

HIST 2900 W T01 U.S. Social and Cultural History**Professors Sarah Elvins and David Churchill****Sarah Elvins – Fall Term****Office: 353 University College****Phone: 474-8860****Email: sarah.elvins@umanitoba.ca****Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-10:00 or by appointment****Course Description**

Welcome! This course will explore aspects of popular culture in the United States from the period 1877 to the present. Students will learn about changes in American food, entertainment, sport, consumption, music, and art, and consider how developments in leisure reflected and influenced broader changes in politics, gender roles, economics, and family life.

Most class time will be devoted to lectures, with occasional chances for group discussion or interaction. It is essential to attend the lecture. Completing the readings alone will not provide all of the background and analysis necessary to get the most out of the course. Students will also be responsible for reading the assigned material each week. The final exam will cover all materials presented in lectures, films, discussions, and readings.

Rules and Regulations

It is a shame to have to state this, but all written work for this course must be original. Do not be tempted to “borrow” materials from the internet or other sources without attribution. If you are using someone else’s ideas or words, you must include a footnote or endnote to show where you got the material. If something looks suspicious, I will check! If you cheat, you deny yourself the opportunity to learn and improve your skills. You also risk your academic future:

The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism on a written assignment is a grade of F on the paper and a final grade of F (DISC) (for Disciplinary Action) for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as purchase of an essay and repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five (5) years from registration in courses taught in a particular department/program in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty. The Faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism or to other experts for authentication. The common penalty in Arts for academic dishonesty on a test or examination is F for the paper, F (DISC) for the course, and a one-year suspension from courses acceptable for credit in the Faculty. For more serious acts of academic dishonesty on a test or examination, such as repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department or program in Arts or from all courses taught in or accepted for credit by this Faculty.

All assignments should be typed and double spaced, using a 12-point font. Further details about written assignments will be provided in class. Because this is a course that meets the University Senate's Written English ("W") requirement, ***you must hand in and get a passing grade on each assignment in order to pass the course.*** You will be provided with some evaluation before the Voluntary Withdrawal date of March 19, 2015.

Pay close attention to due dates. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, and only if you contact the professor directly before an assignment is due. Papers are due in class on the date indicated. Late papers will be penalized 2.5% per day. Students who wish to appeal a grade given for term work must do so within 10 working days after the grade for the term work has been made available to them. Uncollected term work will become the property of the Faculty of Arts and will be subject to confidential destruction.

Grade Breakdown

Term 1

**Assignment 1: Short Essay (3-5 pages, 750-1250 words)
due October 23 in class** **15% of final grade**

**Assignment 2: Essay (4-6 pages, 1000-1500 words)
due November 27 in class** **20% of final grade**

Term 2

**Assignment 3: Short Essay (3-5 pages, 750-1250 words)
due February 26 in class** **15% of final grade**

**Assignment 4: Essay (4-6 pages, 1000-1500 words)
due April 2 in class** **20% of final grade**

Final Exam During Exam Period **30% of final grade**

Grade Distribution

Exceptional – absolutely outstanding	90 and above	A+
Excellent – mastery of content and writing	81-89	A
Very Good – high quality work	75-80	B+
Good – solid performance	70-74	B
Satisfactory - slightly above average	65-69	C+
Adequate - average work	60-64	C
Marginal	50-59	D
Failure	below 50	F

Required Text – Fall Term

Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Steel Drivin' Man: John Henry: The Untold Story of an American Legend* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)

All other readings available online, or to be distributed by the instructor.

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Week 1

September 4

Introduction

Week 2

September 9

Time, Communication, Work and Leisure

September 11

Gender, Courtship and Respectability

Readings:

Kathy Peiss, "Charity Girls and City Pleasures," *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 18 No. 4 (July 2004) 14-16.

Nan Enstad, "Ladies of Labor: Fashion, Fiction, and Working Women's Culture," from *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999): 48-83.

Week 3

September 16

Region, Race and Popular Culture

September 18

Minstrel Shows

Readings:

Lee Glazer and Susan Key, "Carry Me Back: Nostalgia for the Old South in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 30. No. 1 (April 1996): 1-24.

Richard Waterhouse, "The Internationalization of American Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of the Minstrel Show," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* vol. 4 no. 1 July 1985 pp. 1-11.

Yuval Taylor and Jake Austen, “Darkest America: How Nineteenth-Century Black Minstrelsy Made Blackface Black,” in *Darkest America: Black Minstrelsy from Slavery to Hip-Hop* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2012): 25-79.

Week 4

September 23

Commercial spaces, department stores and window shopping

September 25

P. T. Barnum and the rise of mass amusement

Readings:

Benjamin Reiss, “P.T. Barnum, Joice Heth and Antebellum Spectacles of Race,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 51 no. 1 (1999): 78-107. (available online via JSTOR)

William Leach, “Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 71 no. 2 (September 1984): 319-342.

Week 5

September 30

Alcohol and Leisure Time in Industrial America

October 2

Restaurants and home cooking in the late nineteenth century – Please come prepared to talk about cookbooks!

Readings:

Examine at least three cookbooks available at the “Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project” website, available online at the Michigan State University here: <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/>

Search by date, and examine cookbooks from the period roughly 1869-1920

Jane Dusselier, “Bonbons, Lemon Drops, and Oh Henry! Bars: Candy, Consumer Culture, and the Construction of Gender, 1895-1920,” in Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001): 13-49.

Week 6

October 7

Song and toys and childhood

October 9

Summer camps, nature, and gender

Readings:

Steel Drivin' Man, Chapters 1, 2

Week 7

October 14

Vaudeville, Theatre and Class

October 16

Holidays and resort towns

Readings:

Lawrence Levine, "William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in Cultural Transformation," *American Historical Review* Vol. 89 No. 1 (1984): 34-66. Available online via JSTOR.

Peter M. Hopsicker, "Defying the Restrictions: The Adirondack Mountain Club Answers the 'Jewish Question,'" *New York History*, Vol. 91., No. 2 (Spring 2010): 124-145.

Week 8

October 21

Food and alcohol – immigrant experience

October 23

Literacy, the penny press and popular fiction

Assignment no. 1 is due in class

Readings:

Steel Drivin' Man, Chapters 3, 4

Michael Denning, "The Figure of the Dime Novel," from *Mechanic Accents*

Week 9

October 28

Baseball and sport

October 30

World's Fairs, the Circus and the Midway

Readings:

Steel Drivin' Man, Chapters 5, 6

Week 10**November 4**

The American West in Art and Fiction

November 6

Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show

Readings:

Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," (paper presented at the 1893 World's Columbia Exposition in Chicago). Widely available online, including here: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm>

Steel Drivin' Man, to end

Week 11**November 11 – no class****November 13**

Coney Island and Mass Amusements

Readings:

Nan Enstad, "Dressed for Adventure: Working Women and Silent Movie Serials in the 1910s," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 21 no. 1 (Spring 1995): 67-90.

Gary Cross, "Crowds and Leisure: Thinking Comparatively Across the 20th Century," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 39 no. 3 (Spring 2006): 631-650.

Week 12**November 18**

The Roaring 1920s and modern life

November 20

Prohibition, Gangsters and pop culture

Readings:

John F. Kasson, "The Manly Art of Escape: The Metamorphoses of Ehrich Weiss," from *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001): 77-155.

Week 13**November 25**

Movie: Gold Diggers of 1933

November 27

The culture of the Depression

Assignment No. 2 is due in class**Readings:**

Margaret T. McFadden, "'America's Boy Friend Who Can't Get a Date': Gender, Race, and the Cultural Work of the Jack Benny Program, 1932-1946," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 80 no. 1 (June 1993): 113-134.

Bradford W. Wright, "Superheroes for the Common Man: The birth of the comic book industry, 1933-1941," from *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Week 14**December 2**

Popular entertainment and celebrity

No readings this week – have a good break!

The lecture schedule for the Winter Term will be distributed the first meeting back in 2015, on January 6.