



Captain America is sworn in as President in Marvel's *What If...?*, Vol. 1, No. 26 (January 1981)

HISTORY 2132A
History of American Popular Culture
Fall 2022
Thursdays, 2:30-4:30, UCC 56
In-Person Lecture

Instructor: Allen Priest, Assistant Professor

Office Hours: TBD

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This is a draft syllabus. Please see your course OWL site for the final syllabus in September, as some readings and assignments may change between the draft and final syllabus.

Course Delivery with Respect to the COVID-19 Pandemic:

The intent is for this course to be delivered in-person but should the COVID-19 landscape shift, the course will be delivered asynchronously (eg. posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. The course will return to an in-person mode of delivery when the University and local health authorities deem it safe to do so.

Course Description:

This course traces the evolution of American popular culture from its emergence as an increasingly inclusive "mass" culture in the nineteenth century to the more fragmented and kinetic cultural productions that are disseminated by American media - art, literature, television, film, music, the internet, etc.- today.

Antirequisite(s): *HIST 3307E*

Course Syllabus:

Starting with the advent of amusement parks, circuses and vaudeville shows, the progression and evolution of popular culture is something that has always been to a degree – exclusionary and idealistic. This course seeks to highlight the trend lines in popular culture and discuss how each era's dominant trends are as important for what they exclude, as for what they embrace. Topics explored will include: PT Barnum's true legacy, the cultural appropriation of jazz, the changing roles of women in film and television, monster films of the atomic era, the cultural significance of Marvel comics, and queer representation in media.

Course Materials:

All readings and materials for this course will be provided on OWL.

Methods of Evaluation:

Take Home Mid-Term Exam – 35%

This exam will be conducted on OWL between **October 14th at 12:01AM – October 17th at 11:59 PM**, and will cover material from Weeks 1-6 of the course. Students will have **three hours to complete the exam** once the portal is open, and exams grades will take into consideration that this is an open-book test. More details on specifics will be provided at a later date.

Mini-Lecture Assignment – 30%

This assignment will see students produce a mini-lecture on a topic of interest to them, which fits the time period and subject matter of the course. Students are encouraged to examine something that the course mentioned, but perhaps didn't have time to get into extensive detail on, or a subject that did not come up.

These presentations are due to the OWL portal on **November 24th by 11:59 PM**. More details on specifics of the assignment, and a list of suggested topics, will be provided at a later date.

In-Person Final Exam – 35%

The final exam of this course will be conducted in-person, during the exam period. It will cover material from Weeks 7-13. Students will have **three hours to complete the exam**, and in contrast to the mid-term, your exams grades will take into consideration that the test is not open-book. More details on specifics will be provided at a later date.

Note: In order to pass this course, all three components must be completed

Late Policy:

Assignments submitted after the deadline, without accommodation from [Academic Counselling](#), will receive a **2% per day** penalty, including weekends and holidays.

Accommodation for Missed Tests/Midterms:

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test will be required to write a make-up test. The make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

For in-person classes, make-up tests will be written during one of the Department of History make-up midterm dates. Dates for the two make-ups slots will be listed on the Department of History website under [Important Dates](#). It is important to note that these times are fixed, and that the course professor has no control over scheduling these dates. Students are expected to accommodate the make-up schedule.

IMPORTANT: In the event the University moves to online learning make-up tests will take place online via OWL. The date for the make-up may differ from the date listed above.

No other make-up opportunities will be provided unless further academic consideration is granted by Academic Counselling. Students who fail to write a make-up test in a designated time slot will receive a grade of zero on that assessment.

Course professors may not be available to respond to questions during the make-up test slots.

Use of Electronic Devices:

Students are permitted to use both personal computers and tablets for the purpose of note-taking in the classroom. However, the use of electronic devices for anything other than note-taking, especially in a class this large, can be distracting to your peers. Any student that is not using an electronic device for class-related purposes may be asked to leave lecture.

Cellphones should be set to silent or “do not disturb” during lecture, and be put away

Recording of lecture content is not permitted without permission. If there is a matter of accessibility that needs accommodation, please discuss with the course professor how they can best assist your learning.

Additional Statements:

Please review the Department of History Course Must-Knows document,

<https://www.history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/Docs/Department%20of%20History%20Course%20Must-Knows.pdf>, for additional information regarding:

- Academic Offences
- Accessibility Options
- Medical Issues
- Plagiarism
- Scholastic Offences
- Copyright
- Health and Wellness

Course Schedule and Readings

September 8th – Course Introduction and Defining “Popular Culture”

John Storey, “What Is Popular Culture?” in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, 9th edition (New York: Routledge, 2021), 1-16

George Lipsitz, “The Historical Study of Popular Culture,” in *A Companion to Popular Culture*, edited by Gary Burns (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 13-30.

Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular,” in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 5th edition, edited by John Storey (New York: Routledge, 2019), 564-574

September 15th – The Greatest Showman? Late 19th Century Modernity and the Barnum Legacy

James Fiumara, “*Electrocuting an Elephant* at Coney Island: Attraction, Story, and the Curious Spectator,” *Film History* 28, no. 1 (2016): 43-70.

Janet M. Davis, “From the King of Beasts to Clowns in Drag,” in *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under the American Big Top* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 142-191.

September 22nd – The Jazz Age and the Rise of the Movie Star in Popular Culture

Lisa R. Williams, “A Furious Battleground: World War One and the Development of Jazz in American Popular Culture,” *Jazz Perspectives* 8, no. 2 (2014): 153-84.

Stephen Sharot, “The ‘New Woman’, Star Personas, and Cross-Class Romance Films in 1920s America,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 19, no. 1 (2010): 73-86.

September 29th – Disney, Dandyism, and Depression Era Popular Culture

Tracey Molley, “Animating Depression America, 1934-7,” in *Cartoons in Hard Times: The Animated Shorts of Disney and Warner Brothers in Depression and War, 1932-1945* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 37-60.

Drew Todd, “Dandyism and Masculinity in Art Deco Hollywood,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 32, no. 4 (2005): 168-181.

October 6th – Popular Culture in an America at War

Luis Alvarez, “Zoot Style and Body Politics,” in *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance During World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 77-112.

Paul Hirsch, “‘This is Our Enemy’: The Writers’ War Board and Representations of Race in Comic Books, 1942-1945,” *Pacific Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (2014): 448-486.

October 13th – *I Love Lucy*, Rock n’ Roll, and Elvis Presley: Fifties Popular Culture

Stephanie E. Bor, “Lucy’s Two Babies: Framing The First Televised Depiction of Pregnancy,” *Media History* 19, no. 4 (2013): 464-478.

Beth Fowler, “‘A Teenager in Love’: How Black Adolescents Became ‘Teenagers’ in Rock and Roll Music, 1956-1960,” *Popular Music and Society* 44, no. 3 (2021): 324-339.

***** TAKE HOME: MID-TERM EXAM *****

Accessible on OWL from October 14th at 12:01AM to October 17th at 11:59PM

October 20th – Flying Saucers, Monster Movies, and Nuclear Fears: Cold War Popular Culture

John Sharples, “Sky and Stardust: The Flying Saucer in American Popular Culture, 1947-1957,” *Cultural and Social History* 13, no.1 (2016): 81-98.

Robert A. Jacobs, “Fallout Stories,” in *The Dragon’s Tail: Americans Face the Atomic Age* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 29-41.

October 27th – The Vietnam Era and the Counterculture Movement in Popular Culture

Beverly C. Tomek, “‘Hanoi Jane’ and the Myth of Betrayal: The Cultural War on the Home Front,” in *The Vietnam War in Popular Culture*, Volume 1, edited by Ron Milam (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2017), 313-336.

Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, "(Re)Collecting Vietnam: Vietnamization, Soldier Remorse, and Marvel Comics," in *Drawing New Color Lines: Transnational Asian American Graphic Narratives* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 189-208.

***** READING WEEK *****
October 31st to November 6th

November 10th – Teen Movies, Hip Hop, & Neon Everything: Eighties/Early Nineties Pop Culture

Anthony C. Bleach, "Postfeminist Cliques? Class, Postfeminism, and the Molly Ringwald-John Hughes Films," *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 3 (2010): 24-44.

Steve Marston, "Make Room For Hip-Hop: Mass-Print Mediation of 'Baggy' Basketball Shorts, 1990s-1994," *Sport in Society* 20, no. 11 (2017): 1612-1624.

November 17th – Popular Culture at the Dawning of the New Millennium

Sean Brayton, "MTV's *Jackass*: Transgression, Abjection and the Economy of White Masculinity," *Journal of Gender Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 57-72.

Matt Davies, et al., "Feminism and Political Strategy in *The West Wing*," in *Gender, Violence, and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2012), 56-69

November 24th – Popular Culture and 'The War on Terror'

Tim Gruenewald, "Superhero Films after 9/11: Mitigating 'Collateral Damage' in the Marvel Cinematic Universe," in *Imperial Benevolence: U.S. Foreign Policy and American Popular Culture Since 9/11*, edited by Scott Laderman and Time Gruenewald (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 141-167.

Ben Quail, "American Idiots: Charting Protest and Activism in the Alternative Music Scene During George W. Bush's Presidency," *Comparative American Studies* 18, no. 3 (2021): 302-231.

***** MINI LECTURE PRESENTATIONS DUE *****

Submit by November 24th at 11:59 PM

Please ensure that you submit your presentations to the OWL portal under "Assignments"

December 1st – TBD based on Class Interest

A quirk in the academic schedule sees us begin and end on a Thursday, which gives us 13 weeks together instead of 12. When I planned the course, I broke it into twelve sections, and as a result we have an extra week. After the mid-term, I am going to have students suggest a topic they would like to know more on, and we will vote – as a class – on my top three selections. The winner will be what we explore this week.

December 8th – Popular Culture (Wars) in the 2010s

Cory Albertson, “‘Growing Needy, Whiny Tomatoes’: The Marriage of Heteronormative Roles and Same-Sex Relationships,” in *A Perfect Union?: Television and the Winning of Same-Sex Marriage* (London: Routledge, 2018), 52-72.

Patrick William Kelly, “Disfiguring the Americas: Representing Drugs, Violence, and Immigration in the Age of Trump,” in *Imperial Benevolence: U.S. Foreign Policy and American Popular Culture Since 9/11*, edited by Scott Laderman and Time Gruenewald (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 210-229.

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