wednesday, February 8 – Introduction to Projects/Presentations

Week 4

Monday, February 13 – The Gay Marriage Debate and *Follow That Egg*

Wednesday, February 15 – Why Get Married?

Week 5

Monday, February 20 – Muslims in America and *Ginger Kids*

Wednesday, February 22 – Privilege and *Pee*

Week 6

Monday, February 27 – Sexism and Meta-South Park

Wednesday, February 29 – Pornography and the *Stupid Spoiled Whore Video Playset*, et. al.

Week 7

Monday, March 5 – *Cartoon Wars* and *6 Days to Air*

Wednesday, March 7 – *Cartoon Wars* and In-Class Presentation Work

Week 8

Monday, March 12 – No Class; Spring Recess

Wednesday, March 14 – No Class; Spring Recess

Week 9

Monday, March 19 – In-Class Presentation Work
Wednesday, March 21 – Karl Marx and Gnomes

Week 10

Monday, March 26 – Business Ethics and *Wall-Mart This Way Comes*
Wednesday, March 28 – Occupy Wall Street and *1%*

Week 11

Monday, April 2 – Immigration and *Goobacks*
Wednesday, April 4 – Poverty and *Starvin' Marvin*

Week 12

Monday, April 9 – Guest Lecture
Wednesday, April 11 – Presentations

Week 13

Monday, April 16 – Presentations
Wednesday, April 18 – Presentations

Week 14

Monday, April 23 – Presentations
Wednesday, April 25 – Presentations

Week 15

Monday, April 30 – Presentations
Wednesday, May 2 – Evaluations

Your Presentation Date: _____

Your Presentation Group Members and Emails:
