

REMIXING RHETORIC: POP CULTURE IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

A Presentation by Christine Singleton

Bottom Line

- Using pop culture in the First-Year Writing Composition classroom can be incredibly beneficial
 - Students feel a sense of ownership over the material
 - Students are able to compare new themes and techniques with material they already have consumed
 - Students can “examine elements of the contemporary American zeitgeist to see how cultural artifacts reflect essential ideas and concepts” (Evans 32)
- But, how can popular culture be effectively utilized when...
 - “...what seemed relevant and absorbing last year has likely stopped trending by the time we get around to teaching it” (Swanson & Dademo 337)
 - ...we are not consuming the same media as our students
 - ...students suffer from a “Millennial Disconnection” (Swanson & Dademo 337)

Definitions

- Popular Culture: all those elements of life which are not narrowly intellectual or creatively elites and which are generally, though not necessarily, disseminated through mass media (Browne & Madden qtd. in Smelstor & Weiher 42)
 - “Thus, popular culture consists of both uttered and printed words (well-known records and jokes as well as best sellers, magazines, newspapers) and both moving and still pictures (postcards, posters, and billboards as well as films, plays, TV) (Smelstor & Weiher 42)
- Millennial Disconnect: a term [used] to describe the pedagogical stalemate marked by students’ lack of focus, disengagement from reading materials, and skepticism regarding the relevance of general education courses (Swanson & Dademo 337)
- Remix: an overarching term that includes any act of composition that involves the deliberate manipulation of previous passages, clips, or samples throughout a majority of the work (Stedman 108)
- Semiotic: relating to signs and symbols

Literature Review

Similarities

- Multiple levels of analysis
 - Film
 - Reviews (Amateur and Critic)
 - American value system
- Different types of media allow for analysis of subject matter, tone, diction, and approach
- “Artifacts of popular culture”

Topics

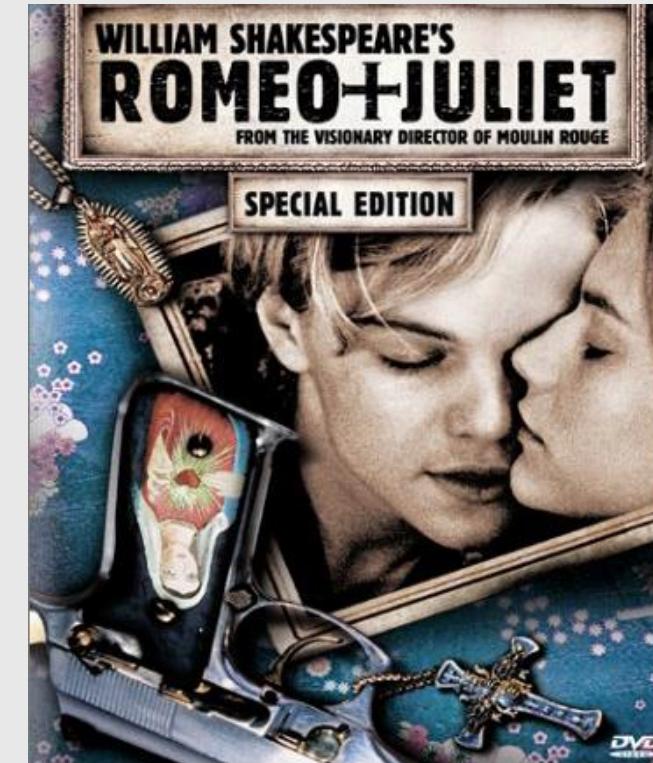
- Evans (2004): Psychology and pop culture in composition
- Smelstor & Weiher (1976): Ads, TV, Journalism, and Best-Sellers
- Swanson & Dademo (2017): Theory applied to any text-based movie
- Stedman (2012): Remix theory in student composition

Prominent and Persistent Themes in American Literature

1. The search for identity
2. Individualism
3. Freedom
4. The journey
5. Initiation/rite of passage
6. The frontier
7. Moral struggle
8. Rebellion vs conformity
9. The American Dream/Nightmare (Evans 33)

Activity: New Course (Remixed from Swanson and Dademo)

1. Impressions (Poster and Trailer)
 1. Rhetorical Appeals (pathos, logos, ethos, kairos)
 2. Evaluate success of poster and trailer as audience's first point of contact for the film (339)
2. Interpretations (Watch the Film)
 1. a central truth of semiotic analysis—there is no single, correct interpretation of any text
 2. Model for close reading by analyzing specific scenes for directorial choices
3. Taste (Analyzing Recognition)
 1. Three types: critical acclaim, professional acclaim, popular taste
 2. “Conversation leads to consecration”
4. Remixing
 1. Students will remix the film by writing their own fan fiction



Sources

- Evans, Jerome. "From Sheryl Crow to Homer Simpson: Literature and Composition through Pop Culture." *The English Journal*, Vol. 93, No. 3, Jan. 2004, pp. 32-38, www.jstor.org/stable/4128866.
- Smelstor, Marjorie and Carol Weiher. "Using Popular Culture to Teach Composition." *The English Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 3, Mar. 1976, pp. 41-46, www.jstor.org/stable/814833.
- Stedman, Kyle D. "Remix Literacy and Fan Compositions." *Computers and Composition*, Vol. 29, Iss. 2, Jun. 2012, pp. 107-123, www.doi.org/10.1016/j.compcon.2012.02.002.
- Swanson, Beth Sara and Ray Dademo. "Narrating the Moviegoing Experience: Reframing Film for First-Year Composition." *CEA Critic*, Vol. 79, No. 3, Nov. 2017, pp. 337-343, www.jstor.org/stable/26574876.