

AMERICAN STUDIES 300-02
Introduction to American Popular Culture
Fall 2015
Monday and Wednesday, 10:00-11:15
UH-250

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Office Hours: M, 1:30-3:30, W, 2:30-4:30 or by appointment

Course Description

In this course, we will analyze the historical development of American popular culture from the folk culture of early America to the digital culture of today. Concentrating on the relationship among producers, audiences, and critics, we will explore how popular culture has both shaped and been shaped by the wider historical development of America. Moving chronologically, we will explore how popular entertainments—including spectator sports, circuses, mass-produced novels, music, film, comic books, television, video games and other digital sources—have transformed America and its peoples. To guide our analysis of such sources, we will consider several larger questions: Why is popular culture important? Does it change people, society, and the world? Who are the primary consumers and producers of popular culture? Who or what controls the meaning of popular culture? How does popular culture both unite and divide Americans?

General Education Learning Goals

American Studies 300 meets the General Education "Explorations in Social Sciences" requirement (D.5). In line with CSUF's "Goals of General Education," this course will encourage students to...

- a. Examine problems, issues, and themes in the social sciences in greater depth; in a variety of cultural, historical, and geographical contexts; and from different disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives
- b. Analyze and critically evaluate the application of social science concepts and theories to particular historical, contemporary, and future problems or themes, such as economic and environmental sustainability, globalization, poverty, and social justice.
- c. Analyze and critically evaluate constructs of cultural differentiation, including ethnicity, gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, and their effects on the individual and society.
- d. Apply theories and concepts from the social sciences to address historical, contemporary and future problems confronting communities at different geographical scales, from local to global.

Course Goals

In addition to the official, CSUF Learning Goals, this course has three main goals that guide all of its elements. The lectures, discussions, assignments, and essays will help you to:

1. Understand the development of American popular culture from the 18th century to the present;

2. Develop the analytical skills necessary to understand and interpret a wide variety of source materials;
3. Improve your written (and hopefully oral) communication skills.

Required Texts

Readings and viewings should be completed by the date on which they appear on the syllabus. Please bring the day's readings to class on the day on which they will be discussed.

Books to Purchase:

Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*
Susanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*
Frank Miller, *Batman: Year One*
Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas*

In addition to these sources, you are required to read a number of primary and secondary sources that can be found on the course TITANIUM site. On the course's main page, you can find all the information and readings/assignments that you will need for each week of the course.

I also will occasionally send you links to readings that can be found online. Be sure to read ALL documents before the class on the date listed on the folder.

Please do not read too far ahead as I may adjust the shorter online readings to fit the development of the course.

In addition to the printed sources, you are also required to view four films for the course. These films will not be shown in class. All of the films are available over the internet. If necessary, I will organize a showing of the film. The films are:

Planet of the Apes
The Jazz Singer
A Face in the Crowd
The Lego Movie

Course Assignments

Analyzing Pop Culture	50
Essay 1	200
Essay 2	250
Final Exam	300
Analyzing Book	50
Analyzing Film	50
Forum Responses (3)	100
Total	1000

Graded Exercises

There are four different kinds of graded exercises in this class: essays, exams, forum responses, and analyzing source worksheets.

- **Analyzing Pop Culture:** This is a short series of questions about in which you begin to analyze some elements of pop culture (it is completely your choice). This is graded on a Credit/No Credit basis and will be the foundation of your Final Exam essay question.
- **Analyzing Book/Film:** You must complete ONE set of questions for a book and ONE set of questions for a film. You will have 3 opportunities to finish the Book Questions and 3 opportunities to finish the Film Questions. A hard copy of these MUST be turned in at the start of class on the day we are discussing the book or film AND must be turned in to Turn-It-In as well to check for plagiarism. Remember you must answer the questions for ONE book and ONE film.
- **Essays:** You have two essays to write for this course, one after Part II and another after Part III. While there is no minimum or maximum length requirement, these typically require between three and five pages to answer the question satisfactorily.
- **Final Exam:** Your Final Exam will consist of two parts. In Part I you will have to answer 4-5 questions about the readings/films/lectures in no more than one paragraph per question. In Part II you will revise your Analyzing Pop Culture assignment from the beginning of the semester into an essay that ties the form of pop culture to materials covered in class and demonstrates the analytical and writing skills you have developed over the semester.
- **Forum Responses:** Beginning in Week 4, each of you will have to participate in 3 forums administered through TITANium. In Week 3, I will assign you to a group of ten (numbered 1-5). Remember your group number because that determines which forums you are required to participate in. Before the start of the weekend, I will post a series of questions in each forum about the readings/films for the next week. BEFORE THE START OF CLASS, you are required to post a response to those questions that will be graded for the depth of the engagement and understanding of the source. If your post is late, the grade may be cut by 50%. You are allowed to participate in ONE Make-Up Forum during the last 3 days of class.

Points/Grade Breakdown

925-1000	A	725-774	C
895-924	A-	695-724	C-
875-894	B+	675-694	D+
825-874	B	625-674	D
795-824	B-	595-624	D-
775-794	C+	594↓	F

Late Assignments, Missed Classes, and Rewrites

Because I have designed each assignment to help you think about the weekly material and prepare for larger essays, it is crucial that you complete assignments on time. Accordingly, late papers will be accepted at my discretion and may result in a penalty. It is your responsibility to contact me if you must miss a class or turn in a paper late. Be sure to notify me as soon as possible if you must turn in an assignment late so that proper accommodations can be made.

In accordance with General Education writing requirements, you will have the opportunity to rewrite and resubmit your first paper assignment for a better grade. You may NOT rewrite the assignment if it was turned in late or was failed because of plagiarism.

Expectations

To be successful in this class, you must work hard and come to class each day prepared to concentrate and participate. In the classroom, you should feel free to ask questions and fully participate. Because participation is critical to this class, we must work together to establish an atmosphere of tolerance and respect. While we are free to disagree, we should not deride or condemn each other. Additionally, you should avoid all distracting, disrespectful, or disruptive behavior that may inhibit other individuals' performance in the class. In particular, you must not engage in private conversations, newspaper reading, and so forth. All electronic devices, except those used for note taking, must be turned off during class.

American Studies at Fullerton

I am always happy to talk with students about the possibility of majoring, double majoring, or minoring in American Studies. Please drop by my office hours or to schedule an appointment if you would like to learn more about the department or the discipline. For more information on the American Studies Department, visit our website: <http://hss.fullerton.edu/amst/>.

Student Accommodations

CSUF complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing a process for disclosing disabilities and arranging for reasonable accommodations. On the CSUF campus, the Office of Disabled Student Services has been delegated the authority to certify disabilities and to prescribe specific accommodations for students with documented disabilities. DSS provides support services for students with mobility limitations, learning disabilities, hearing or visual impairments, and other disabilities. Counselors are available to help students plan a CSUF experience to meet their individual needs. Prior to receiving this assistance, documentation from a qualified professional source must be submitted to DSS. For more information, please contact DSS in UH 101; phone 657-278-3117; website: <http://www.fullerton.edu/dss/>

Academic Integrity

Integrity is an essential component of all students' academic experience. Students who violate university standards of academic integrity are subject to disciplinary sanctions, including failure in the course and suspension from the university. Since dishonesty in any form harms the individual, other students, and the university, policies on academic integrity are strictly enforced. I expect that you will familiarize yourself with the academic integrity guidelines found in the current student handbook. [<http://www.fullerton.edu/handbook/>]. Cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means, or helping someone commit an act of academic dishonesty. (UPS 300.021). Examples include, but are not limited to:

Unacceptable examination behavior: communicating with fellow students, copying material from another student's exam or allowing another student to copy from an exam, possessing or using unauthorized materials, or any behavior that defeats the intent of an exam.

Plagiarism: taking the work of another and offering it as one's own without giving credit to that source, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.

Unauthorized collaboration: on a project, homework or other assignment where an instructor expressly forbids such collaboration.

Documentary falsification, including forgery, altering of campus documents or records, tampering with grading procedures, fabricating lab assignments, or altering medical excuses.

Campus Emergency Procedures

Students should be familiar with campus emergency procedures: <http://prepare.fullerton.edu/>

Course Schedule

Indicates Reading Found On TITANium

This schedule may be subject to revision

Part I. Studying Pop Culture

Week 1 Studying Popular Culture

8/24 Course Introduction: Studying Pop Culture

8/26 Who Controls Meaning? Fans and Fan Culture

READ: Henry Jenkins on Fandom

WATCH: Fan Films (YouTube Links on TITANium)

Week 2 Studying Music and Literature

8/31 Analyzing Music: Kendrick Lamar vs. Against Me!

LISTEN: *To Pimp a Butterfly* by Kendrick Lamar vs. *Transgender Dysphoria Blues* by Against Me!

9/2 Analyzing Literature: *The Hunger Games*

READ: *The Hunger Games*

Week 3 Studying Film

9/7 NO CLASS: LABOR DAY

9/9 Analyzing Film: *Planet of the Apes*

WATCH: *Planet of the Apes*

READ: *Planet of the Apes* article

9/13 DUE SUNDAY AT 11:59 PM: Analyzing Pop Culture

Part II. From Folk to Pop

Week 4 The Folk Culture of Early America

9/14 The Sin of Fun? Entertainment in Puritan America

READ: Thomas Morton and John Cotton on Fun in Puritan America

FORUM: GROUP 1

9/16 Capitalism, Christianity, and the Battle Over Folk Culture

READ: Nissenbaum, Chapter 1

FORUM: GROUP 2

Week 5 Containing Folk Culture

9/21 **From Frontier to Civilization, Gouging to Boxing**
READ: Nissenbaum, Chapter 2
FORUM: GROUP 3

9/23 **The Parlor and the Street: Gender and Class in Victorian America**
READ: Nissenbaum, Chapter 3
FORUM: GROUP 4

Week 6 A Nation of Frauds

9/28 **A Nation of Humbug: P.T. Barnum and American Capitalism**
READ: Nissembaum, Chapter 4
FORUM: GROUP 5

9/30 **Sympathy, Envy, and Disdain: Race and the Power of Pop**
READ: Nissenbaum, Chapters 6 or 7
FORUM: GROUP 1

Week 7 Creating Pop Culture

10/5 **The Folklore of Industrial America**
READ: Skim Dime Novel (Your Choice and Links on TITANium)
FORUM: GROUP 2

10/7 **Football and the Frontier in Industrial America**
READ: David Wallace Adams, "More than a Game: The Carlisle Indians Take to the Gridiron, 1893-1917"
FORUM: GROUP 3

10/11 **DUE SUNDAY AT 11:59 PM: ESSAY 1**

Part III. The Rise of Mass Culture

Week 8 Technologies of Desire

10/12 **The War over Desire: Anthony Comstock vs. L. Frank Baum**
READ: L. Frank Baum, *Ozma of Oz* Selection; Anthony Comstock, Traps for the Young
FORUM: GROUP 4

10/14 **Canned Music? Technology and the Rise of Mass-Produced Music**
READ: John Phillips Sousa on "Canned Music"
FORUM: GROUP 5

Week 9 Mass Culture for a Mass Society

10/19 **From Science to Pleasure to Art: The Victorian Transformation of Film**
READ: Collection of Early Editorials on Film
FORUM: GROUP 1

10/21	Embracing Pop Culture, Becoming American
WATCH:	<i>The Jazz Singer</i>
FORUM:	GROUP 2
DUE:	<i>Jazz Singer</i> Questions
Week 10	<u>Cultural Heroes of the Machine Age</u>
10/26	The English and the Exotic in America
READ:	Burroughs, <i>Tarzan</i>
FORUM:	GROUP 3
DUE:	<i>Tarzan</i> Questions
10/28	From Swashbucklers to Superman: The Rise of Pop Culture Heroes
WATCH:	Superman Short Film from 1930s
FORUM:	GROUP 4
Week 11	<u>The Death of Victorian America?</u>
11/2	Swinging the Machine Age: African Americans and the Politics of Fun
READ:	<i>Jump for Joy</i> (Selection)
FORUM:	GROUP 5
11/4	Pop Propaganda and National Identity in WWII
WATCH:	Disney Propaganda Films (Links on TITANium)
FORUM:	GROUP 1
11/8	DUE SUNDAY AT 11:59 PM: ESSAY 2

Part IV. Pop Culture World

Week 12	<u>Pop Culture at War</u>
11/9	Pop Culture Fights a Cold War
READ:	<i>Satchmo Blows up the World</i> , (Selection)
FORUM:	GROUP 2
11/11	NO CLASS: VETERANS DAY
Week 13	<u>The Culture of Security</u>
11/16	Selling the TV, Controlling Audiences?
WATCH:	<i>A Face in the Crowd</i>
FORUM:	GROUP 3
DUE:	<i>A Face in the Crowd</i> Questions
11/18	Leaving Today: The Wonderful World of Walt Disney
DUE:	Articles and Websites on Disneyland
ACTIVITY:	In-Class Group Work on Disney Parks
FORUM:	GROUP 4

Week 14 Music, Power, and Identity

11/30 Music and Dissent: Rock and Motown

READ: *Dancing in the Streets* (Selection)

FORUM: GROUP 5

12/2 Music and the Politics of Identity: Disco and Hip-hop

READ: Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture* (selection)

FORUM: MAKE-UP OPPORTUNITY 1

Week 15 Cultures of Trauma and Joy

12/7 Everything is Awful?

READ: *Batman: Year One*

FORUM: MAKE-UP OPPORTUNITY 2

DUE: *Batman: Year One* Questions

12/9 Everything is Awesome? The Rise of Participatory Culture

WATCH *The Lego Movie*

FORUM: MAKE-UP OPPORTUNITY 3

DUE: *The Lego Movie* Questions

Week 16 Finals Week

12/18 DUE FRIDAY AT 11:59 PM: FINAL EXAM