

American Studies 401T
Adolescent America: A Cultural History and Contemporary Study of the
Teenager in America

California State University, Fullerton
 Fall 2015
 Mondays 7:00-9:45 PM / Room: UH-319

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Course Description

Many of our cultural ideas and ideals about adolescence are of recent vintage. The idea that adolescence is a distinct life stage characterized by "storm and stress" first emerged at the end of the 19th century. The term "teenager" did not come into popular usage until the 1940s. Only recently have researchers identified ways in which the "teen brain" is structured differently from the adult brain. This research proseminar therefore approaches "adolescence" as a historically constructed identity in American society. We will pursue our interdisciplinary inquiry on twin tracks: on the one hand, we will consider how the category of "adolescence" has been defined and understood by psychologists and childrearing experts; the media and the culture industry; and institutions such as schools and the juvenile justice system. On the other hand, we will study how young people themselves actively perform, resist, and renegotiate their age-graded identity as teenagers.

In this upper-division American Studies seminar, students will learn a variety of approaches to studying youth and youth cultures. The primary goal of this course is to guide students through the process of researching and writing a 15-20-page interdisciplinary research paper on a topic of their choice related to adolescence.

Course Prerequisites: AMST 201 and ASMT 301.

Required Texts

Books

Julia Alvarez, *Once Upon a Quinceañera: Coming of Age in the USA* (2007)
 Jeffrey Eugenides, *The Virgin Suicides* (1993)

TV Show

You are required to watch Season 4 of *The Wire* (2006) in its entirety by November 16. It is available on reserve in the CSUF library. You may also acquire it on your own through DVD-rental or digital streaming services (it is streaming on Netflix).

Articles

There will also be a number of assigned articles for this course, available on Titanium as web links or downloadable PDF files. Consult the course schedule for the list of readings.

American Studies Learning Goals

Develop a rigorous concept of culture and cultural process as well as an interdisciplinary sensibility, becoming aware of connections among the social sciences and the humanities.

- Develop an interdisciplinary interpretive framework for studying American culture, cultural diversity, and cultural processes in ways that will enable students to solve practical and theoretical problems

Gain a thorough understanding of cultural diversity by examining the creative tension between unity and multiplicity in American experiences.

- Identify a variety of examples of cultural diversity and commonality in America's past and present, demonstrating an awareness of the similarities, differences, and relationships among the multitude of American groups
- Explain how categories of difference—including race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality—are culturally constructed and vary according to historical, regional, and social contexts
- Understand and demonstrate how cultural beliefs and practices have played a role in both the exercise of and resistance to power throughout American history

Understand and interpret the ways in which culture creates meaning and guides behavior.

- Critically analyze and interpret a spectrum of cultural documents and expressive forms, ranging from popular to folk to elite expressions, from mass media to material culture
- Employ both historical and contemporary perspectives in order to situate these documents in relevant individual and social as well as local, national, and global contexts

Learn research, writing, and expressive skills to see connections among complex materials and to clearly communicate an understanding of the underlying meanings and causes of cultural/historical events.

- Design and carry out an original interdisciplinary research project on American culture
- Discover primary and secondary sources (hard copy as well as digital) using the library's resources
- Analyze and synthesize material from primary and secondary sources in order to create a coherent argument based on evidence
- Develop an original thesis and support that thesis through the thoughtful use of a variety of properly cited sources
- Communicate their research findings through clear, well-organized written and oral presentations
- Develop critical thinking, writing, and interpretive skills

Become informed and engaged American citizens, able to situate current political and social issues within their historical and cultural contexts.

- Understand the historical origins and cultural significance of current movements for social change.
- Situate the historical and contemporary study of American culture in a global context, demonstrating an understanding of the ways American culture has been shaped by diaspora, colonialism, and globalization

Course Assignments and Grading Standards

Assignments

The major writing assignment for this course is a 15-20-page research paper on a topic of your choice that is related to adolescence in America. You are expected to formulate a research question, progressively fine-tune your topic; conduct research using primary and secondary sources; formally present your findings to the class; and write a paper in which you lay out a clear argument supported by ample evidence. Because 401T is the capstone for the American Studies major and minor, you

should view this process as an opportunity to demonstrate your acquired abilities in cultural analysis and interdisciplinary thinking.

You must meet with me one-on-one to discuss your topic before you turn in your proposal.

In addition to the research paper, there are two short essays and four discussion forum posts that are required, designed to help you reflect on the course content and practice your analytical skills.

• **Research Proposal**

Your 4-5-page research proposal should...

- 1) frame a question that you want to answer in your research paper;
- 2) describe the focus of your paper (the topic) and explain the connection between your topic and your question. In other words, how will this topic help you answer your question?
- 3) discuss how your research project relates to and will address the following areas:
 - identity: how will your topic examine the relationship between identity and culture?
 - context: what context will be important for understanding your topic?
 - change over time: how will your project address change over time?
 - analysis: what cultural documents will you be analyzing as evidence?
- 4) list at least 3 primary and 6 secondary sources (secondary = scholarly articles and/or books) you plan to consult as you conduct your research. Note: your final paper must include research into at least 12 sources. At least 2 of those sources must be full-length scholarly books.

• **Project Update**

You are required to turn in a project update that includes the following:

- 1) How has your question and topic evolved since your proposal?
- 2) A rough draft of an introduction to your paper
- 3) A detailed outline of the rest of your paper
- 4) An updated bibliography of your primary and secondary sources

• **In-Class Presentation**

You are required to give a 10-minute in-class presentation on your research. Your presentation should include an audio, visual, and/or material source. Think of this as an opportunity to teach your findings to the class. Reading from bullet points on a PowerPoint presentation is greatly discouraged.

• **Research Paper**

Your final research paper should be 15-20 pages long, double-spaced, 12-point font. You may format the paper in either MLA, APA, or Chicago style; just be consistent.

• **Paper #1: Change Over Time (4-5 pages [minimum length])**

Write an essay in which you describe how ideas about adolescence and the everyday life experiences of young people have changed over time, from the 17th century to the present. You should reference at least three specific historical examples, taken from our readings (at least one example each from

early America, the progressive era, and the postwar era). End your paper by describing what *you think* adolescence means today.

• **Paper #2: Analyzing Images (4-5 pages [minimum length])**

Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the image of adolescence in the novel *The Virgin Suicides* with a popular culture text of your choice (film, television show, or novel). Your paper should address the following questions: In each text, what are the rites, rituals, and/or experiences that mark the transition into adulthood for young people? What does coming of age mean in each text? What is the image of adolescents in each text? Are there any similarities or differences in the depictions of teenagers and coming of age?

• **Discussion Postings**

Four times in the course of the semester you must participate in an online discussion forum; I will provide the prompt for each forum. Your forum response should be 1-2 paragraphs long (a few sentences is too short) and should demonstrate that you have done the reading and thoughtfully reflected on the question.

In addition to posting your response to each prompt, you must respond to at least two classmates' posts every week. These responses should be thoughtful, respectful, and approximately one paragraph long. Your posts and responses may also include questions about the readings or about what others have written.

Posts to the discussion board will be graded and should always be carefully written and proofread. Each week, your posts will be graded out of a possible 6 points: up to 3 points for your individual post, and up to 3 points for your responses to your classmates.

For your own response to the prompt:

3 points will be given for postings that are specific, cite the reading, and clearly demonstrate understanding of key issues;

2 points will be given for postings that show partial understanding of the reading but fail to notice or to remark on key issues;

1 point will be given for postings that are poorly written, too short, unclear, vague, and/or repetitive of other's postings and show minimal comprehension of reading;

0 points will be given for posting that show no evidence of having done the reading.

For your responses to your classmates' posts:

3 points will be given if your responses are thoughtful, clear, and contribute to the discussion in productive ways;

2 points will be given if your responses are clear and thoughtful but lacking in detail or originality;

1 point will be given if your responses do not demonstrate understanding of the reading or prompt or add little of substance to the discussion;

0 points will be given if you do not respond to classmates or are late with your responses.

Please note the deadlines for posting in the course schedule. These are firm deadlines. Late posts will not be counted. After all, your classmates should not be expected to keep checking back to see if you've posted yet in order to write their responses.

Posting Etiquette

Be as respectful as you would be in a face-to-face encounter. Do not waste your readers' time by repeating something that others have already posted or trying to fake your way through a discussion of something you have not read. I expect you to take the prompts seriously. And, of course, to maintain academic integrity by making it clear whenever you use the words or ideas of another.

Grading Standards

Proposal	5%
Paper #1: Change Over Time	10%
Paper #2: Analyzing Images	10%
Discussion Forum	10%
Project Update	5%
In-class Presentation	10%
Final Research Paper	40%
Participation	10%

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required at every class meeting. Attendance and class participation make up 10% of your final grade. Upper-division seminars work best when students are actively engaged with the classroom community, concepts, and coursework. Please come to every class prepared to 1) describe the central argument or theme of the assigned reading; 2) assess the reading for its relative strengths and limitations; 3) raise questions about the reading; 4) connect the course readings to one another; 5) connect the reading to your broader understanding of contemporary and historical issues in American culture; 6) relate the reading to your own experience and/or areas of expertise.

Late Assignments

An assignment is considered late if it is not turned in at the beginning of the class session in which it is due. Late assignments will be lowered one mark **per day** (NOT per class meeting) after the due date (for example, C to C-). Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis for legitimate reasons and only when a student asks for an extension at least 24 hours before an assignment is due.

Grading

For this course, +/- grading will be used. No extra credit will be offered. Keep all graded work so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out.

Community Policies

- It is unacceptable to arrive late or leave class early. If you must leave class early because of an appointment that cannot be missed, make sure that you tell me before class begins.
- Cell phones must be on silent (not vibrate), or preferably turned off. They must be stowed away out of sight.
- Laptops may only be used for notetaking; going online with your laptop is not permitted in class.

A+ 97-100; A 93-96; A-90-92; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C- 70-72; D+ 67-69; D 63-66; D- 60-62; F 0-59

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 Disability Support 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. <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 (subject to revision)

Date	Topic / Reading Assignments	Writing Assignments
M, Aug. 24	Introduction to Course: When Does Adolescence Begin and End?	
M, Aug. 31	<p>Before Teenagers: Coming of Age in Early America</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Demos and Virginia Demos, “Adolescence in Historical Perspective,” <i>Journal of Marriage and the Family</i> (1969), excerpt. • R. Todd Romero, “Colonizing Childhood: Religion, Gender, and Indian Children in Southern New England, 1600-1720,” from <i>Children in Colonial America</i>, ed. James Marten (2007), 33-47. • Steven Mintz, “Growing Up in Bondage,” <i>Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood</i> (2004), 94-117. • Emmy E. Werner, <i>Reluctant Witnesses: Children’s Voices from the Civil War</i> (1988), excerpts. 	
M, Sep. 7	No Class: Labor Day	
M, Sep. 14	<p>Rites and Rituals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alvarez, <i>Once Upon a Quinceañera</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post to Discussion Forum A by Sunday at 8 P.M.; respond to at least two classmates before 5 P.M. Monday.
M, Sept. 21	<p>The Invention of Adolescence: Progressive Era Youth Cultures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G. Stanley Hall, <i>Adolescence</i> (1904), excerpts. • Emory Bogardus, “The City Boy and His Problems: A Survey of Boy Life in Los Angeles” (1926), 	

	<p>excerpts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice Commission of the City of Chicago, <i>The Social Evil in Chicago: Study of Existing Conditions With Recommendations</i> (1911), excerpts. • Sarah E. Chin, “Youth Must Have Its Fling?: The Beginnings of Modern Adolescence,” <i>Inventing Modern Adolescence: The Children of Immigrants in Turn-of-the-Century America</i> (2009), 13-28. • Beth L. Bailey, “Sex Control,” <i>From the Front Porch to the Back Seat: Courtship in 20th Century America</i> (1988), 77-96 	
M, Sept. 28	<p>Rise of the Teenager in Postwar America</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erik Erikson, “Eight Ages of Man,” <i>Childhood and Society</i> (1950), 247-269. • David Riesman “A jury of their peers: changes in the agents of character formation,” <i>The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character</i> (1950), 66-82. • Thomas Doherty, “The Teenage Marketplace,” <i>Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s</i> (2002), 32-53. • Miriam Forman-Brunell, “The Bobby-Soxer Babysitter,” <i>Babysitter: An American History</i> (2009), 69-92. 	<p>Post to Discussion Forum B by Sunday at 8 P.M.; respond to at least two classmates before 5 P.M. Monday</p>
M, Oct. 5	<p>Contemporary Girlhood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class screening and discussion of <i>Thirteen</i> (dir. Catherine Hardwicke, 2003) • Joan Jacobs Brumbeg, “The Body as Evidence,” <i>The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls</i> (1997), xvii-xxxii. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper #1 due in class, hard copy
M, Oct. 12	<p>Constructing the Typical Teen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class screening and discussion of <i>American Teen</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Proposal due in class, hard copy

	(dir. Nanette Burstein, 2008)	
M, Oct. 19	<p>Educating Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamela Perry, “Identity and High School,” <i>Shades of White: White Kids and Racial Identities in High School</i> (2002), 10-11. • Jean Anyon, “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work,” <i>Journal of Education</i> (1980). • Murray Forman, “Straight Outta Mogadishu: Prescribed Identities and Performative Practices Among Somali Youth in North American High Schools,” from <i>Youthscapes</i>, ed. Maira and Soep (2005), 3-22. • Grace Llewellyn, excerpts from <i>The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education</i> (1991) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post to Discussion Forum C by Sunday at 8 P.M.; respond to at least two classmates before 5 P.M. Monday
M, Oct. 26	<p>Adolescent Sexuality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eugenides, <i>The Virgin Suicides</i>, Chapters 1-3 • Jean Twenge, “Sex: Generation Prude Meets Generation Crude,” <i>Generation Me</i> (2006), 159-179. • Ritch C. Savin-Williams, “Who’s Gay?” <i>The New Gay Teenager</i> (2005), 23-48. 	
M, Nov. 2	<p>Moral Panics and Protected Childhood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eugenides, <i>The Virgin Suicides</i>, Chapters 4-5 • Steven Mintz, “Parental Panics and the Reshaping of Childhood,” <i>Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood</i> (2004), 335-353. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper #2 due by Thursday, Nov. 5, at midnight via TurnItIn on class Titanium site.
M, Nov. 9	<p>Delinquency and Discipline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mariah Adin, “‘I Shall Beat You, So That the Devil Shall Laugh at It’: Children, Violence and the Courts 	

	<p>in New Amsterdam,” from <i>Children in Colonial America</i>, ed. James Marten (2007), 90-103.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Getis, “Experts and Juvenile Delinquency, 1900-1935, from <i>Generations of Youth</i>, ed. Austin & Willard (1998), 21-35 • William Bush, “The Other Lost Generation: Reform and Resistance in the Juvenile Training Schools, 1907-1929,” <i>Who Gets a Childhood: Race and Juvenile Justice in 20th Century Texas</i> (2010), 7-41. • Mary Odem, “Teenage Girls, Sexuality, and Working-Class Parents in Early 20th Century California,” from <i>Generations of Youth</i>, ed. Austin & Willard (1998), 50-64. 	
M, Nov. 16	<p>Contemporary Boyhood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Wire</i>, Season 4 (2006) • Ralph Beliveau and Laura Bolf-Beliveau, “Posing Problems and Picking Fights: Critical Pedagogy and the Corner Boys,” from <i>The Wire: Urban Decay and American Television</i>, (2009), 91-103. 	<p>Post to Discussion Forum D by Sunday at 8 P.M.; respond to at least two classmates before 5 P.M. Monday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Update due, in class, hard copy
M, Nov. 23	No Class: Fall Break	
M, Nov. 30	Student Presentations	
M, Dec. 7	Student Presentations	
Finals Week	Student Presentations , if necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Paper due, TBD