THE GLASGOW SCHOOL: OF ART	Course Specification

Course Code:	Session
PCRS108	2017/18

1. Course Title:
Core Research Skills in Popular Culture and Creative Practice

2. Date of Production/Revision:
3 February 2015

3. Level:
SCQF 11

4. Credits:
15

5. Lead School/Board of Studies:
Graduate School

6. Course Contact:
Dr David Sweeney

7. Course Aims:
Strange as it may seem today, in the aftermath of the 'culture wars' of the mid to late twentieth century, the study of popular culture is *still* treated with suspicion and derision not only by 'ordinary' people but even by some academics. Partly this is a problem of perception: to outside observers (the uninitiated) the *practice* of popular culture research e.g. watching films and television programmes, reading comic books, listening to pop music can seem far too much like *fun* rather than rigorous scholarship. And because pop culture is often dismissed as trivial, including by those who regularly participate in it, researchers are frequently accused of 'reading too much' into their area of study, with the result that they find themselves in the unenviable position of having to justify the academic value of their endeavours. The purpose of this course, **'Popular Culture and Creative Practice',** is to assert the legitimacy of pop culture research and, in the process, to equip researchers with the means of defending their studies from those who fail to understand that trivia lies in the eye of the beholder and that the 'lowest' form of popular entertainment can reveal as much, if not more, about the society that generates it as the 'highest' work of art.

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The course shows not only that pop culture *can* be studied in a legitimate scholarly manner, it also show *how* such scholarship should be undertaken, drawing attention to the methodological mistakes researchers often make and the pitfalls they face as a result. The course will explore some of the following topics:

- 'The Dream of Society', Why Study Popular Culture

- Highs and Lows: How Culture Is Stratified and the Case against Popular Culture

- 'Price is what you pay. Value is what you get.': Commodity fetishism, Cultural Capital and Passionate Materialism

- Participatory Culture and Fan Labour

- Working Hard, Or Hardly Working? How (and How Not) To Study Popular Culture

This course aims to:
- Provide students with a variety of core research tools that are equally useful across a range of fields of postgraduate study;
- Facilitate cross-disciplinary thought and practical connections, by bringing together students on different programmes of study;
- Enable students to conduct and manage their own self-contained research projects;
- Interrogate the relationships between forms of research and modes of practice.

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8. Intended Learning Outcomes of Course:

By the end of the course students should be able to:
- Use appropriate research resources and methods effectively;
- Understand the principles underpinning research at postgraduate level;
- Demonstrate understanding of the relationships between research and practice;
- Organise and conduct research projects effectively and efficiently.

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9. Indicative Content:

- Introducing research skills for postgraduate students
- Conceptualising a research question
- Understanding research resources
- Finding and managing information
- Mapping the context
- Developing and managing a project of research
- Practice as research
- Disseminating research outcomes

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10. Description of Summative Assessment:

Attendance at lectures, seminars and group discussions will be mandatory. In addition to this, students will be required to submit an assignment that presents an analysis of an idea or concept, artwork, practitioner or debate, which they consider is at the cutting edge of their field of enquiry. This submission may take one of two forms:

No.	Assessment Method	Description of Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week (assignments) or length (exam)
1	Essay	2500 word written essay (this should include examples of visual work, where appropriate, and a bibliography)	100	End of Stage 1

OR

No.	Assessment Method	Description of Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week (assignments) or length (exam)
1	Practical Submission*	Creative submission accompanied by a 500 word positioning statement	100	End of Stage 1

10.1 Please describe the Summative Assessment arrangements:

For this course, students will be required to produce and submit one assignment. This may take either of the following forms:

- Written submission: an essay of 2500 words, correctly presented and referenced, relating to a topic pertinent to the course. Students intending to write an essay should have the topic approved in advance by the course tutor.

OR

- Practical Submission*: Students may submit a creative piece such as an illustration, sound piece, comic book etc which must be agreed in advance with the course tutor. Creative submissions should be accompanied by a 500 word positioning statement and full list of references.

[*If a student wishes to make use of equipment and technical support from Technical Services, including the use of GSA's media studio, they must first consult with their tutor who will in turn liaise with Technical Services to consider what level of support and technical provision might be available - due to restricted capacity.]

Assessment Criteria
Students on this course will be assessed on their ability to:
- conceptualise and present a research problem;

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- utilize appropriate methods and tools when conducting a research project;
- situate their projects of research within a research context;
- critically reflect on the success and effectiveness of their own projects of practice and research;
- demonstrate a level of depth in the analysis of works, practitioners, ideas and/or debates appropriate to postgraduate level

Please also refer to the course handbook for further specific guidance about the assessment criteria.

11. Formative Assessment:
Formative Assessment takes place in week 5/6.
11.1 Please describe the Formative Assessment arrangements:
Please refer to the handbook for details about the formative assessment arrangements.

12. Collaborative:	
Yes ☐	**No** ☒
12.1 Teaching Institutions:	

13. Requirements of Entry:
None

14. Co-requisites:
None

15. Associated Programmes:
All Postgraduate Taught Programmes
16. When Taught:
Stage 1

17. Timetable:
2 hours, Wednesday mornings between 9 – 1 pm.

18. Available to Visiting Students:	
Yes ☒	**No** ☐

19. Distance Learning:	
Yes ☐	**No** ☒

20. Placement:

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Yes ☐	No ☒

21. Learning and Teaching Methods:

Method	Formal Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours (Including formal contact hours)
Lecture		
Studio		
Seminar/Presentation	20	20
Tutorial		
Workshop		
Laboratory work		
Project work		
Professional Practice		
E-Learning / Distance Learning		
Placement		
Examination		
Essay		
Private Study	Not Applicable	130
Other (please specify below)		
TOTAL	**20**	**150**

22. Description of "Other" Teaching and Learning Methods:

23. Additional Relevant Information:

This course introduces students taking taught postgraduate programmes at the Glasgow School of Art to a range of core research skills, from formulating research questions to methods of utilizing visual and written sources. The ways in which postgraduate study differs from undergraduate – and the significance of research to this distinction – will be explored. Central to the course is the importance of research for practitioners, and the notion of practice as a form of research.

The Core Research Skills courses taught in Stage 1 may include the following:

- **Academic Skills for Masters Research**
- **Archives and Historical Resources**
- **Business Skills and Creative Entrepreneurship**
- **Writing in Art, Design and Architecture**
- **Drawing as Research**
- **The Sociological Imagination**
- **Popular Culture and Creative Practice**
- **Philosophy and Creative Practice**
- **Analysis and Self Analysis**
- **Design Ethnography in Practice: applying the ethnographic perspective**
- **Visual Mapping: Analysis and Presentation through Graphics**

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24. Indicative Bibliography:

Adorno, T. (2001) *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, London: Routledge.

Barthes, R. (1993) *Mythologies*, London: Vintage.

Baudrillard, J. (1988) *Selected Writings*, London: Polity.

Benjamin, W. (1999). 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations*. London: Pimlico.

During, S. (1999) *The Cultural Studies Reader*, London: Routledge.

Dyer, R. (1999) *Stars*, London: BFI.

Farren, M. (1985) *The Black Leather Jacket*, London: Plexus.

Hall, S. (ed, 1980), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-9*, London: Hutchinson.

Huyssen, A. (1989) *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press

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