BROOKLYN COLLEGE
Department of Television and Radio
Special Topics: South Park & Political Correctness
TV/R 73 Section R3 (Course Code 5273)
Fall 2008, Thursdays 3:40-6:20pm
503A Whitehead

Prof. Brian Dunphy
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Prerequisites: TV/R 16.5 or permission of chair.
Credits: 3

Expected Outcomes/ Learning Objectives:

1. Students will be able to analyze South Park as a literary text.

2. Students will be able to discuss the meaning and significance of South Park from interdisciplinary perspectives, including cultural, social, historical and political contexts.

3. Students will use a wide-range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate South Park as a text dealing with relevant religious, political, and social issues.

Assessment:

Fulfillment of course objectives will be evaluated through one of two paper options:

Option A: 3 papers. Students will be required to write 2 short papers and one final paper.

Option B: 5 papers. Students will be required to write 5 medium length papers.

All papers are due throughout the semester on dates designated. The papers will revolve around a character, plot or element of the program pertaining to a specific episode, assigned readings and/or in-class discussions. Students will present their ideas in class (mandatory, at least ONCE) and workshop them with other students.

***Class discussion and participation will be an important determinant of the fulfillment of the learning objectives. ***

Course Description:

Students will become familiar with the theory of political correctness and its place in modern society. Themes to consider: Has political correctness hurt us as a society? What are the problems and/or advantages of being politically correct?
We will explore the libertarian philosophy of the creators, Trey Parker & Matt Stone, and their treatment of the many issues facing the world. The show’s ability to discuss ‘hot-button’ issues is at the core of its strength. The “un” PC world of *South Park*, creates a dialogue often ignored by the mainstream media, government and other interest groups.

**Course Texts:**

You are responsible for the designated material contained in the following required texts:


*Websites for cheaper books: bigwords.com – it works! Trust me.*

Other articles for the assigned readings are in the required course packet and will also be distributed online via email.

**Initials: For EMAIL: (E), Course Packet (CP)**

**Suggested Reading List:**


**Course Grading:**

**Option A:** *Paper 1 & 2* - 5-7 pages each, minimum -- 30%

*Final Paper* – 17-20 pages, topic to be determined -- 35%

OR

**Option B:** 5 papers, 5-10 pages each, with wiggle room – 65%

*** One paper missing 20% drop in grade ***

Class work, presentation, attendance, punctuality, participation, effort -- 35%

**Paper Requirements:**

Your paper should be 1.5-spaced with one-inch margins all around, in Times New Roman 12 point font. *No papers will be accepted that are hand-written!*

As many of you are aware, plagiarism (i.e., using the words of another without attribution) is on the rise at college campuses across the country, including Brooklyn College. Plagiarism violates canons of proper scholarship and, if detected, can result in a failing grade for the course and, in extreme cases, expulsion from the university. Please be aware that instructors, through the use of computer software, are now able to detect plagiarism in student papers with increasing ease.

**Presentation:**

Every episode is available online at [southparkstudios.com](http://southparkstudios.com)
Please use this site to watch episodes you will be presenting on.

You will discuss the readings, the episodes, etc. Presentations will last throughout the class but you will not be the focus throughout its’ entirety. Obviously, your presentations can be papers and vice-versa
Schedule of Classes & Readings:

Section I – Introduction to South Park

Week 1, August 28th – Introduction to course and South Park

Episodes: “Cartman Gets an Anal Probe” & “Goin’ Down to South Park”

Section II – Religion in South Park

Week 2, September 4th – Religion, Faith and South Park

Readings:

1. Johnson-Woods: Chapters Introduction, 1, 11, 15
2. Arp: Introduction by Robert Arp
3. Arp: Chapter 20 – “Religious Pluralism and The Super Best Friends” by J. Dueck
4. Arp: Chapter 3 – “Blasphemous Humor in South Park” by Kevin J. Murtagh

Episodes: “Super Best Friends” & “Trapped in the Closet”

Week 3, September 11th – Religion Cont’d

Readings:

1. Arp: Chapter 8 – “The Philosophical Passion of the Jew: Kyle the Philosopher” by William J. Devlin
2. Arp: Chapter 5 – “You know, I Learned Something Today: Stan Marsh & The Ethics of Belief” by Henry Jacoby
3. Johnson-Woods: Chapter 2
4. Passion Play (E)
5. Mormonism (E)
6. Hitchens (E) – Chapter 1

Episodes: “All About the Mormons” & “The Passion of the Jew”

Week 4, September 18th – Religion Cont’d

Readings:

1. Arp: Chapter 12 – “The Satirized My Prophet… Those Bastards! South Park & Blasphemy” by David R. Koepsell
2. Johnson-Woods: Chapter 10
3. Hitchens (E) – Chapters: 2, 7, 8, 11 – Possible: Students to decide.

Episodes: “Red Hot Catholic Love” & “Bloody Mary”

Special Note: Option A – Paper 1 Due – Religion, Option B – Paper 1 Due - Religion
Section III – Social Issues & South Park

Week 5, September 25th – Cloning & Stem Cell Research

Readings:
1. Arp: Chapter 15 – “Four-Assed Monkeys: Genetics & Gen-Ethics in Small-Town Colorado” by Scott Calef
2. Applied Ethics (E) – Cloning: Chapter 9 (Against) & Chapter 10 (For)
3. Johnson-Woods: Chapters 5, 12
4. Other

Episodes: “Elephant Makes Love to a Pig” & “Krazy Kripples”

Week 6, October 2nd – Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide & Individual Rights

Readings:
1. Applied Ethics (E): Euthanasia: Chapter 11 (For) & Chapter 12 (Against)
2. Arp: “Oh My God! They Killed Kenny… Again: Kenny & Existentialism” by Karin Fry
3. Johnson-Woods: Chapter 6
4. Other

Episodes: “Death” & “Best Friends Forever”

Week 7, October 16th – Global Warming, Media & The Government

Readings:
1. Dunphy: “Why The World Needs South Park” – working project
2. Johnson-Woods: Chapter 10

Episodes: “Two Days Before the Day After Tomorrow”

Week 8, October 23rd – Corporate America

Readings:
1. Arp: Chapter 9- “The Invisible Gnomes & The Invisible Hand: South Park and Libertarian Philosophy” by Paul A. Cantor
2. Arp
3. Other
4. Other

Episodes: “Gnomes” & “Something Wall-Mart This Way Comes”

Special Note: Option A – Paper 2 Due
Special Note: Paper Proposals Due in class. Option B - Paper 2 Due
Week 9, October 30th – Politics and The US Electoral System

Readings:
1. Arp: Chapter 11 – “Vote or Die, Bitch” – The Myth of that Every Vote Count & The Pitfalls of the Two-Party System by John Scott Gray
2. Johnson-Woods: Chapter 13
3. Other
4. Other

Episodes: “Douche & Turd”

Week 10, November 6th – Xenophobia, Immigration & Terrorism

Readings:
1. Applied Ethics: Immigration – Chapter 13 (For) & Chapter 14 (Against)
2. Johnson-Woods: Chapter 14
3. Arp: “Flatulence and Philosophy: A lot of Hot Air, or the Corruption of Youth” by William W. Young III
4. Carens?

Episodes: “The Snuke” & “GooBacks”
**** SPECIAL EPISODE – “…. About Last Night” – Obama v. McCain

Special Note: Option B – Paper 3 Due

Section IV – South Park in a Post 9/11 World

Week 11, November 13th – 9/11

Readings:
1. Arp: Chapter 10 – “South Park & The Open Society: Defending Democracy Through Satire” by David Valleau Curtis and Gerald J. Erion
2. Peace, War & Terrorism: Chapter 1 – The New Face of War
   a. Preface
   b. Osama Bin Laden, Jihad Against Jews & Crusaders
   c. George W. Bush, President’s Radio Address
   d. Peter Simpson, The War on Terrorism: Its moral justification and limits
   e. Daniel Benjamin, Two Years After 9/11: A Balance Sheet
   g. Michael Meacher, This War on Terrorism is Bogus
3. Readings on 9/11 Conspiracy Theories

Episodes: “Osama Bin Laden Has Farty Pants” & “The Mystery of the Urinal Deuce”
Week 12, November 20th --- Terrorism

Readings:
1. Peace, war & Terrorism: Chapter 3, 4
   a. John Ashcroft, USA Patriot Act “honors” Liberty & Freedom
   b. Susan Herman, The USA Patriot Act and the US Department of Justice: Losing our Blances?
   c. David Tell, John Ashcroft Maligned Again
   d. Stephen Gale & Lawrence Husick, From MAD to MUD: Dealing with New Terrorism
   e. Robert Hutchings, Terrorism & Economic Security
   f. John Bolton, The International Aspects of Terrorism & Weapons of Mass Destruction
   g. Paul Wilkinson, Overview of the Terrorist Threat to International Peace & Security
   h. George W. Bush, The New Measure to Counter the Threat of WMD

Episodes: “The Imaginationland Trilogy: Full Length Feature Film- Director’s Cut”

Week 13, December 4th – The Iraq War

Readings:
1. Peace, War & Terrorism – Chapter 2: Pre-Emptive War, Chap. 3
   a. Jim Hightower, In a Time of Terror, Protest is Patriotism
   b. John R. Macarthur, The Unchallenged “Evidence” for War
   c. Condoleeza Rice, A Balance of Power that Favors Freedom
   d. William Galston, Perils of Preemptive War
   e. Richard Grimmett, US Use of Preemptive Military Force: The Historical Record
   f. William Saunders, Possible War with Iraq
   g. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., The Immorality of Preemptive War
   h. Steven Weisman, Doctrine of Preemptive War has its roots in early 1990s
   i. Steven Welsh, Preemptive War & International Law
   j. Ulrich Arnswald, Preventive War or Preemptive War
2. False Pretenses: Print out— centerforpublicintegrity.org

Episodes: “I’m A Little Bit Country”

Special Note: Option B – Paper 4 Due

Special Note: Paper Proposals Presentation Part II
Week 14, December 11th – Religion, Politics, Social Issues, Terrorism & Mass Media

Readings:
  1. Peace, War & Terrorism – Chapter 5: Ethics, Peace, & Tomorrow
     a. Alberto Gonzales, Memo for the President
     b. Martin L. Cook, Ethical Issues in CounterTerrorism
     c. TBD

Episodes: “Cartoon Wars Part I” & “Cartoon Wars Part II”

FINAL PAPERS DUE – Week of December 15th or 21st – To Be Determined

Option A – Final Paper Due
Option B – 5th & Final Paper Due

Important Dates:

9/18 – A: Paper 1, B: Paper 1
10/16 – B: Paper 2
   Paper Proposals due in class
10/23 – A: Paper 2
11/6 – B: Paper 3
12/4 – B: Paper 4
   Paper Proposals due in class