ANTH 360: Anthropology of Pop Culture

Summer 2017 (full-term)
MW 12:00-2:10
SLN: 10102
Instructor: Christopher Santo Domingo Chan

Rose gold iPhones, designer sneakers, K-Pop, youtube beauty tutorials: we tend to speak of pop culture as either mindless candy or as a technique of mass control. How might we find other ways to excavate popular culture “in the field” – and enmeshed and entangled with the politics and pleasures of everyday life around the world?

We’ll use a set of diverse theories to investigate pop culture’s plural registers: cultural critique from Frankfurt before World War II, linguistics and literary theory from early 20th-century Russia and Switzerland, psychoanalysis, U.S. and global feminisms in the 1980s onward, contemporary Science and Technology Studies and Software Studies, and intersectional and postcolonial inversions of these traditions.

We are interested in the "sharing economy" of likes, tags, and shared content -- but also the idea that pop culture produces shared, collective social experiences that demand our attention as anthropologists. We'll take sharing quite literally as a learning philosophy in class by keeping shared notes and documents, and developing pop projects of our own.