English 247: American Literature and Popular Culture
Instructor: Michael Truscillo
Office: PAS 1064
Contact: 888-4567 x 2625; mj2trusc@artsmail.uwaterloo.ca

This course is an introduction to American literary and cultural studies through the examination of selected movements, moments, topics, or figures, drawing on both literature and other media. Our primary focus will be the postmodern erasure of the divide between "high" literary culture and "low" popular culture. Against the modernist suspicion of mass culture, postmodernism embraced genre fiction (Hombre), marginalized identities (On the Road), and experimentation with generic expectations (Fear and Loathing). We will also explore the flipside of this phenomenon: "low" cultural forms infused with "high" art seriousness (consider how Apocalypse Now and The Shining utilize the war movie and the horror movie). What is "popular" culture, and how does it participate in the construction of identity? This concern will be central to the course.

Required Texts:
LaHaye, Tim, and Jerry Jenkins. Left Behind. Tyndale House, 1996.
* Course Readings Package

Recommended Texts:

Assignments:

1. Midterm: 20%
   Details to follow. October 20.

2. Essay (7-8 typed pages): 40%
   Details to follow. Due December 9.

3. Final Exam: 40%
   TBA by the university.

Essay Policies: The essay must be delivered to the English Department Drop Box before 4:30pm on Friday December 9, 2005.
Late essays will be docked 2% per day starting the day the assignment is due, including weekends.
Extensions are at my discretion for serious medical and/or family emergencies only. You must provide documentation, to qualify for an extension.

Please note: Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will be dealt with according to the University of Waterloo Disciplinary Code (see Policy 71 in Undergraduate Calendar). All quotations, paraphrased material and ideas which are not your own MUST be properly cited and referenced.
Reading Schedule

Week 1, Sept 15: Introduction: Postmodernism and American Popular Culture; "High Theory / Low Culture"*

Week 2, Sept 22: Hombre

Week 3, Sept 29: Film: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

Week 4, Oct 6: On The Road

Week 5, Oct 13: Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas / "The Daily Show"

Week 6, Oct 20: MIDTERM; Film: Apocalypse Now Redux


Week 8, Nov 3: Left Behind / "Homicide: Life on the Streets"

Week 9, Nov 10: Gentlemen Prefer Blondes

Week 10, Nov 17: Ghost World

Week 11, Nov 24: Film: The Shining

Week 12, Dec 1: The Shining cont'd