Course description: We've all asked or heard these questions before: Why is Kim Kardashian famous? What has Snooki done to earn the cover of Rolling Stone? And why does the media seem obsessed with every tweet, status update or comment Sarah Palin puts out? Celebrities, most all agree, are everywhere, yet celebrity itself remains an enigmatic phenomenon, nearly as pervasive as it is fleeting. In recent decades, scholars from disciplines as diverse as film studies, anthropology, psychology and media studies have offered a number of different theories as to what, exactly, a celebrity is and why celebrities occupy such a prominent position in our national discourse. Though their theories often diverge more than they intersect, most all agree on one factor: celebrities are much more than just famous people; they are a kind of popular mythology—a form of symbolic storytelling in which the public at large is granted agency to elevate and perpetuate individuals as national narratives. In this writing seminar, we will attempt to unravel the stories we tell when we write, speak and consume media about celebrities, as we discover the ways in which the celebrity stories we trade in often reveal much more about ourselves than about the celebrities themselves. We will sift through the various, competing schools of thought regarding celebrity and its impact, function and dynamics, as we engage in an interdisciplinary exploration of what celebrities are and what they reveal about our popular imagination. As we learn to read celebrities as texts, we will likewise craft our own texts about celebrities, as we carefully analyze, thoughtfully research and apply variant theoretical lenses to the figures we regularly consume in print and on screen.

Course Link: This is a linked course. This means that topics and discussions in this course are specifically designed to intersect with issues raised in your . . . course. This also means that if you choose to drop this course, you must drop . . . as well.

Goals and Objectives:
- An understanding of writing as a process of thinking and rethinking
- An understanding of the difference between revising and editing, and the true ability to do both
- Reasonable fluency in various modes of thinking and writing, such as observing and reporting, analyzing and interpreting, evaluating and arguing
- Increased skill in the critical reading of one's own writing and that of peers and professionals
- Consistency in the control of syntax and grammar
- An understanding of style as stance, voice, diction and syntax that is determined, in part, by the occasion and purpose of writing
- Make connections with other courses in terms of both content and methods of critical inquiry
- Demonstrate a proficiency in methods of research and documentation, including the evaluation of secondary sources, annotation, integration of quotations, and proper citation according to MLA guidelines.

Note: We will read and, occasionally, view sensitive material. If you object to or are uncomfortable with depictions of sex, drugs, violence, profanities, and so on, you should drop the course. Your continued enrollment in this section indicates your comfort with and responsibility for reading and viewing these texts. Alternate assignments will not be given.

Texts: All course readings, unless otherwise noted in your calendar, are available at english110.qwriting.org/celebrity-culture. We will also be working with the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): owl.english.purdue.edu. Print out all course readings and bring them to class on the days they are assigned.

Grading Information:
- Participation 20%
- Responses 15%
- Paper 1: Analysis 15%
- Paper 2: Comparative Analysis 15%
- Paper 3: Toulmin Model Argument 15%
- Paper 4: Synthesis 20%

Participation: In this class, participation is crucial. I expect you to come to class on time, prepared—with readings and/or homework complete—and ready to discuss. Attendance in our class will provide you with information that will only exist in the conversations between ourselves and our various texts, and you will be held responsible for this information. Aside from general class participation, daily assignments, workshop participation and in-class writing will count toward your participation grade and cannot be made up in the event of absence. Adherence to basic classroom etiquette will also factor into your participation grade: come to class on time, don’t sleep, put your iPod and cell phone away and treat your classmates with respect.

Writing Requirements: You will write four major papers this semester, eight short response papers and several in-class writing assignments. Major papers and responses must be typed, double-spaced, titled, with all outside sources cited both parenthetically and in a Works Cited page. Response papers are 1-2 pages in length. Hand-written papers (except in the case of in-class writing) will not be accepted. All papers must conform to MLA format. Specific assignments for all major papers and responses will be given in class.

Revisions: You may revise your first and second major papers, after they have been graded, for a higher grade. Details and specific instructions will be provided in class. Late papers can be revised, but late penalties will still apply. Plagiarized papers can not be revised. Response papers can not be revised.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism will not be tolerated. A student who has plagiarized will automatically fail the paper and possibly the course. The student will also be listed on a departmental record that will be maintained for the duration of the student’s enrollment at the College and reported to the Dean of Students, who may decide to take further action.
See the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity (http://web.cuny.edu/academics/information-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf) for further information.

Writing Center: Located in Kiely Hall 229, tutors there are trained to help you revise your writing at various stages. If you believe you need additional help with your writing, or if I ask you to set up a regular meeting with a tutor, you should make an appointment at least one week prior to when an assignment is due. You can also get online help by visiting their website at http://qcpages.qc.edu/qcsw.

Special Assistance: If you have a learning, sensory, or physical reason for special accommodation in this class, contact the Office of Special Services in 171 Kiely Hall at 718-997-5870 and please inform me.

Calendar: This calendar is subject to change. You are responsible for keeping up with the changes. Reading assignments are listed for the day they are due.

Week 1: Summary
8/30  Introductions. In-class reading: Excerpts from celebrity blogs. Diagnostic essay.

Week 2: Analysis (including voice, tone and audience)
9/6   Morin, from The Stars. Discussion of Paper 1.
9/8   Evans and Williams, from Fame: The Psychology of Stardom. Response due: Critically read the text (summarize, analyze and evaluate).

Week 3: Sensory details, evidence
9/13  Hinerman, "I'll Be Here with You": Fans, Fantasy and the Figure of Elvis.

Week 4: Structure, thesis, revision
9/20  First draft of Paper 1 due (the personal narrative). Workshop: Careful summary, sensory details, audience considerations
9/22  Revised draft Paper 1 due. Workshop: Making a claim, analysis, structure

Week 5: Comparative analysis
9/27  Paper 1 due. In-class reading: Carlyle, from "On Heroes and Hero Worship."
9/29  Holiday. No class.

Week 6: Comparative analysis (cont'd), transitional relationships
10/4  Classes follow a Friday schedule. No class.
10/6  Boorstin, "From Hero to Celebrity: The Human Pseudo-Event." Response due: Explain the difference between the hero and the celebrity, according to Boorstin. Do you agree or disagree with these distinctions? Discussion of Paper 2.

Week 7: Source integration, quotation
10/11 Gabler, "The Greatest Show on Earth." **Response due:** Using at least three direct quotations, explain Gabler's tenets of celebrity, and then provide one celebrity that fits his criteria and explain why.

10/13 Furedi, "Celebrity Culture."

Week 8: Revision, introductions and conclusions, effective titles

10/18 Draft of Paper 2 due. Workshop: comparative analysis and structure, source integration, introduction and conclusion, title

10/20 Paper 2 due. Film: *A Star Is Born*

Week 9: Toulmin model, Aristotelian triangle


10/27 Dyer, from *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. **Response due:** What attitudes toward celebrity are apparent in *A Star Is Born*? What assumptions are being made about the audience's attitude toward celebrity?

Weeks 10: Toulmin model (cont'd), persuasive language

11/1 Grossberg, "Is There a Fan in the House? The Affective Sensibility of Fandom." **Response due:** Perform a Toulmin analysis of Grossberg.

11/3 Various news articles on celebrity stalkers--TBA.

Week 11: Revision, independent research


Week 12: Library research methods

11/15 Turner, "Celebrity, the Tabloid, and the Democratic Public Sphere."

11/17 Class meets in library.

Week 13: Analyzing narrative, evaluating and selecting evidence

11/22 Classes follow a Thursday schedule. Hinerman, "(Don't) Leave Me Alone: Tabloid Narrative and the Michael Jackson Child Abuse Scandal."

11/24 Holiday. No class.

Week 14: Balancing original analysis and argument with research

11/29 **Response due:** Analyze any narrative thread emerging in your celebrity journal.

12/1 Draft of Paper 4 due. Workshop: Balance, source integration

Week 15: Close editing

12/6 Individual conferences (Celebrity journal due during your conference.)

12/8 Individual conferences

12/13 **Paper 4 due.**