AnthroPop

Symbolic Anthropology and the Artistry of Popular Culture
ANTH 2400

This course takes an anthropological approach to examining how fictions and fandoms both reflect and affect the societies in which their artistic works are curated and consumed. We will engage with "fan-art" to explore how the lore of popular fantasy serves as a language of imagination for understanding ourselves as symbolic beings. We will focus on global franchises and contemporary trends inclusive of fantasy literature, film, gaming, and genres as platforms through which "fan-artists" use the grammar of "fiction" to curate and negotiate cultural "realities". Students will cultivate a novel appreciation for how "everyday" "fan-art" goes beyond "hobby", to function as a powerful discursive platform.

Instructor	Teaching Assistant (TA)
Professor Nelson	**T.A. Chanel**
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OH: Mondays 11am-Noon	**OH: Wednesdays 1-3pm**

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- Think critically about the discursive power of everyday platforms of expression.
- Acknowledge multiple perspectives across contemporary issues.
- Practice collaborative skills in analysis, presentation, and development of "fan-art".
- Communicate how artistic expression can serve as an avenue for how symbols both visualize and re-envision cultural realities.

Required Materials

All course readings/materials will be accessible via Canvas.

Grade Breakdown

Assessments:

Attendance	10%
CORE Assessments	5%
Discovery	15%
Peer Led Discussion	15%
Unit Papers	30%
Final: Exhibition FanWork	25%

Grading Scale (%):

A 90-100
B 80-89
C 70-79
D 60-69
F <60

Course Organization

Introduction to AnthroPop (Weeks 1-2)

Students will be introduced to key theorists contributing to the core literature of symbolic anthropology. Through a contemporary adaptation of their theories, we will engage in a discussion of how everyday symbols function as discursive elements for understanding how we make meaning in the world and with each other. Broadly, we will also situate the topic of "pop-culture" within the discipline of anthropology.

Unit 1: The Discursive Element of Fan-Fic and Fan-Art (Weeks 3-5)

In this unit, students will understand how "Fan-Fic" and "Fan-Art" exist, and persist, as more than just a pasttime. We will focus on the active role of the "fan" or "stan" as they generate dialogues with franchises and fandoms alike through "cultural literacies" (e.g. artistic renderings) of contemporary societal perceptions. We will understand how "fan-fictions" are illustrated editorials reflecting a host of socio-cultural topics.

## Unit 2: Changing the Discourse: Artistic Reinvention (Weeks 6-8)

Unit 2 will address how "fan-art" can not only engage with, but go beyond, the "fiction", in re-envisioning new "realities". Situated around Roy Wagner's theories in the classic "Invention of Culture" (1975), we will discuss how "fan-artists" are employing the grammar of the "fiction" franchise to illustrate and imagine new realities beyond the original work, impacting not only franchise canon but also broader issues.

Unit 3: Challenging the Discourse: Impact & Praxis (Weeks 10-14)

Our final unit will situate the impact that "fan-art" can have as a discursive element. Focused on the work of Harry Jenkins' (2014) regarding "Fan Activism and Participatory Politics" we will continue to look at select case studies of "fan-art" to understand how these amateur illustrations can be used to engage with socio-cultural topics, not only in the real world, but also within the original "fictional" landscape in measures that seek out change.

Exhibition FanWork (Weeks 15-16)
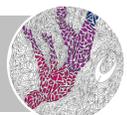
The final two weeks of the semester will be dedicated studio time for students to polish and finalize their Final Exhibition FanWork pieces. This period will culminate in a public exhibition of selected fanworks.

Weekly Breakdown

Mondays	**Big Talk:** Instructor led, class-wide discussion referencing literature and unit themes/topics.
Wednesdays	**Discovery:** Students will work in randomized groups to find "fan-work" applications of unit topics.
Fridays	**Peer Led Discussion (PLD):** Students will facilitate a class discussion/presentation on unit topics in pre-assigned groups.

Description of Assessments

CORE Assessment
5%

Students will provide short essay answers to signature assessment questions designed to measure students' mastery of CORE objectives: Communication and Social Responsibility. Students will also provide feedback on their collaborative peer led discussion/presentation to measure students' mastery of CORE objectives: Critical Thinking and Teamwork.

Attendance
10%

Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. If possible, it is advised that students communicate with the professor prior to being absent in order to mitigate the impact the absence may have on the student's attainment of course learning goals. Attendance will be calculated according to the table on the right. ALL absences will initially count as <u>unexcused</u> unless documentation of a university approved absence is provided in writing to the instructor within 48 hours of the missed class.

Points	Absences
100	0
90	1
80	2-3
70	4-6
60	7-9

<u>NOTE</u>: 10+ unexcused absences will automatically result in an "F" for your FINAL grade in the COURSE (beyond the attendance grade).

Peer Led Discussion
15%

Students will work in collaborative groups to present and lead a scheduled class discussion during one of the three key conceptual units. Groups scheduled to lead the discussion are expected to develop a thesis, present relevant case studies, and reference the literature in engaging their peers in a conversation that serves to propel our class conversations further.

Discovery
15%

Students will work in randomized groups to seek out "fan-art" works and engage in an anthropological discussion with the instructor or TA that explores how those works figure into conversations related to each unit's themes and topics. Students are expected to reference course literature in their analysis. The lowest discovery grade will be dropped.

Unit Papers
30%

Students will be expected to engage with a question prompt at the end of each unit. Papers must reference "fan-art" and "fan-fiction" presented in class and synthesize class discussions with key literature from the course. Unit papers are expected to be between 500-700 words and must include properly cited references from the course. Guidance and grading criteria will be provided in our Canvas course.

Final: Exhibition FanWork
25%

Students will be presented with the challenge of creating an original "fan-art" piece that engages with the discursive element of "fan-art"/"fan-fiction" within a pre-approved franchise/genre of their choosing. This project should engage with the transformative/discursive power of "fan-art". Students will also be expected to present their work in public exhibition if selected. This final assessment is comprised of the following submitted work: 1) proposal; 2) analysis; 3) FanArtist statement; and 4) an original "Fanwork" created for this course.

Assessments Schedule

*Schedule is subject to change and every effort will be made to announce those updates on Canvas within 48 hours.

Assessment Type	Assignment	Due Date
Discovery *lowest grade is dropped	Unit 1	(1/28) (2/4) (2/11)
	Unit 2	(2/18) (2/25) (3/4)
	Unit 3	(3/25) (4/1) (4/8) (4/15)
Peer Led Discussions *students are responsible for only 1 discussion date	Unit 1	(2.6) (2.13)
	Unit 2	(2.20) (2.27) (3/6)
	Unit 3	(3.27) (4.3) (4.10) (4.17)
Unit Papers	Unit 1	2.16.26
	Unit 2	3.16.26
	Unit 3	4.20.26
Exhibition	Proposal	4.13.26
	Analysis	4.24.26
	FanArtist Statement	4.27.26
	FanWork	4.27.26
CORE Signature Assessments	Critical Thinking and Teamwork	Discovery Day prior to presentation
	Comm. & Social Responsibility	4.24.26

Assignment Policy

All work submitted for credit must be original work created by the student uniquely for this course during the Spring 2026 semester. (Any work generating a similarity score above a 25% will be reviewed for possible academic integrity violations). NOTE: If you are re-taking this course, you must receive written approval from the instructor prior to re-submitting any assessment. If you re-submit work, or sections of work, from a previous semester and/or from another course, then this is categorized as plagiarism-even if it is your own writing. Work submitted via any other medium (i.e. email) will not be accepted. It is the student's responsibility to confirm that work has been submitted successfully by the deadline and in a readable and acceptable format.

All work must be submitted in person during class time unless otherwise indicated in Canvas. If a student is absent from class with an unexcused absence, then they will receive a zero for any assignments due that day. Students that are absent from class with an approved and documented excuse will be responsible for submitting their assignment at the next available scheduled class meeting.

Late Policy

Late work will not be accepted without proper documentation of an excused period of absence or with a pre-approved extension (see extension policy). Proper documentation of a university approved absence must be emailed to the instructor within 48 hours of the missed assignment. In cases where proper documentation is approved, the instructor will communicate make-up credit options to the student.

Extension Policy

Extension requests will be considered for **Unit Papers** under the following conditions:
- The student communicates, in writing, a request for an extension at least 48 hours prior to the original deadline.
- The student does not make it a regular habit of requesting extensions. Two extension requests per semester are considered reasonable.

Approved requests will be granted a 24 hour extension. If the student requires additional time then they must communicate that in writing to the instructor prior to the expiration of the extended deadline. Deadlines may be extended for a maximum of 48 hours. Exceptions may include situations that have the support of the Dean of Students, in which case it will be up to the discretion of the instructor to increase the extension period beyond 48 hours.

Life Happens...

While it is expected that students in this course read the syllabus, life would rather wait for the movie. If "life happens", reach out to me so that I can understand the context behind what else is finding its way into our classroom. The sooner you communicate with me, the more options that I can offer you and the sooner I can get you connected with university resources that can help.

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

The Department of Anthropology expects its students to abide by the high ethical standards of practicing professionals within the field of anthropology. The Department does not tolerate cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, or sabotage. This includes the use of unauthorized professional writing/editing services and generative AI for assignments. Students are expected to follow the American Anthropological Association's code of ethics: "In their capacity as researchers, anthropologists are subject to the ethical principles guiding all scientific and scholarly conduct. They must not plagiarize, nor fabricate or falsify evidence, or knowingly misrepresent information or its source" (http://ethics.americananthro.org/category/statement/).

Students are encouraged to use the UNT Writing Center. For additional resources to help with paper writing, including how to avoid plagiarism and how to use citations, see the Department of Anthropology Writing Guide. For information on the University's policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and dishonesty, see the UNT Student Academic Integrity policy.

In this course assessments, including art, held credible by the instructor to have relied on AI use (whether knowingly or not), in any form and degree, are considered practices in academic dishonesty. A suspicion of academic dishonesty and/or the aforementioned behaviors deemed to violate academic integrity standards, may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Any student suspected of academic dishonesty in this course will receive at the very least a 0 on the assignment or up to an F in the course. A report of academic integrity violation shall be filed against the student with UNT and the student will have an opportunity to appeal the decision according to UNT's appeal process.

ADA Policy

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website (https://disability.unt.edu/).

Emergency Notification and Procedure

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to CANVAS for contingency plans for covering course materials.