

**History 482B: Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America
Spring 2011**
Professor Chris Endy

Thursdays, 6:10 to 10:00 p.m. in King Hall B4016
Instructor's Office: King Hall C4076A
Email: cendy@calstatela.edu
Office Phone: 323-343-2046
Office Hours: Tues/Thur 2:15-4:15, and by appointment.
Personal Faculty Web Page: <http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/cendy>
(contains syllabus, handouts, tips on writing papers, and more.)

This course offers advanced undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to read, view, discuss, and write about popular culture in 20th century U.S. history. **Key questions** that we will explore include:

1. How do we know what “**popular culture**” is? What do we mean when we talk about popular culture (vs. folk, mass, or high culture)?
2. Who has controlled the **creation and reception** of popular culture?
3. To what extent has popular culture brought **liberation** for average people? To what extent has it brought social or cultural **control** by reinforcing stereotypes or dominant values?
4. Has popular culture and commodified entertainment brought **true happiness**, or does it mainly offer false, empty pleasures?
5. How do movies, songs, novels, and other popular culture artifacts reflect (or distort) **broader societal issues** such as gender and race relations or definitions of class and nationality?
6. How “American” is American pop culture, both within the United States and around the world? Is the **globalization** of American popular culture something to celebrate or lament?

Required Books (plus articles on e-reserve via the JFK library website):
John Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).
Rachel Rubin and Jeffrey Melnick, *Immigration and American Popular Culture: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).
Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995).

Assignments and Grading:

Class Participation: 15%
Oral Presentation: 5%
Reading Responses: 30%
Take-Home Midterm Essay (4-5 pages): 15%
Take-Home Final Essays (two 3-4 page essays): 35%

•We will use a “+/-” system: A (93-100), 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 (60-66), F (0-59). If you don't understand the basis of the grade you received or if you disagree with the assessment, speak to the instructor—but only after letting twenty-four hours pass for you to absorb and reflect on the evaluation. Please act within two weeks of the return of the assignment. Please also note that students will most likely receive a failing grade for the course if they miss three or more class sessions or fail to submit an assignment.

Your grades on the papers will be based on three major, closely related areas:
1. development of an argument or point of view that is pertinent to the issue at hand and that has breadth, coherence, and insight (interpretation);
2. use of the relevant class material (evidence); and
3. expression of ideas in a clear, concise, engaging prose (style).

Grading Rubric:

A: excellent. Outstanding in all three of the areas listed above.
B: good. Strong in all three areas or notable strengths in one balanced by weakness in another.
C: average. Adequate in one or more areas, weak in others.
D: poor. Problems in all three areas, or a lack of engagement in assignment.
F: unacceptable. Serious flaws, or a lack of engagement in the assignment.

A Note on Class Format and Discussions: We will spend a substantial part of our class time engaged in some activity other than lecture. Class participation is a part of your grade. If you encounter obstacles to your participation (for whatever reason), please meet with me so we can work out a solution. The class will also discuss sensitive but important issues involving race and gender. Please respect the views of your classmates and frame your comments constructively. One final rule: to promote classroom cohesiveness, no laptops or other electronic devices are allowed in the classroom.

Responses: For most class sessions, you will receive study questions designed to promote class discussion of reading assignments. You are required to turn in responses for eight of those fourteen opportunities. Responses may be typed or hand-written and are due at the start of class. Late responses will not be

accepted. If you think that you might miss a class when an assignment is due, you can turn it in beforehand.

Oral Presentation: You will deliver a 6-7 minute presentation, in which you introduce the class to some example of popular culture that you find particularly enjoyable or interesting. This artifact of pop culture (e.g. a song, a dance, a comic book, a movie, a fashion style, a video game) can be either historical or contemporary. Your presentation should consist of two parts. The first part is a 2-3 minute explanation of why you find this piece of pop culture so appealing or interesting. This part should also explain some of the social and cultural context surrounding your piece of pop culture. Most importantly, you should frame your comments around at least one of our core class questions listed at the start of the syllabus. You should deliver this part of the presentation in a coherent manner but without reading extensively from notes. For the second part of the presentation, you should share a carefully-selected 3-4 minute excerpt or demonstration of your pop culture artifact. Please rehearse carefully so that your presentation meets these time requirements.

Special note: You should not use PowerPoint or any other presentation software to summarize your lecture. If you use PowerPoint, it should only be to show one or two important images. If you plan to show an internet video (e.g. YouTube), you should email me the web address at least four hours before the start of class. I will then embed the link into my own lecture PowerPoint presentation. This will save time setting up for each presentation. If you have a special vision that differs from the above rules, please contact me at least two days in advance so I know what you're planning.

Late Policy:

Reading Responses: No late submissions allowed.

Midterm Essay: This paper will have two points deducted for each day, including weekend days, that it is late. Essays submitted on Turnitin just after the deadline will still be considered a day late.

Take-Home Final Essays: Late finals are strongly discouraged and may result in a failing grade for the class.

NOTE: In case of a family emergency, special allowances may be made. Please contact me as soon as possible. If you suspect that you might have a problem meeting a deadline, consult with me before the due date.

How to Submit Essays on Turnitin.com: You will submit some essays for this class online, using the online portal www.turnitin.com. You will need to establish a user profile with the website early in the quarter. If you have any problems establishing an account, please let me know well in advance of the first due date. If you have your paper ready to submit but for some reason cannot access [turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com), you should paste the text into an email message and send it to me before the deadline so that I know you had it completed on time.

Then submit the paper to turnitin.com at the next available chance. Every internet connection can go down unexpectedly, so you should never wait until the last minute to submit your papers. Late submissions caused by faulty internet connections will still be treated as late papers. Make sure you give yourself enough time to find an alternative connection before the submission deadline. Please review carefully your submission on the website to make sure it is correct. Make sure to get an email "receipt" to confirm your submission.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism refers to the use of another author's words or ideas without acknowledgement of this use. This includes copying from texts or webpages as well as submitting work done by somebody else. Other forms of plagiarism include altering a few words or the sentence structure of someone else's writing and presenting it as your own writing (that is, without quotation marks or footnotes). Violators will receive at minimum a zero on the assignment and will be reported to University authorities.

Please also read the following statement about www.turnitin.com, which comes from the CSU General Counsel and will apply to this class: Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. You may submit your papers in such a way that no identifying information about you is included. Another option is that you may request, in writing, that your papers not be submitted to Turnitin.com. However, if you choose this option you will be required to provide documentation to substantiate that the papers are your original work and do not include any plagiarized material.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

7 April: Class Introduction

14 April: Inventing Mass Culture and Modernity at Coney Island

Lawrence Levine, "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences," *American Historical Review* 97 (December 1992): 1369-99. [E-Reserve, J-Stor, & Academic Search Premier]

Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, whole book.

Responses 1 and 2 Due

21 April: What Do Films Mean? Ethnicity and Class on Screen

Rubin & Melnick, *Immigration*, 1-4, 11-48

Richard Butsch, "American Movie Audiences of the 1930s," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 59 (Spring 2001): 106-120 [E-Reserve]

Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in Juliet B. Schor and Douglas B. Holt, ed., *The Consumer Society Reader* (New York: New Press, 2000), 3-19. [E-Reserve.]

Responses 3 and 4 Due

Oral Presentation Proposal Due (a sentence or two on your topic)

28 April: Ethnicity on Trial: Representation and Resistance

Rubin & Melnick, *Immigration*, 49-128

Responses 5 and 6 due

5 May: Gender Play: Conformity and Resistance

Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 3-138

Elizabeth R. Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles," *Western Historical Quarterly* 38 (Summer 2007): 133-156.

Responses 7 and 8 due

12 May: Feminism and the Media

Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 139-307

Watch the Lady Gaga "Telephone" video (on YouTube)

Responses 9 and 10 due

16 May (SATURDAY)

Midterm Essay Due via turnitin.com by 5pm.

19 May: Hippies and Hip-Hop

Rubin & Melnick, *Immigration*, 129-84, 197-211

Responses 11 and 12 due

26 May: Coca-Colonization? How American is Am. Pop Culture Abroad?

James Petterson, "No More Song and Dance: French Radio Broadcast Quotas, Chansons, and Cultural Exceptions," in Heide Fehrenbach and Uta G. Poiger, eds., *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations: American Culture in Western Europe and Japan* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000): 109-23. [E-Reserve]

James. L. Watson, "China's Big Mac Attack," *Foreign Affairs* 79 (May/June 2000): 120-34. [E-Reserve & Academic Search Premier]

Ian Condry, "The Social Production of Difference: Imitation and Authenticity in Japanese Rap Music," in Fehrenbach and Poiger, eds., *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations*, 166-84. [E-Reserve]

Response 13 due

2 June: Coca-Colonization?, cont.

Rubin & Melnick, *Immigration*, 217-47

Josh Kun, "What Is an MC If He Can't Rap to Banda?: Making Music in Nuevo L.A.," *American Quarterly* 56 (September 2004): 741-58. [E-Reserve]

Alex Seago, "The 'Kraftwerk Effekt': Transatlantic Circulation, Global Networks and Contemporary Pop Music," *Atlantic Studies* 1 (2004): 86-106. [E-Reserve]

Response 14 due

9 June: Finals Week (Tuesday)

Take-Home Final Essay due via turnitin.com by Thursday, 9 June, 10pm.