

College Teaching Goes Pop: Enhancing the Classroom with Mass Media

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Agenda

1. Overview of topic & importance
2. Overview of survey findings
 1. Who is using pop culture in the classroom?
 2. What types of media are being used?
 3. What are the rationales for use?
 4. What are faculty perceived benefits for use?
3. Discussion on how pop culture can be a useful teaching tool
4. Case studies of pop culture use in classrooms
5. How can you use pop culture?!



Overview – History

- On campus: 1950's – left-leaning cultural studies faculty; means of social critique
- 1970's – English departments; popular novels
- Today:
 - Institutions: University of California at Berkeley, Frostburg State University, Brown University, Lebanon Valley College
 - Departments: gender studies, sociology, business, fine arts, urban studies, education, English

Overview – Critiques

- Loss of focus on the classics
 - Draw enrollments away from 'weightier' courses
- Entertainment has limited role in education
 - Rots the mind (Pryor, 2008)
 - Frivolous topics (Greenfield, 2007)
- Conservative: violent or sexual images have no place in education
- Liberal: cultural dominance/propagation (Trisdell, 2007)



Overview – Definitions

- Pop culture vs. mass media
 - Pop culture is inextricable from mass media (Strinati, 2004)
 - Medium is the message (McLuhan, 1964)
- Defined by theory used to study it
- Broader definitions:
 - "The very basis of our cultural environment" (Ott & Mack, 2014, p. 13)
 - Media for the common people, developed to generate a profit for their creators, available on a broad scale (Bertonneau, 2010; Oliver, 2011; Collins, 2012)
 - Develop along with technology (Jubas & Knutson, 2012)

Overview - Literature

- Practitioner-focused research
 - Instructors saw a need, introduced pop culture, reported on outcomes
 - Qualitative, but not case studies
- Quantitative studies



Purpose of this Study

- Widespread practice
- Lack of broad-based quantitative research
- Who is using pop culture? Why? What outcomes are expected?
- Positive outcomes reported, but limited generalizability
- Also there's [this](#)

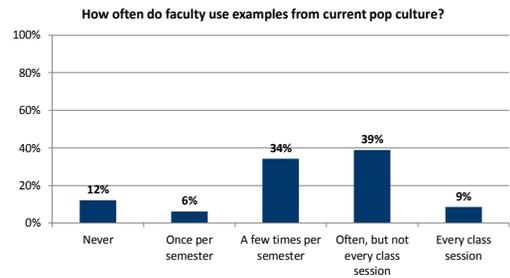
Our Definition

Current popular (pop) culture is defined here as mass entertainment in the form of text, visual images, music, and film/video experiences widely available for consumption and created within the past 10 years.

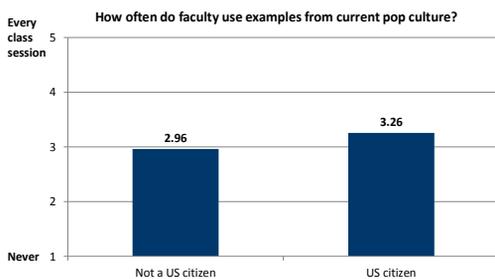
FSSE

- Faculty Survey of Student Engagement
 - Faculty perceptions of an involvement in undergraduate student engagement at four-year colleges and universities
- 2015 experimental item set
 - 1,836 faculty
 - 20 institutions
- Descriptive analyses

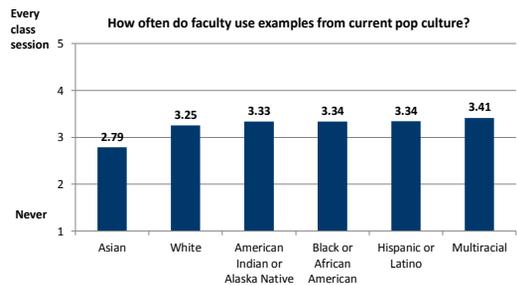
Who Uses Pop Culture?

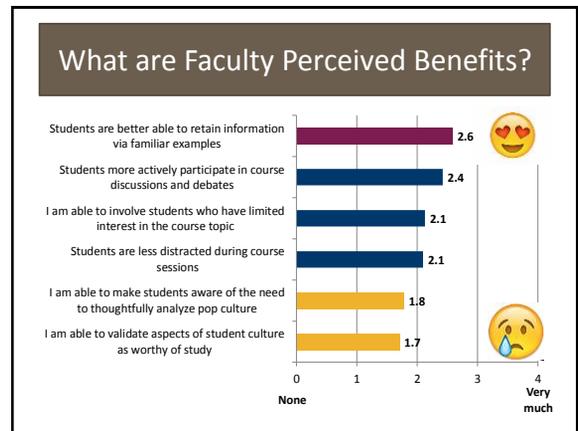
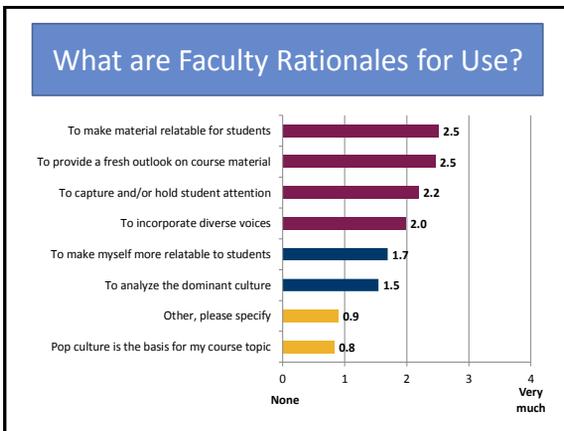
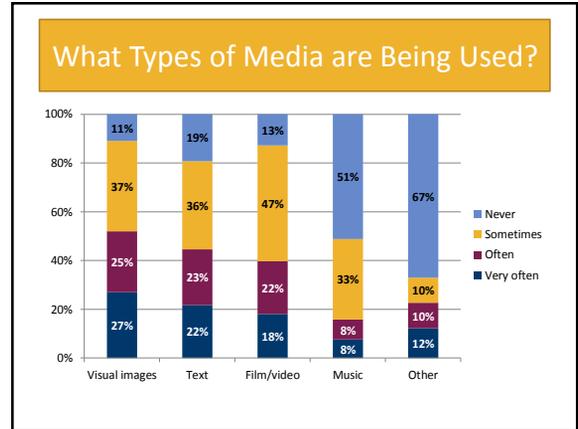
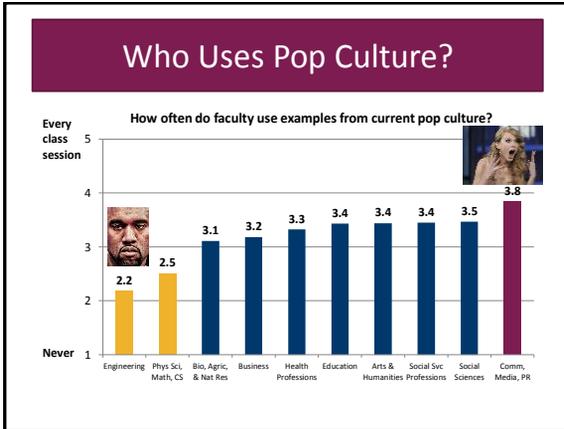


Who Uses Pop Culture?



Who Uses Pop Culture?





Pop Culture as a Teaching Tool

- First – a test of your knowledge!
- Text **BRIDGETYUHAS919** to **22333**

- ### Pop Culture as a Teaching Tool
- Pedagogical reasons to use pop culture
 - Critical pedagogy
 - Incorporation of diverse voices; support of non-majority culture
 - Media literacy for informed democracy
 - Transformative pedagogy
 - Students critique media and create their own messages
 - Constructivism
 - Students bring examples and analyze them with instructor, rather than passively absorbing

Pop Culture as a Teaching Tool

- Teaching techniques with pop culture
 - Those noted in the data: keeping student attention, make material relatable, incorporating diverse voices, etc.
 - Breaking up lectures
 - Common platform for starting discussions
 - New perspective on course material

Pop Culture as a Teaching Tool

- Teaching techniques with pop culture
 - Chickering & Gamson's (1987) *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*
 - Interaction between faculty and students, developing cooperation among students, and good active learning techniques
 - Can be accomplished through using pop culture examples

Classroom Examples

- Practitioner-focused literature
 - Instructors saw a need in a course, thought pop culture might address the need, and tried it out
 - Discussion/understanding/attention always lags at a certain point in the course material or;
 - Course attracts a fair number of non-majors; required gen-ed course that students are just trying to get through
 - Instructors incorporated pop culture, observed the outcomes, and reported on this process

Classroom Examples

- **Math:** Remedial calculus course at West Point used *Survivor* to create team competition Burks (2010)
- **Intro to Biology:** *Star Trek* treble episode to illustrate reproduction cycles Pryor (2008)
- **Intro to PoliSci:** *The Daily Show* to add humor, interest; combat distractions Beavers (2011)
- **Third Wave Feminism:** Music, film, print ads, visual images used because activism through media was central to the movement Bardsley (2006)
- **History:** Films used to help develop students' abilities to critique historical accuracy in media Sprau & Keig (2001)
- **Pre-med/Nursing:** Episodes of *Grey's Anatomy* shown; discussions about what real workplace interactions might be like Jubas & Knutson (2012)

Classroom Examples

Pop Culture In Action!

- [Watch clip](#)
- Talk with a partner or small group
 - What pedagogical techniques are being used by the professor here? What is effective about her approach? What would you critique about her approach?
 - After 5min, share in broader discussion with the room

Reflection & Discussion

How might you use a pop culture example in your own classroom?



Questions?
Presentation and more
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