The Chinese University of Hong Kong
MA in Intercultural Studies Programme
2025-26, Term 1
CULS5227 Fandom and Participatory Culture
(tentative)

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Time and Venue: Friday 18:45-21:30 | ELB 303
Office hour and Consultation: by appointment

Course Description

Fandom, or fan culture, is a term that has historically carried much stigma, yet now represents an intriguing aspect of cyberspace subculture in the Web 2.0 (or even Web 3.0) era. It describes communities formed by like-minded individuals in various aspects of popular culture, such as sports, films, television dramas, or music, who actively produce creative content for their enjoyment. As Henry Jenkins once suggested, most fan cultures exhibit characteristics of participatory culture, where fan communities relish their interpretations of popular culture and promote artistic creation and expression. While scholars of popular culture critique consumers of mainstream content as 'disciplined readers' who are manipulated by the culture industry and follow the trends of mass culture, those who support fan participation view popular culture consumers as poachers who appropriate ideas from media texts and creatively reinterpret them. Therefore, by concentrating on fan activities, this course aims to explore individual and collective agency in media and popular culture through community building, mass consumption, subcultures within the mediascape and participatory culture. Through this course, students will learn about the relationship between fan cultures and identity, consumer culture, community building, affect studies, and more in contemporary mediascapes.

Learning Outcomes

- **Trace and Recognise** the history of fan culture from the 19th Century to its recent developments.
- **Clarify and situate** fan culture and its community's practices in trans/national bases and global trends towards social media, online communities, and web 2.0 or web 3.0 culture.
- **Employ** a range of theoretical tools and methodologies to critically examine the impact of fandom on socio-political, economic and cultural participation.
- **Reflects and critically comment on** fan practices and community-building issues under the manipulation and articulation of web 2.0 platform capitalism and its possibilities in the web 3.0 era.

Course Components & Learning activities

1. Lectures and tutorials
2. Guest sharing
3. Fieldtrips

Assessment Methods

1. Class participation (10%)

Class attendance, responding to questions from instructor and contributing to class discussions and giving constructive feedback to students' presentations during tutorials. Students are encouraged to share their ideas and experiences through class discussions, class/group activities in the context of the teaching plan.

2. Forum Discussion (20%)

Students must participate in two discussion panels, each worth 10% of the total marks. Both individual and group efforts are considered.

3. Group Presentation (30%)

Students are required to conduct a group research project as well as giving a group presentation. The group project will be assessed through two main components:

(1) An in-class oral presentation in English (20 minutes)
(2) Presentation slideshows (not less than 20 pages)

4. Final paper (50%)

Students are required to write a critical socio-cultural review on fan culture in Asia context with a specific research focus that is aligned with this course:

(1) A one-page outline with tentative paper topic (on or before lesson 10)
(2) A final paper in English with a proper reference list included. The length of the submission should be a minimum of 8 pages and a maximum of 15 pages with double line spacing (excluding references and appendices).

*The instructor reserves the right of not grading any late submission, or to mark down the late submission for one point grade. No paper will be accepted after grade submission.

Course Content

Lesson 1 Rethinking Audience Studies

Keywords: participatory, collective intelligence, fan labour, prosumer (producer-consumer) and approreader (appropriator-reader)

Readings:
- SANDVOSS, CORNEL, et al. "Introduction: Why Still Study Fans?" *Fandom, Second Edition: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, edited by Jonathan Gray et al., 2nd ed., NYU Press, 2017, pp. 1–26.
- Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito, and Danah Boyd, "Defining Participatory Culture," in *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era*, 2016, pp. 1–31.

Lesson 2 Methodologies Matters: Mapping Fandom in Asia

Keywords: trans-Asia cultural exchange, minor transnationalism, research ethics, the Asian turn in fandom studies, occasioned communities

Readings:
- IWABUCHI, KOICHI. "Undoing Inter-National Fandom in the Age of Brand Nationalism." *Mechademia* 5 (2010): 87–96.
- Henry Jenkins. "Pop Cosmopolitianism: Mapping Cultural Flows in an Age of Media Convergence." In Desirée Baolian Qin-Hilliard, and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco ed., *Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium*. 1st ed. United States: University of California Press, 2004.
- ITO, M. (2017). "Ethics of Fansubbing in Anime's Hybrid Public Culture." In J. Gray, C. Sandvoss, & C. L. Harrington (Eds.), *Fandom, Second Edition: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2nd ed., pp. 333–353). NYU Press.

Lessons 3 Discussion Forum I - Reflective Workshop (10%)

This week, we will pause the lecture to transform the classroom into a discussion forum. We will critically engage with the concept of intersectionality, examining current trends in fandom to recontextualize the cultural economy of fandom and fan practices.

Keywords: self-reflexive ethnography, intersectionality, cultural economy,
Readings:
- John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in Lisa A. Lewis ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. "1. Intersectionality as Critical Inquiry," *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*, New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2019, pp. 21-53.

Lesson 4 On 'DIY': the textual adventure of fans

Keywords: cultural politics of DIY, participatory pleasure, imagined community, global convergence

Readings:
- Diane Penrod, "Writing and Rhetoric for a Ludic Democracy: YouTube, Fandom, and Participatory Pleasure," in Heather Urbanski ed., Writing and the Digital Generation: Essays on New Media Rhetoric, McFarland, 2010.
- Morimoto, H. L., & Chin, B. (2017) "Reimagining the imagined community: online media fandoms in the age of global convergence". *Fandom, Second Edition: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, edited by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington, New York, USA: New York University Press. pp. 174-188.

Lesson 5 In the name of love: labouring, gifting, and reciprocating between fans

Keywords: fan labour, gift economy, emotion economy, emotional labour, digital econmoy

Readings:
- Terranova, Tiziana. "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy." *Social Text*, vol. 18, no. 2 (63), June 2000, pp. 33–58.
- Tisha Turk. "Fan Work: Labor, Worth, and Participation in Fandom's Gift Economy." In "Fandom and/as Labor," edited by Mel Stanfill and Megan Condis, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures* (2014), no. 15.

Lesson 6 Identity politics within and beyond fan communities – gender, class, and race

Keywords: gender and sexuality, misogyny, hierarchy, identity politics, intersectionality, whiteness, field of production

Readings:
- Gosling, V. K. (2022)"Girls Allowed? The Marginalization of Female Sport Fans." in Sandvoss, C., Gray, J. & Harrington C.K. ed., *Fandom*. New York, USA: New York University Press, 250–260.
- Suzanne Scott. (2019). "Interrogating the Fake Geek Fan Girl: The Spreadable Misogyny of Contemporary Fan Culture," *Fake Geek Girls: Fandom, Gender and the Contemporary Culture Industry*. New York: New York University Press.
- Stanfill, M. (2011). "Doing fandom, (mis)doing whiteness: Heteronormativity, racialization, and the discursive construction of fandom." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 8.

Lesson 7 Fan community as counter public – queering fandom

Keywords: queering, community, collectivity, intersectionality, public sphere, counter public, queerbaiting, transcultural desires

Readings:
- Matt Hills, "Fan Cultures Between Community and 'Resistance,'" *Fan Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Ng, Eve. 2017. "Between Text, Paratext, and Context: Queerbaiting and the Contemporary Media Landscape." Transformative Works and Cultures 24.
- Kam, Lucetta Y. L. (2020) "Fandom—Transcultural Desires and Lesbian Fandom." In *Keywords in Queer Sinophone Studies*, edited by Howard Chiang and Alvin K. Wong, New York: Routledge. 132–152.

Lesson 8 Fan activism

Keywords: resistance, digital activism, community mobilization

Readings:
- Cho, Michelle. "BTS for BLM: K-Pop, Race, and Transcultural Fandom." *Celebrity studies* 13.2 (2022): 270–279.
- Li, E. C. Y. (2017) "Desiring Queer, Negotiating Normal: Denise Ho (HOCC) Fandom before and after the Coming-Out," in Lavin, M., Yang, L. & Zhao, J.

ed., *Boys' Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols Queer Fan Cultures in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan,* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp131-156.

Lesson 9 Toxic fans and anti-fans

Keywords: participatory censorship, digital fandom, rational fans, data fans (shujufen)

- Matt Hills, "From Fan Doxa to Toxic Fan Practices," Participations, May 2018.
- Wang, Yiming, and Jia Tan. "Participatory Censorship and Digital Queer Fandom: The Commercialization of Boys' Love Culture in China." *International journal of communication* 17:2023.

Lesson 10 Fandom – a detour

Keywords: nationalism, soft power, minor transnationalism, cultural hegemony, trans-Asia cultural exchange

Readings:
- Liu, Hailong. "Love Your Nation the Way You Love an Idol: New Media and the Emergence of Fandom Nationalism." *From Cyber-Nationalism to Fandom Nationalism.* 1st ed. vol. 1. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2018. 125–147.
- Ji-Hyun Ahn, and E Kyung Yoon. "Between Love and Hate: The New Korean Wave, Japanese Female Fans, and Anti-Korean Sentiment in Japan." *Journal of contemporary Eastern Asia* 19.2 (2020): 179–196.

Lesson 11 – Discussion Forum II (10%)

Key Questions: Again, why studying fandom matters? What kinds of interdisciplinary potentials fandom enables? 10 weeks of exploring fan cultures, we will convene for a second discussion forum to consolidate our understanding of fandom. Each student will have the opportunity to share their give-and-take and contribute to the exchange of ideas.

Lesson 12 & 13 – Group presentation

Recommended Readings
- Click, M. A. (ed.) (2019). *Anti-fandom: dislike and hate in the digital age.* New York: New York University Press.
- Click, M.A., & Scott, S. (Eds.). (2025). *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Huat, C. B. (2012). *Structure, Audience and Soft Power in East Asian Pop Culture.* Hong Kong University Press.
- Itō, Mizuko., Daisuke. Okabe, and Izumi Tsuji. (Eds.). (2012). *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World.* New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Iwabuchi, K., Tsai, E. & Berry C. (Eds.). (2017). *Routledge Handbook of East Asian Popular Culture.* Routledge.

- Jenkins, H. (1992). *Textual poachers : television fans & participatory culture*. Routledge.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2008). *Convergence culture : where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
- Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington. (Eds.). (2007). *Fandom: Identities and Communities in A Mediated World*. New York: New York University Press.
- Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse. (2006). *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet,* Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Lavin, M., Yang, L., & Zhao, J. J. (Eds.). (2018). *Boys' love, cosplay, and androgynous idols : queer fan cultures in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan*. Hong Kong University Press.
- Lisa A. Lewis (ed.,) (1992). *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, New York: Routledge.
- Matthew Hills. (2003) *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Pande, R. (ed.) (2020). *Fandom, Now in Colour: A Collection of Voices*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Roy, R. K., & Das, B. (Eds.). (2022). *Korean Wave in South Asia : Transcultural Flow, Fandom and Identity* (1st ed. 2022.). Springer Nature Singapore.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to university policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.

- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.

- Students are fully aware that their work may be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.

- Students are fully aware of the AI approach(es) adopted in the course. In the case where some AI tools are allowed, students have made proper acknowledgment and citations as suggested by the course teacher.

Assignments without a properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

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All use of AI tools is prohibited in assignments and assessment tasks

For assignments and assessment tasks that count towards the final course grades, students are not allowed to submit work which is produced with the collaboration of or supported by the use of any generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT)*.

Any breach of the regulations will be considered an act of academic dishonesty and will be handled according to the University's *Procedures for Handling Cases of Academic Dishonesty.*

In case of queries, students should seek advice from the course teacher.