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


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:


Week 3
September 16
Region, Race and Popular Culture

September 18
Minstrel Shows

Readings:


**Week 4**
**September 23**
Commercial spaces, department stores and window shopping

**September 25**
P. T. Barnum and the rise of mass amusement

**Readings:**


**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


**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:


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:

Steel Drivin’ Man, to end

Week 11
November 11 – no class

November 13
Coney Island and Mass Amusements

Readings:


Week 12
November 18
The Roaring 1920s and modern life

November 20
Prohibition, Gangsters and pop culture

Readings:
**Week 13**

**November 25**
Movie: Gold Diggers of 1933

**November 27**
The culture of the Depression

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

**Readings:**


**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.