We may watch *The Daily Show with John Stewart* for its award-winning satire of contemporary politics and media, but that isn't why a network like Comedy Central produces and broadcasts the program. From a business perspective, *The Daily Show* attracts viewers ages 18-34, who are the target market for advertisers selling movies, booze, and video games. *The Daily Show* is clearly more than a marketing scheme, but the bottom line is that Comedy Central uses *The Daily Show* to attract our attention and then sell us to advertisers.

We live in a society in which culture is a product: organized into industries with their own lobbying groups in Washington, produced and distributed by corporations, and sold to consumers in the marketplace. The buying and selling of mass-produced cultural products dates back to the origins of book and newspaper publishing, accelerated with the rise of motion pictures and the expansion of national advertising in the early 20th century, and now— in the age of social media— pervades every aspect of our lives. It is virtually impossible to imagine how one might live a life beyond the reach of commercial culture.

The cultural industries make cultural products like *The Daily Show* or *The Hunger Games* widely available, but this also means that the market determines cultural value in ways that are clearly worth examining more closely.

The object of this course is to understand how cultural industries function by discussing many of the defining features of commercial culture, including the role of corporations and media conglomerates in producing and distributing cultural products, the social organization of creative practices within these corporations, the influence of advertising and marketing on the selling of these products, and the expansion of global markets. Students will come to understand how these features of cultural industries shape and contribute to the cultural value of the movies, books, television, music and other media they encounter in their daily lives. The readings, assignments, and classroom activities are intended to help you develop competence in critical thinking about culture and society, as demonstrated through exams and short essays, and advanced skill in the writing of reasoned arguments, as demonstrated in formal papers.

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**COURSE TEXTS:**

- Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic, 2010)