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Date:

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BENGALURU - 27**

**SEMESTER EXAMINATION: JULY 2022**

**IV SEMESTER – MA ENGLISH**

**EN 0318 - English Studies 4 - Cultural Studies**

**TIME: 2½ hours MAX. MARKS: 70**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. This question paper contains **THREE** pages and **SEVEN** questions.
2. You may refer to the passages but do not copy from them directly.

**I. Answer ANY ONE of the following questions in around 200 words. ` (1x15=15 Marks)**

1. Raymond Williams calls culture “one of the two or three most complicated words in English language”. What is implied by such a statement? Why is it important to study culture? Why is the definition of “culture” complex and complicated? How has the term evolved in meaning over time?

OR

1. Read the following passage introducing Cultural Studies by the University of Winnipeg and answer the questions that follow.

At the centre of Cultural Studies sits a host of questions, such as what constitutes a text, how some texts, visual images, and cultural artifacts come to be valued over others, and how questions of value relate to the distribution of power and authority.

Rather than concentrating exclusively on the group of elite texts that make up so-called "high culture," Cultural Studies takes as its focus the whole complex of changing beliefs, ideas, feelings, values, and symbols that define a community’s organization and sense of itself. Culture in this sense is often understood to be a primary vehicle of globalization in the contemporary world and deeply enmeshed in particular social, economical and political environments. As such, when we study culture, we are studying the world we live in and how we function in it.

How are the texts used in Cultural Studies different from texts studied in other disciplines? Why does Cultural Studies attempt to critically analyse the relative “value” of various “texts”? How can the discipline help us understand “a community’s organization and sense of itself”? Explain using examples based on your readings during the semester.

**II. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in 120-150 words each. (2x10=20 Marks)**

1. What is popular culture? How does ideology shape popular culture? Explain using adequate examples.

1. What are the three concurrent modes of cultural processes identified by Raymond Williams? How do they create a fluid (as opposed to static) understanding of culture? Explain providing examples for each.
2. What do Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer mean by “the culture industry”? Do you agree with their proposition that the culture industry leads to mass deception? Provide reasons to substantiate your view.

**III. Read the following excerpt and answer the questions in 75-100 words each. (2x5=10 Marks)**

a) In this passage, Pierre Bourdieu expresses his views on the question of taste in everyday consumption of cultural products.

The science of taste and of cultural consumption begins with a transgression that is in no way aesthetic: it has to abolish the sacred frontier which makes legitimate culture a separate universe, in order to discover the intelligible relations which unite apparently incommensurable ‘choices’, such as preferences in music and food, painting and sport, literature and hairstyle. This barbarous reintegration of aesthetic consumption into the world of ordinary consumption abolishes the opposition, which has been the basis of high aesthetics since Kant, between the ‘taste of sense’ and the ‘taste of reflection’, and between facile pleasure, pleasure reduced to a pleasure of the senses, and pure pleasure, pleasure purified of pleasure, which is predisposed to become a symbol of moral excellence and a measure of the capacity for sublimation which defines the truly human man. The culture which results from this magical division is sacred. Cultural consecration does indeed confer on the objects, persons and situations it touches, a sort of ontological promotion akin to a transubstantiation.

1. Bourdieu, above, talks about the opposition between the “taste of sense” and the “taste of reflection”, between “facile pleasure” and “pure pleasure”. Do you feel Bourdieu agrees with this division? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Write a short note on the term “habitus” used by Bourdieu in his explanation of the social construction of taste.

**IV. Read the following excerpt and answer the questions in 75-100 words each.**

**(2x5=10 Marks)**

The following passage is taken from Stuart Hall’s “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies”. Answer the questions that follow.

So the notion that Marxism and cultural studies slipped into place, recognized an immediate affinity, joined hands in some teleological or Hegelian moment of synthesis, and there was the founding moment of cultural studies, is entirely mistaken. It couldn’t have been more different from that. And when, eventually, in the 1970s, British cultural studies did advance – in many different ways, it must be said – within the problematic of Marxism, you should hear the term problematic in a genuine way, not just in a formalist-theoretical way: as a problem; as much about struggling against the constraints and limits of that model as about the necessary questions it required us to address. And when, in the end, in my own work, I tried to learn from and work with the theoretical gains of Gramsci, it was only because certain strategies of evasion had forced Gramsci’s work, in a number of different ways, to respond to what I can only call (here’s another metaphor for theoretical work) the conundrums of theory, the things which Marxist theory couldn’t answer, the things about the modern world which Gramsci discovered remained unresolved within the theoretical framework of grand theory – Marxism – in which he continued to work.

1. Hall, here, presents the “problematic” relationship between cultural studies and conventional Marxist theory. What are some of the central problems which theorists of the Birmingham school had with conventional Marxism?
2. In the passage, Hall notes his indebtedness to Antonio Gramsci’s work. Explain Gramsci’s definition of the term “hegemony” and its contribution towards studying social/cultural relations.

**V. Read the following excerpt taken from an article by Kal Raustiala and Christopher Jon Sprigman published on *Slate.com* and answer the question that follows in 150-200 words. (1x15=15 Marks)**

When Christie’s auctioned for $69 million a “nonfungible token,” or NFT, linked to the digital collage *Everydays: The First 5000 Days*, many people asked WTF was an NFT? And why was a relative unknown artist by the name of Beeple now the third-highest selling living artist—for a digital work that the new owner can’t even hang on the wall?

The ensuing media frenzy proved that NFTs have successfully consummated a buzzy marriage of cryptocurrency and contemporary art. But they have also been touted as solving the authenticity problem that plagues digital art.

The hallmark of any digital work is that it can be replicated—perfectly, endlessly, and virtually without cost. But if you bundle the artwork with an NFT, then you have a way, some argue, of identifying the “authentic” copy. As the New Yorker recently put it, “imagine digital Beanie Babies, but with only one existing copy of each.” That supposed rarity helps make sense of the lofty price tag for Everydays, as well as for the many other NFTs out there linked to digital works ranging from tweets to music videos.

David Hockney, the 83-year-old British painter whose pop-art masterpiece *Portrait of an Artist (Pool With Two Figures)* briefly held the record ($90.3 million auction price in November 2018) for price paid for the work of a living artist before losing that title to Jeff Koons’ sculpture *Rabbit* ($91.1 million auction price in May 2019), is skeptical. On an art podcast, Hockney recently said, “What is it that they’re owning? I don’t really know.” NFTs, Hockney said, are the domain of “international crooks and swindlers”…

The Christie’s description of the auction states that Beeple will deliver a copy of *Everydays*—a 500-megapixel image with a file size of about 300 megabytes—to the buyer. That feature makes this transaction resemble a typical art sale—buyer pays money; artist delivers “authentic” artwork. But unlike a painting or a sculpture or even a traditional photograph that has been created by the hand of the artist, there are countless perfect copies of *Everydays* floating around on the internet, copies that are indistinguishable from the one Beeple delivered to the buyer.

In fact, the very technology used to store the work—the peer-to-peer “InterPlanetary File System”—creates many copies of the file containing *Everydays* and distributes them to many computers connected to the network as a form of distributed storage.

10. Why is it difficult to ascertain “authenticity” in digital art? How does this compare to Walter Benjamin’s ideas about aura, authenticity and artistic values? Do you feel that his observations on art and mechanical reproduction are still relevant in the age of digital creation/reproduction? Provide reasons to justify your views.