

## NEW PROGRAM PROPOSAL

College: **[Humanities]**

Department: **[English]**

1. Title of Proposed Program: **[Minor in Popular Culture Studies]**

2. Type of Proposed Program:

- ☐ New Undergraduate Major
- ☐ New Option in Undergraduate Major
- ☒ New Minor
- ☐ New Master's Degree Program
- ☐ New Option in Master's Degree Program
- ☐ Other

3. Date of Proposal Implementation: (Semester / Year): **[Fall] / [2018]**

4. Unit Requirements (*if proposing a NEW UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR*): N/A

5. Unit Requirements (*if proposing a NEW MINOR or UNDERGRADUATE OPTION*):

Lower Division Requirements:	<b>[0-9 ]</b> units
Upper Division Requirements:	<b>[9-18]</b> units
Total Units Required in Minor or Option:	<b>[18]</b> units

6. Unit Requirements (*if proposing a NEW MASTERS or OTHER PROGRAM not covered by #4 or #5 above*): N/A

7. Catalog Entry: (*Attach proposed catalog copy. This should include a complete description of the proposed program.*)

The Minor in Popular Culture teaches methods for critically understanding popular culture, including popular literature and art, entertainment media, social media, fashion, design, sports, music, performance, folklore, pastimes and rituals, and all forms of popular cultural expression, as well as the ways we live our everyday lives. This minor recognizes that pop culture is an important source of ideological, moral, and political messages as well as aesthetic pleasure and recreation. Studying the forces that shape pop culture, and the ways we may respond and contribute to pop culture, gives vital insight into daily life, citizenship, and what it means to participate in society. Furthermore, studying pop culture offers the advantage of deep critical and historical understanding for those who may wish to work in entertainment media or advertising, as well as teachers who may wish to use popular culture in their classrooms.

This minor defines popular culture broadly as a global, multicultural phenomenon that embraces not only industrialized mass culture (the texts, images, products, genres, and styles created or spread via mass media) but also cultural expression at the individual and grassroots levels, as well as folk culture and communal ways of life. Students in the minor

learn to analyze popular texts, media, and pastimes critically, to understand and engage with related theories, and reflect on the connections between popular culture and identity.

Many courses in the minor satisfy General Education requirements or may be used as electives or requirements in various majors. ENGL 413A-Z may be taken twice for credit: once as a core course and once as an elective, provided the topics are different.

**A. Core courses (9 units):**

ENGL 312 Literature and Film (3)  
ENGL 313 Studies in Popular Culture (3)  
ENGL 413A-Z Selected Topics in Popular Culture (3)

**B. Electives (9 units):**

AIS 301: American Indians and Popular Culture  
AAS 230 Asian Americans and the Media  
AAS 430 Asian American Popular Culture  
AFRS 252 Popular Culture and the Black World  
AFRS 358 Politics of Hip Hop  
ANTH 326 Introduction to Folklore  
ART 305 Art and Mass Culture  
ART 448 History of Contemporary Art  
ART 461 History of Graphic Arts  
ART 462 History of Photography  
CHS 111 The Chicana/o and the Arts  
CHS 306 The Chicana/o in Films  
CHS 405 Chicanas/os and the Media  
COMS 301 Performance, Language and Cultural Studies  
COMS 356 Intercultural Communication  
COMS 401 Performance and Social Change  
COMS 445 Communication and Popular Cultures  
CTVA 100 Introduction to Mass Communication Arts  
CTVA 210 Television Film Aesthetics  
CTVA 309 Film as Literature  
ENGL 253 Bestselling Literature  
ENGL 254 Popular Literary Genres  
ENGL 315 Digital Writing  
ENGL 333 Comics and Graphic Novels  
ENGL 370 Science Fiction  
ENGL 405 Language Difference and Language Change  
ENGL 428 Children's Literature  
ENGL 429 Literature for Adolescents  
ENGL 430 Literature and the Visual Arts  
FCS 255 The Fashion Industry  
GWS 410 Sex, Lies and Media

JOUR 250 Visual Communication  
 JOUR 372 Diversity and the Media  
 JOUR 465 Mass Communication and Popular Culture  
 LING 325 Language, Gender and Identity  
 LING 406 Language and Social Interaction  
 MUS 106HH Hip Hop Music  
 MUS 107 Music Today  
 MUS 108 Music in Film  
 MUS 306 Introduction to Jazz  
 MUS 307 Music from a Global Perspective  
 MUS 309 Traditional Music of the U.S.  
 MUS 310 Understanding World Cultures Through Music  
 PHIL 170 Philosophy and Pop Culture  
 RS 311 Religion and Film  
 RTM 278 Recreation and Leisure in Contemporary Society

#### **8. Justification of Request:** *(Attach)*

The Popular Culture Studies Minor will enable our undergraduates, in the words of scholar Jared Gardner, “to build bridges between the popular, public, and material cultures of their daily lives and the cultures that are the traditional objects of study of the University.” We believe such a minor is overdue.

Popular culture includes not only industrialized mass culture that comes to us “from the top down,” but also creative and political responses to mass culture that happen at the individual and grassroots levels—as well as folkways and pastimes outside of the culture industries that have their own rich histories and cultural meanings. A global, multicultural phenomenon, pop culture can be an important source of ideological, moral, and political messages as well as aesthetic pleasure and recreation. Indeed, pop culture surrounds and suffuses our daily experience, informing and shaping our lives. That is why it demands rigorous attention from scholars, and why we should teach it.

The humanities in particular have a long tradition of studying popular culture critically, and that tradition is well represented by the English Department’s course offerings and faculty specialists in the area. The proposed minor offers to capitalize on the Department’s proven expertise in popular culture studies while enriching CSUN’s curriculum in ways that respond directly to the needs and interests of students today—particularly our students in greater Los Angeles, a hub of entertainment media and one of the “capitals” of American mass culture. Offering students a chance to reflect on that culture means offering them a competitive edge. For example, students coming out of CSUN’s respected media industry programs—such as its exploding CTVA program—and seeking jobs in highly competitive media will find the critical perspectives taught in this minor a distinct advantage.

The Department’s history of offering pop culture studies is rooted in the course English 313: Studies in Popular Culture, which has been a popular elective and General Education (Lifelong Learning) course for about fifteen years, and which will become the foundation for the proposed minor. This rigorous Information Competency course emphasizes critical

methodologies for interpreting popular texts and artifacts as “signifiers of larger cultural forces and realities.” Enrollment in this course has been and continues to be high, averaging 172 students per term from Fall 2013 through Spring 2016. Given its popularity, 313 will make an excellent building block, i.e. core course, for the minor, as students who take 313 to meet a GE requirement can be encouraged to join the minor as well.

In addition to this course, the Department has long addressed pop culture through courses like English 312: Literature and Film and the highly enrolled English 333: Comics and Graphic Novels. Since English 312 focuses on transmedia adaptation, and necessarily deals with pop culture, we propose to make it another one of the core courses in the minor. It introduces critical concepts from narrative theory and adaptation theory that go well beyond the traditional “books-into-movies” paradigm. Other existing courses, for example English 370: Science Fiction and English 430: Literature and the Visual Arts, have also appealed to students of pop culture and can work within the minor as electives. Also, we will be proposing new courses on Bestselling Literature (ENGL 253) and Popular Literary Genres (ENGL 254) in order to build on faculty strengths in those areas, and these too we see as electives in the minor.

The Department faculty is well qualified to teach in and sustain this minor. Among our faculty are experts in popular genres and genre theory; new media; film, media, and transmedia adaptation; comics and graphic texts; digital and visual rhetorics; theories of performance; and creative and critical approaches to the practice of everyday life.

At the College level, Humanities, the English Department’s home, is the ideal matrix for this minor, since, as the College’s website states, the humanities urge students to “synthesize” knowledge across domains and “apply a broad base of thought” to diverse topics and fields—a multidimensional approach vital to the study of pop culture. The College promotes reading, writing, and critical thinking, and urges students to “communicate their ideas” to a wide audience. Studying pop culture fits the College’s stated mission to encourage critical reflection on “human identity and experience” in diverse areas and to enable students to “act as responsible global citizens” committed to a just and democratic vision. In sum, study of pop culture should be recognized as a vital part of the College’s mission to explore and value “the diversities of cultures, thought, [and] perspectives” that make up a liberal education.

At the University level, the minor addresses CSUN’s Fundamental Learning Competencies, i.e. the bedrock goals of the collegiate experience: to understand the scope and diversity of culture; engage in critical inquiry and problem-solving; find, evaluate, and use information competently and fairly; communicate effectively; and take responsibility for their actions as citizens and consumers. More precisely, the minor will serve at least three of CSUN’s Five Core Competencies: Written Communication, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy. The minor affirms and strengthens the English Department’s commitment to teaching those competencies; indeed, the Department sees the minor as an opportunity to take a leadership role in meeting that challenge. Assessments piloted by CSUN’s Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review (2014-2015; 2015-2016) and based upon the university Writing Proficiency Exam reveal areas of particular concern in Critical Thinking and Information Literacy, both of which the minor will address through the teaching of popular materials (per the program SLOs below).

These assessments reveal another ongoing concern: the gap between Native Speaker and English Learner pass/fail rates on the WPE. As the 2014-2015 report notes, this gap “will require closing-the-loop attention in the future,” a mission made especially urgent by CSUN’s growing number of international students. The teaching of critical approaches to popular culture and media offers one way of closing that gap. Given the ubiquity and impact of the texts and media that comprise popular culture—take for example social media, videogames, and blockbuster films—the minor offers an ideal curriculum and learning space for CSUN’s nontraditional, first-generation, and international student population, particularly at a time when literacy is expanding beyond traditional notions of writing and reading. The “popular” now means “global,” and today’s film and Web texts in particular arguably constitute a new lingua franca. (Consider videogame play, which often entails interacting, i.e. communicating, with gamers from around the world.) At the same time, popular culture includes strategies of resistance to globalized mass culture and to cultural hegemony; it offers a way of studying the effects of globalization “from the ground up.” So whereas the content of many disciplines has the potential to alienate disadvantaged or ESL students, popular culture’s familiar and approachable texts and media offer a welcoming opportunity for all students to engage in academic discourse. Furthermore, Popular Culture courses act as a multicultural learning site or contact zone, wherein native English-speaking and international students can recognize and benefit from studying culturally-oriented differences toward familiar texts and media. As linguistic and cultural differences shape students’ orientation toward popular culture and English language learning in general, both native English speakers and international students stand to learn from joining in the conversation provided by this minor.

Pop culture is a medium through which most of our students navigate on a daily basis. This new minor thus serves CSUN’s overall mission to help students develop “critical and creative abilities” and the “ethical values of learned persons who live in a democratic society, an interdependent world, and a technological age.” While many of our students are deeply invested in aspects of popular culture, and many possess the technical skills needed to make use of digital culture and social networking, we believe that academic training in cultural studies can help them toward a much-needed critical, ethical, and political self-awareness. Our mission calls on us to foster intellectual rigor, to advance the “civic, cultural and economic aspirations of our surrounding communities,” and to support “innovation, experimentation” and imaginative risk-taking—all goals served by teaching students to think critically, creatively, and politically about pop culture, its products and enticements, and the problems it may pose.

Finally, the proposed minor offers CSUN an opportunity to update and refresh its course offerings, boost diversity, and keep pace with the growing study of popular culture as practiced across the country, e.g. in programs like the popular culture minors at USC, the Ohio State University, Washington State, and Virginia Tech; the majors in popular culture at Bowling Green and Western Kentucky; and graduate concentrations in popular culture or cultural studies at such universities as UT Austin, Washington University in St. Louis, and George Mason (not to mention programs abroad, in Canada, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere). These schools know that courses in Popular Culture draw students, help to create a more diverse, socially responsive curriculum, and offer students a competitive edge. Overall, this minor will enable the English Department, and CSUN generally, to reinforce the

Core Competencies at the heart of our mission while responding substantially to students' intense interest in pop culture and how that culture informs their own lives.

**9. Estimate of Impact on Resources within the Department, for other Departments and for the University: (*Attach*)**

While we will be proposing three new courses for the curriculum of this new minor, two of these (ENGL 253: Bestselling Literature and ENGL 254: Popular Literary Genres) are envisioned as broadly-based GE courses that will be taught by a variety of faculty. Many faculty in English are qualified to teach these courses, which can be folded into their existing schedules without disrupting the Department's offerings. The other new course, English 413A-Z: Selected Topics in Popular Culture, will be taught by faculty with particular expertise in popular culture studies who regularly teach the existing English 313; again, the new course can be readily folded into their schedules. While we hope to attract a fair number of students to the minor, we do not anticipate that the minor will greatly impact advising or staff work, as we already accommodate the needs of many majors and minors. Working with students in the new minor should fit easily into Department business.

Similarly, the Department is large enough to absorb offering a few more courses without a large impact on budget and course rotation. Indeed, we hope to attract GE students through the GE courses offered in the minor, thus positively impacting our FTES and budget. In fact, we anticipate that this cutting-edge minor will attract students to CSUN and to diverse courses in other departments and colleges as well. Thus the minor should positively impact FTES and budget for other departments and colleges and the university as a whole.

We are anticipating that the minor will grow to approximately the size of the other minors in the department (between 50-80 students). At this size, advising can be absorbed into the current minor advising structure in the department. If the minor grows larger than the other minors in the department, the department is prepared to expend the resources necessary for either a yearly or a semesterly course release for a faculty member to take on the advising. This will be developed in accordance with the existing advising structure in the department.

No additional classroom space or unusual equipment will be required to support the minor. Further, the Oviatt Library will not need to invest heavily in new resources; many resources are already in the library, and the minor simply offers a new way of capitalizing on them. Also, given the nature of the program itself, many resources are freely available online.

**10. Goals and Measurable Student Learning Outcomes for the New Program:**

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to define popular culture and its parameters.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply critical thinking to popular culture.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply and critically engage with theories relevant to the study of popular culture.

4. Students will demonstrate the ability to research, critically evaluate, respond to, and ethically use information sources in popular culture studies.

## 11. Methods of Assessment for Measurable Student Learning Outcomes:

### A. Assessment Tools:

Although CSUN does not require minors to be assessed formally at the department level, this minor is being constructed partly in response to perceived challenges in student learning as specified in the university Core Competencies. In particular, the minor is designed to be part of campus-wide efforts to address the Core Competencies of Written Communication, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy. Therefore, courses in the minor will be assessed periodically in accordance with current assessment procedures for the major options.

### B. Describe the procedure the dept./program will use to ensure the faculty will be involved in the assessment process (refer to the University's policy on assessment):

In accordance with the assessment policy stated in the current CSUN Catalog, department assessment is led by our department assessment coordinator and conducted by a variety of faculty on relevant department committees.

To oversee implementation and assessment of the minor, a committee comprised specifically of faculty teaching in the minor will be formed during the minor's first academic term. That committee will lead or facilitate the evaluation of course syllabi to ensure that the SLOs of the minor (critical thinking, engagement with and application of theory, and information literacy) are addressed in every course in the minor.

## 12. Record of Consultation: (Normally all consultation should be with a department chair or program coordinator. If more space is needed attach statement and supporting memoranda.)

Date:	Dept/College:	Department Chair/Program Coordinator	Concur (Y/N)
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ AIS ]	[ Brian Burkhardt ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ AAS ]	[ Eunai Shrake ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ AFRS ]	[ Theresa White ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ ANTH ]	[ Sabina Magliocco ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ ART ]	[ Edward Alfano ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ CAS ]	[ Beatriz Cortez ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ CHS ]	[ Gabriel Gutierrez ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ COMS ]	[ Kathryn Sorrells ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ CTVA ]	[ Jon Stahl ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ FCS ]	[ Yi Cai ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ GWS ]	[ Breny Mendoza ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ JS ]	[ Jody Myers ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ JOUR ]	[ Linda Bowen ]	[ IP ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ LRS ]	[ Ranita Chatterjee ]	[ Y ]

[ 4/11/17 ]	[ LING ]	[ Ana Sanchez Munoz ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ MCLL ]	[ Brian Castronovo ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ MUS ]	[ Ric Alviso ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ PHIL ]	[ Tim Black ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ QS ]	[ Greg Knotts ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ RS ]	[ Rick Talbott ]	[ Y ]
[ 4/11/17 ]	[ RTM ]	[ Mechelle Best ]	[ Y ]

**13. Approvals:**

Department Chair/Program

Coordinator: Kent Baxter

Date: [5/1/17]

College (Dean or Associate Dean):

Date: [ ]

Educational Policies Committee:

Date: [ ]

Graduate Studies Committee:

Date: [ ]

Provost:

Date: [ ]