

HIST 2900 T03 The History of American Popular Culture

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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

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.

Since this is a course that meets the University Senate's W requirement, *students must pass the requirement for written English in order to pass the course.*

You will be provided with some evaluation before the Voluntary Withdrawal date of January 18, 2019.

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: Essay (4-5 pages, 1000-1250 words) 15% of final grade
due October 25 in class

Assignment 2: Essay (4-5 pages, 1000-1250 words) 20% of final grade
due November 29 in class

Term 2

Assignment 3: Essay (4-5 pages, 1000-1250 words) 15% of final grade

Assignment 4: Essay (4-5 pages, 1000-1250 words) 20% of final grade

Final Exam During Exam Period 30% of final grade

Grade Distribution

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

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.

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 6

1) Introduction

Week 2

September 11

2) Time, Communication, Work and Leisure

September 13

3) Gender, Courtship and Respectability

Readings:

Andrea G. Radke, "Refining Rural Spaces: Women and Vernacular Gentility in the Great Plains, 1880-1920," *Great Plains Quarterly* Vol. 24 no. 4 (Fall 2004): 227-248.

(*** Note: Unless otherwise noted, all articles are available online through the library's home page. Click on **Databases A-Z**, then **America: History and Life**. You can then search by author and title.)

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.

Week 3

September 18

4) Region, Race and Popular Culture

September 20

5) Minstrel Shows

Readings:

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 25

6) Commercial spaces, department stores and window shopping

September 27

7) 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.

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**October 2**

8) Alcohol and Leisure Time in Industrial America

October 4

9) 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 9**

10) Song and toys and childhood

October 11

11) Summer camps, nature, and gender

Readings:

Steel Drivin' Man, Chapters 1, 2

Week 7**October 16**

12) Vaudeville, Theatre and Class

October 18

13) 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.

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 23

14) Food and alcohol – immigrant experience

October 25

15) Literacy, the penny press and popular fiction

Assignment no. 1 is due in class

Readings:

Steel Drivin' Man, Chapters 3, 4

Week 9

October 30

16) Halloween

November 1

Discussion: *Steel Drivin' Man*

Readings:

Steel Drivin' Man, Chapters 5, 6

Week 10

November 6

17) West in American Culture

November 8

The National Parks

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

Fall Break

Week 12

November 20

19) Amusement Parks

November 22

20) The 1920s

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.

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 27**

21) Prohibition Culture

November 29

Movie: Gold Diggers of 1933

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.

Week 14**December 4**

1930s Radio

December 6

Hollywood's Golden Age

No readings this week – have a good break!

The lecture schedule for the Winter Term will be distributed the first meeting back in 2019 on January 8. Double check the classroom assigned for the Winter Term, as often it changes.

Student Resources

Academic Resources

You have access to several important resources to help you navigate your classes and university life more generally. There are writing tutors available to help you with your essays through the Academic Learning Centre (ALC): <http://umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/>. The History department will also make a writing tutor available exclusively to History students in the department on one day a week. The tutor's schedule and contact information to be updated.

The ALC page also has resources to help you with study skills, organization, as well as assistance for students using English as an Additional Language (EAL). Other issues, including accessibility services, workshops, and tips about academic integrity are addressed at the Student Advocacy Services webpage (http://umanitoba.ca/student/resource/student_advocacy/).

All of the above services can also be accessed under the heading of Student Resources on the Student Affairs website: <http://umanitoba.ca/student/studentlife/index.html>.

History students can also take advantage of the huge range of academic materials (including primary and secondary sources, as well as pages to help with writing and referencing) made available by the History subject librarian, tailored just for you! They are available on the Libraries page at this link: <http://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/history>. Students who need research assistance can also schedule an appointment with a librarian through the website.

Student Counseling Centre

Contact SCC if you are concerned about any aspect of your mental health, including anxiety, stress, or depression, or for help with relationships or other life concerns. SCC offers crisis services as well as counseling. <http://umanitoba.ca/student/counselling/index.html>

Student Support Case Management

Contact the Student Support Case Management team if you are concerned about yourself or another student and don't know where to turn. SSCM helps connect students with on and off campus resources, provides safety planning, and offers other supports, including consultation, educational workshops, and referral to the STATIS threat assessment team. <http://umanitoba.ca/student/case-manager/index.html>

University Health Service

Contact UHS for any medical concerns, including mental health problems. UHS offers a full range of medical services to students, including psychiatric consultation. <http://umanitoba.ca/student/health/>

Student Advocacy

Contact Student Advocacy if you want to know more about your rights and responsibilities as a student, have questions about policies and procedures, and/or want support in dealing with academic or discipline concerns. <http://umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy>

UM History Student Association (UMHiSA)

UMHiSA is a history undergraduate student run organization that seeks to establish a sense of community for students studying all facets of history, and provide support for them in their academic career. Students interested in fun times, spirited debate, new opportunities, a community of like-minded students, or all of the above, check out UMHiSA on our instagram account www.instagram.com/umhisa_undergrad/ or emailing umhisau@gmail.com.