This document details two related, individual assessments for our Leisure, Sport, and Popular Culture class. Both assessments are drawn from the same research project, which asks you to conduct a Cultural Studies analysis of a form of popular culture. The success of the project will be largely determined by the extent to which you engage with Cultural Studies theories, concepts, approaches, debates, and research articles, in designing, conducting, presenting, and writing up your project.

More specifically, the first assessment is an individual presentation which you will each give to your respective tutorial groups on either March 25th or April 1st (to be assigned in week 8). The second assessment is an individual essay that follows from your conference presentation. The aim of both assessments is to allow you to express your own engagement with and interest in the class, hone and demonstrate your understanding of Cultural Studies, and develop your research, communication (written and oral), and analytical skills, through a sustained analysis of a popular cultural form, object, or practice.

For the conference presentation you will present a study of a popular cultural form, object, or practice of your choosing. In the presentation, inform the class as to why you have chosen to undertake the study (what might be at stake in doing so?), what you have read (scholarly sources), what analytical tools covered in the class hitherto (or in related material elsewhere) have been of use to you (theory, concepts, case studies), and what you have ‘found’ so far. You will present the preliminary findings of your research, leaving room to develop your work for your written assignment. The individual research project is an essay that fulfills the work outlined in your presentation, that is, an essay that is a Cultural Studies analysis of a popular cultural form, object, or practice.

The assignments are assessed separately, but we hope and intend for the feedback from your conference presentations to inform your individual research project. Seeing as these assignments are intentionally twinned to allow for the development of your ideas, and given that the final project is in lieu of a final exam, there is scope for some excellent, creative essays.

IMPORTANT NOTE: As each of you are to study (present on and write about) different forms of popular culture, you are advised to contact your tutorial instructor as soon as you settle on a proposed topic in order to secure your first choice.
TIMELINE

**Week 6** (February 11): Assignment brief handed out

**Week 8** (February 25): Conference presentation dates assigned

**Week 10 & 11** (March 11): Approval of topic deadlines

**Week 12 & 13** (March 25th and April 1st): Conference Presentations

**Week 15** (April 17): Submit essays

Below we provide some more detailed information about both the conference presentation and the essay. Make sure that you read over this information carefully before you choose your research topic to ensure that it is relevant and also importantly, that it is feasible.

1) **Conference Presentation (20%)**

   - Approximately 12 minute individual presentations + question time
   - March 25th and April 1st

Below are some notes on what your presentation should include. You may vary the structure, as your own essay might befit a particular plotline, but these components should be included in some form so as we can understand and evaluate your presentation in its own right, as well as give you the feedback needed to inform your essays (details of which are outlined in the next section).

1) Introduce the topic and say why you thought it was both **interesting and significant**.
   What kinds of research questions are you interested in pursuing?

2) Describe some of the key theory, concepts, and/or research articles that have guided your research

3) Specify exactly what you are studying (what popular cultural form, object, or practice) and how you are studying it (tools or techniques derived from Cultural Studies and/or the course material). For example, Kusz (2003) in his article conducted a ‘conjunctural analysis’ of BMX and the white male backlash; Cooky et al (2013) did a ‘content analysis’ of sex/gender representation in sport media; and we have worked through various methods such as Roland Barthes’ mythologies and Stuart Hall’s ‘encoding-decoding’ model. These approaches are important, so consult with your tutorial instructor once you decide on the focus of your study.

4) Talk about your key findings, the main themes that emerged in your research.

5) Discuss how your findings compare to previous research, and whether what you found was somewhat original or how it confirmed what we already know. Did they surprise you?
6) Provide some suggestions for other work in the area, for example, you might think about what you might do to extend your analysis in future research, in order to better address the issue and/or contribute to the literature.

*Because you have limited time to present (as do most presenters at academic conferences), it is important to be concise and well-organized with your points.
*We encourage you to give a lively presentation, with as little reading from a script as possible and with visual aids when useful. Try and enjoy the experience of talking about your original work – you will likely be the expert in the room on your focal subject!
*Class members will be asked to comment on each presentation on a piece of paper that will be handed in after each class. You will be asked to focus on: what you found interesting and compelling about the presentation (this could include the style of the presentation, what was significant and timely about the topic matter, the way that previous research and theory were linked with the findings), some suggestions for the presenter (e.g., some alternative ways that the data could be interpreted, other suggestions for future research)
*The overriding goal here is to provide a friendly and supportive environment where you can practice the art of presenting research findings in a ‘conference presentation’ format.

2) Individual Research Project (30%)
- 16 - 20 pages (double spaced), including references
- Topic to be approved by tutorial instructor by March 11th
- To be submitted as hard copy at the Auditorium Annex by 4pm on April 17th

This section offers guidelines for the structure and content of your essay. We encourage you to consult these guidelines, but also to be creative and adhere to the specific topic of your own paper when writing. Therefore this section first outlines a basic, ‘ideal-type’ structure for your essay, followed by a series of options for addressing your topic. Remember, the options to a large extend define what you want to study, and it is important to be feasible in terms of the time available to you. Put another way, do not be too ambitious in your choice of ‘data’ for this study! Making this a Cultural Studies analysis requires drawing from the relevant theories, concepts, and previous research and literature that are not ‘just background,’ but actually inform your own critical analytical work.

1) The Title: Think of a catchy title. Some good examples include: ‘Sex, lies and audiotape: The political and cultural economies of celebrity fitness videos’, ‘Just do it: Corporate slogans and the political economy of enlightened racism’, ‘Come Together: Sport, Nationalism and the media image’, ‘The Prime Minister of Saturday Night: Don Cherry, the CBC, and the cultural production of intolerance’; ‘Pretty in Ink: Females and the tattooing subculture’.
2) **Introduction:** Draw the reader into your essay with a compelling introduction to your topic. Atkinson (2009) did a good job of this in his article on parkour, read in week 3, by describing the activity and his own epiphany about the ‘essence’ of parkour in the first paragraph. This section should communicate both what the paper is about (e.g. cosmetic surgery), and what makes it a Cultural Studies analysis (e.g. it explores how and why people with the requisite capital physically inscribe their bodies in accordance with particular aesthetics). This section can also offer a rationale for why you are studying a particular popular cultural phenomena, and a shorthand map of what is to come in your paper.

3) **Review of literature:** This project demands, and so should exhibit, a great deal of reading and careful analysis. This is assessed not only or simply on which or how many sources you reference, but on the level of critical engagement with appropriate literature. You do not need to include a formal review of literature – you will notice that many Cultural Studies articles that we have consulted in our class readings do not. However, you do need to evidence the breadth and depth of your readings, so it is up to you whether this is a separate discussion (a formal review of literature section) or integrated into your analysis. You might also want to include illustrations or demonstrations of your chosen topic (screen shots of video game footage or movies; magazine covers; website pages; and so forth).

4) **Details about what you are studying, and how (method):** The emphasis is not on the quantity of material you evaluate (three advertisements versus ten, for example), but the quality of your analytical work and communication of that work. This cannot be stressed enough: Less is often more in this instance as it will enable you to analyze the material in-depth.

5) **Discussion/analysis:** This is where you provide a detailed description of your findings. It is up to you how you would like to present this section, although you may want to focus your findings by talking about a few specific themes that emerged from your research. You will want refer back to other studies on the topic (from your literature review) to analyze what you have found. This section will most likely be quite substantial.

6) **Conclusion:** A conclusion often offers a reiteration of your key findings or contentions, caveats regarding the scope of an essay, or how the analysis might differ in different/anticipated historical, social, or political conditions.

7) **Appendix:** You may or may not have an appendix attached to your essay. This could be an example of the media text you’ve analyzed, or video stills, photos etc. Be sure to refer to the appendix in the essay if you do decide to attach one.
IMPORTANT NOTE: Below we outline some possible approaches to these assignments, based on the content of the class. You do not have to subscribe to one of these approaches, but in any case you are asked to propose your projects to us on or before March 11.

Option #1: A cultural studies analysis of a series of media texts (newspaper articles, advertisements found online, on TV or in magazines, etc.).

This option invites you to look at, for example, how female athletes are represented in particular forms of media, or how masculinity is (re)produced in beer commercials. Cultural Studies scholars are interested in the historical, social, economic, and/or political conditions that inform or ‘frame’ particular modes of representation (such as advertisements), and would use analytical tools and techniques (such as Roland Barthes’ notion of ‘mythologies’ or Stuart Hall’s ‘encoding-decoding’ model) to explain how these advertisements are imbued with particular meanings. For example, how did Fox News frame the issue of concussion in the NFL/NHL in recent years, and how might we explain their interests in doing so? Answering this question might require talking about the role of advertising in sustaining and producing not just demand for consumption but appealing to particular values, identities, norms, and so forth.

Option #2: An analysis of a particular popular cultural object and/or practice.

This option invites you to take an object or artefact, sporting or otherwise, and analyze its broader historical, economic, social, political, and/or ecological significance. For example, in our first lecture and reading, O’Brien and Szeman (2014) take coffee (coffee here being the object, drinking it the practice) and demonstrate how it is part of a chain of production, consumption, and representation. You might do the same, or justify a focus on a particular aspect of this chain (such as consumption) or of its wider significance (such as its history in Canada/Vancouver). For example, objects such as Under Armour or Lululemon apparel, Nike’s N7 or ‘black history month’ sneakers, Barbie/Ken dolls or practices such as yoga or obstacle/adventure racing might be subject to analysis, but the possibilities are many. Again what will determine the quality of the paper is the engagement with Cultural Studies to inform your analysis.

Option #3: An analysis of a movie or documentary

This option is self-explanatory insofar as the choice of movie, documentary, or otherwise is up to you, but key themes will determine how you contextualize the movie. An example of a study would be to do an analysis of the documentary ‘Pumping Iron’ about bodybuilders. If you were to study this movie (with particular attention to, for example, images of ‘the body’), you would want to: 1) consider how other studies have looked at, for example, media portrayals of the body and bodybuilding; 2) do your own
analysis of media portrayals of bodybuilding in ‘Pumping Iron’, considering some of the	hemes that emerged in your examination of the literature (consider looking at how
aspects of the movie are similar to some of the issues written about in the literature;
consider also critiquing the movie if there are portrayals or images or scenes that you
found problematic); 3) compare your findings with those found in the literature; 4)
recommend other studies that could be done on the topic and conclude your study.
Consider, for an example we have all read, the techniques that Kusz (2003) used in his
‘conjunctural analysis’ of texts concerning BMX and whiteness.

Note: If there is another option you would like to pursue that does not clearly fit with any
of these, then please speak with one of us about the possibility. We will encourage
creativity and pursuing personal interests, but also be sure to steer your work in feasible
directions.

DOING YOUR RESEARCH: You will be required to make full use of the library
(including online resources) in order to find articles relevant to your topic. Information
from books and from academic journals is preferred although relevant articles from news
magazines and newspapers are also acceptable. Be wary of quotes drawn from Internet
websites that are not recognized resources (e.g., recognized resources would include on-
line journals or newspapers). Google Scholar is an excellent resource for search
academic journal articles, so be sure to utilize it.

REFERENCES: Cite and reference all articles that you refer to in your study using APA
style (the style used in the Sociology of Sport Journal). You can find APA style
formatting guides on the UBC library website

NOTE ON PLAGIARISM: Beware of plagiarism. The Faculty of Arts guidelines on
the topic indicate that “most simply, plagiarism is intellectual theft. Any use of another
author’s research, ideas, or language without proper attribution may be considered
plagiarism…Depending on the severity of the offence, students found guilty of
plagiarism may lose credit for the assignment in question, be awarded a mark of zero in
the course, or face suspension from the university.”