UCLA Communication Studies 157 - Celebrity, Fame, and Social Media

— TENTATIVE SYLLABUS —

Summer Session A
Schedule: Monday & Wednesday, 1:00PM-3:05PM
Classroom: Via Zoom Meeting
Instructor: Steve Peterson: (contact information below)
TA/Grader: Tor Negrete
Course Website: http://www.com157.org
Office Hours: Monday 3:05- 4:25pm; and by appointment; 2329 Rolfe Hall

Course Description

Students will investigate the role of fame and celebrity in the age of social media through the study of theoretical perspectives, empirical research, popular journalism, and social science measurement. The course will analyze how following the personal lives of media created celebrities impacts self-esteem, connectedness, and personal relationships from both cultural studies and social science perspectives, and how people and corporations cultivate and/or leverage celebrity for financial gain. Topic areas include celebrity gossip and privacy, news sharing, public relations, and the impact of social media (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook,) on development of celebrity, fan support, image construction, and damage control.

Students will be required to analyze how fame and celebrity play roles in their personal lives and in popular culture, and to conduct academic research and develop convincing academic arguments that synthesize popular, theoretical, and empirical sources. Each student will also be required to collect focus group, ethnographic, social network, or content analysis data, and use these data to support novel assertions about celebrity in social media contexts. This course promises to ground popular culture, public relations, and media promotion elements with academic foundations in social networking, mass communication, media and cultural studies, privacy, and computer mediated communication.

Grading

Class participation, group work, and weekly assignments – 12%

Short Assignment (to be described in class).

Research and Data Collection Exercise – 18%

Three Quizzes covering readings and class discussions – 15%, 15%, 20% respectively.

Final Group Project – 20% The final group project will provide a means for students to synthesize the previous weeks of readings, lecture, and discussion, and investigate social, psychological, and cultural impact of celebrity as it relates to its role in western society. Groups will have a choice of topic area, theoretical foundations, and what method to use in their analysis (focus group, ethnography, social network analysis, content analysis, etc.). The nature of the project is largely dependent on the theory, constructs, and methods used in the investigation. The project and paper will then be presented to the entire class at the end of the session.

Class Schedule

Week #1

- Introduction & course goals
- History and culture of fame and celebrity
- Celebrity as class

« Research and Data Collection Exercise Assigned

« *Week #2*

- Why gossip? Why celebrity? – Social, psychological, and cultural foundations
- The identification of audiences with media characters, and development of relationships

« Quiz #1 «

Week #3

- Media news sharing
- Celebrity attachment as related to attachment with friends
- Humanistic and social scientific methods in the study of fame and celebrity

Week #4

- Celebrity and Social and Political Change
- Social media, networking, news sharing behaviors and influence
- Star power and the business of celebrity

« Research and Data Collection Exercise « « Quiz #2 «

Week #5

- Public relations, press releases, and spin
- The development of a celebrity icon
- Damage control: the role of social media in branding and image

Week #6

- Complete Class presentations
- Future directions in celebrity

« **Group Project Presentation in class**

« **Group Project Paper Due**

« **Quiz #3**

Readings:

All reading materials will be available online in PDF form and will be posted to a password protected course website. Readings will be available at least two weeks prior to when they are due and should be read in depth prior to class time. The reading list will be mostly completed by the first day of class, but may need to be amended as the course progresses.

Readings will be selected from, but not be limited to, the below list of references:

Selections from texts:

Abidin, C. (2018). *Internet celebrity: Understanding fame online*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Boorstin, D.J. (1962). *The image: or what happened to the American dream: the celebrity*. New York: Antheneum.

Braudy, L. (1986). *The frenzy of renown : fame & its history*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Burns, K.S. (2009) *Celeb 2.0: how social media foster our fascination with popular culture.* Santa Barbara: Praeger.

Currid-Halkett, E. (2010). *Starstruck: the business of celebrity*. New York: Faber and Faber.

Dunbar, R. (1996). *Grooming, gossip, and the evolution of language.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *Presentation of self in everyday life,* New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Holmes, S. & Redmond S. (2006). *Framing celebrity: new directions in celebrity culture.* London: Routledge.

Weller, K., Bruns, A., Burgess, J. E., Mahrt, M., & Puschmann, C. (2014). *Twitter and society: an introduction*. Peter Lang.

Marshall, P. D., & Redmond, S. (2015). *A companion to celebrity*. John Wiley & Sons.

Marwick, A. E. (2013). *Status update: Celebrity, publicity, and branding in the social media age*. Yale University Press.

Rojek, C. (2015). *Presumed intimacy: Parasocial interaction in media, society and celebrity culture*. John Wiley & Sons.

Selections from periodicals:

Baker, S. (2002). The theoretical ground for public relations practice and ethics: a Koehnian analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics, 35*, 191-205.

Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: a theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass Communication & Society, 4*, 245-264

Corona, V. P. (2011). Memory, monsters, and Lady Gaga. *Journal of Popular Culture, 44*, 1-19.

Ellcessor, E. (2018). One tweet to make so much noise: Connected celebrity activism in the case of Marlee Matlin. *New Media & Society*, *20*(1), 255-271.

Giles, D. C. (2002). Parasocial interaction: A review of the literature and a model for future research. *Media Psychology*, *4*(3), 279-305.

Giles, D. C., & Maltby, J. (2004). The role of media figures in adolescent development: Relations between autonomy, attachment, and interest in celebrities. *Personality and Individual Differences, 36*, 813-822.

Glynn, C. J., Hugh, M. E., & Hoffman, L. E. (2012). All the news that's fit to post: A profile of news use on social networking sites. *Computers in Human Behavior, 28*(1), 113-119.

Grosser, T. Lopez-Kidwell, V. & Labianca, G. (2010). A social network analysis of positive and negative gossip in organizational life. *Group & Organization Management*, *35*(2),177-212

Henderson, A. (1992). Media and the rise of celebrity culture. *OAH Magazine of History, 6*, 49-54.
Hoffner, C., & Buchanan, M. (2005). Young adults' wishful identification with television characters: the role of perceived similarity and character attributes. *Media Psychology, 7,* 325-352.

Hutton, J. G. (1999). The definition, dimensions, and domain of public relations. *Public Relations Review, 25*, 199-214.

Jackson, D. J. (2008). Selling politics: The impact of celebrities' political beliefs on young Americans. *Journal of political marketing*, *6*(4), 67-83.

Kurzman, C. Anderson, C., Key, C., Lee, Y. O., Moloney, M., Silver, A. & Van Ryn, M. W. (2007). Celebrity status. *Sociological Theory*, *25*(4), 347-367.

Loader, B. D., Vromen, A., & Xenos, M. A. (2016). Performing for the young networked citizen? Celebrity politics, social networking and the political engagement of young people. *Media, culture & society*, *38*(3), 400-419.

Marwick, A & boyd, d.. (2011). To see and be seen: celebrity practice on Twitter. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, *17*(2), 139-158.

Marwick, A. E. (2015). Instafame: Luxury selfies in the attention economy. *Public Culture*, *27*(1 75), 137-160.

Page, R. (2012). The linguistics of self-branding and micro-celebrity in Twitter: The role of hashtags. *Discourse & Communication*, *6*(2), 181-201.

Pempek,T. A., Yermolayeva, Y. A., & Calvert, S. A. (2009). College students' social networking experiences on Facebook. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 30*(3), 227–238

Stever, G. S., & Lawson, K. (2013). Twitter as a way for celebrities to communicate with fans: Implications for the study of parasocial interaction. *North American Journal of Psychology*, *15*(2), 339.

Young, J. R. (2008). How to combat a campus-gossip web site (and why you shouldn't). *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *54*(29), p.A16.

Instructor Contact Information:

Steven Peterson, Ph.D.
UCLA Department of Communication
2329 Rolfe Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90095