

Georgia Tech Lorraine, European Campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology
HTS 2084 - Technology and Society
(Celebrity Culture: Photography and the Production of Modern Identity)
Spring 2023
Course Syllabus

Instructor

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Time and Place

TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Course Attributes

HTS 2084 fulfills the social science and ethics requirements at Georgia Tech.

Course Description

The historian Daniel Boorstin once wrote that a celebrity is a person who is well known for his well-knownness. The rise of mass print media in the late nineteenth century resulted in the expanded visibility of famous people via their mass-produced likenesses. We live today in a technological society marked by expanded leisure time, unprecedented capacities for entertainment and diversion – a “society of spectacle” (Guy Debord) – and the proliferation of digital images via social media platforms on a scale unknown in human history. Digital technologies have enabled the easy reproduction and communication not only of images but of our identities and ourselves. Each of us now has the opportunity to become famous for a moment.

How did we arrive at this point? HTS 2084 (“Celebrity Culture”) traces the origin of a world defined by digital images and celebrities with a look at the technologies of image making and related propaganda before and after the invention of photography. We then examine the impact of mass photography and the rise of the smartphone on the proliferation of selfies (or self-produced images) via new cellular networks. In the second half of the course, we explore the implication of digital reproduction of images for our contemporary technological society – our increasing societal investment in celebrities and the blurred lines that have resulted between image, personal identity, and reality.

Course Objectives

Students will accomplish the following objectives:

- Students will describe relationships among languages, philosophies, cultures, literature, ethics, or the arts.*
- Students will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior.*
- Students will develop a critical perspective on changes in the relationship between technology, culture and society over major periods of human history.
- Students will integrate aspects of their living experience while in Europe with their classroom study and develop self-awareness of their identity as travel consumers.
- Students will demonstrate proficiency in the process of articulating and organizing rhetorical arguments in written, oral, visual, and nonverbal modes, using concrete support and conventional language.*
- Students will be able to judge factual claims and theories on the basis of evidence.*
- Students will develop effective oral and written communication skills.

(* Language is taken directly from the General Education Mission Statement of Georgia Tech's Core Curriculum, available on the Registrar website.)

Grading

Course assessment will be based on the following formula:

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| Class discussion | 20% |
| Discussion posts | 20% |
| Film review | 20% |
| Quizzes and test | 20% |
| Final project | 20% |

Georgia Tech Lorraine is a serious academic program. While not required, attendance is strongly encouraged at all classes. Please let me know in advance if you cannot attend for an official reason. Students are expected to pay attention in class and actively discuss readings. Please do not use electronic devices, including laptops and cell phones, without special permission.

Students will receive a grade for *class discussion* on the following scale: 95% (regular and significant contribution) – 90% (moderate contribution) – 85% (little or no contribution). Discussion grades will be posted twice on Canvas during the semester, with the final discussion grade an average score. Discussion contributions in class should increase our group understanding rather than merely repeat points. You will complete after-class *Discussions posts* on Canvas for the topics discussed as well as films shown in class each day. Students will also complete a *film review* of a documentary on modern celebrities from the list provided by the instructor and share their review with the class. Daily *quizzes* will cover your knowledge of the assigned reading material. A single *test* will cover the second, historical unit of the class. There will be no final exam. Instead, a final *group research project* will cover in depth a critical issue of the student's choice related to the course themes of celebrity culture, image-making, and modern identity. Overall project grading will follow a timetable of deadlines assigned by the instructor and therefore both completion and evaluation components.

Note: We will take a field trip to a local print shop and the Gutenberg museum in Mainz, Germany on either Friday, February 3 or 10.

To receive grades of excellence, students must demonstrate close understanding of course concepts and knowledge of relevant historical material covered in lectures, readings, videos, and class discussion. Final grading will be done on a letter basis and will be rounded up on the half percentage point (i.e. 89.5% = A). Final grades will not be available through Oscar until the Monday following the end of the exam period. Please do not ask to have grades changed.

Honor Policy

Students are expected to abide by the Georgia Tech honor code. All infractions will be handled through the Office of the Dean of Students and treated with the utmost seriousness.

Statement on Inclusion

The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts supports the Georgia Institute of Technology's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in the broader society. (Statement taken from Ivan Allen College Dean's Office.)

Course Materials

There are no required textbooks. All reading material and course communication will occur through Canvas.

Course Schedule

Introduction
History: Before and after photography
Contemporary: Celebrities and selfies
Film reviews and final projects
Conclusion