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HONORS U.S. HISTORY

Topics in U.S. Cultural History: American Popular Cultures, 1945-2001

21:512:392

Spring 2016

Class Location: LSC 103

Class Meeting Time: Tuesday, 2:30-5:20

Summary:

This Honors U.S. History course investigates popular cultures in the United States from the end of World War II in 1945 until 2001 in relation to particularly significant political developments and social movements. With a focus on television, music, and film, we will ask how consuming popular culture mattered to the Cold War, to the civil rights movement, and to crises of confidence in the 1970s and the rise of the New Right. What do films, music and television tell us about changing cultural and social values in a given time period? What role did popular culture play in social movements and state policies?

The format of the course will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and smaller group activities. We will often read, watch, listen to, and discuss together primary sources, including films, television shows, and music. Because of the central role discussion will play, **it is essential that you complete the required reading and/or the required viewing and listening by the date indicated on the syllabus.** Please pay particular attention to the required viewing and listening requirements and plan accordingly. Because you will be evaluated on your understanding of sources that are assigned for homework *and* those you first encounter in class, **it is essential that you attend class regularly and engage actively.**

Grading and Requirements:

- Attendance and Class Participation (20%)
- Quizzes: (15%)
- Midterm exams--TWO (20%, combined)
- 4-5 page paper (draft and revision) (20%)
- Final exam (25%)

1. Attendance and Class Participation (20%). This crucial component of the course includes:

• Showing up prepared (with required readings). Attendance *combined with* consistent and thoughtful participation in class discussions is required, and will be counted toward your final grade. This is an honors seminar, and it is *not* a passive learning environment. Each student has a responsibility to complete all assignments and to engage with the material and with other students. If you must miss a class for family/personal/health reasons, please let me know in advance if at all possible. If you miss more than one class for medical reasons, you must provide a doctor's note. I will usually take attendance twice each week—once at the outset of class and again after the break. You must attend the entire class to be counted as present on any given day. Missing more than **two classes total** will affect a final grade. **Any student who misses four or more class sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences may not earn credit in this class.** Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

• To facilitate this participation and to help you prepare for the essay-writing part of the class, you must come to class with a typed one-page response to the discussion question listed for that week on the syllabus at **four points** during the semester. You will receive a check, check+, or check – on these response papers, and not a letter grade; they will count, however, toward the numeric grade that you will receive for class participation. You must submit the first response paper on either **Jan. 26 or Feb. 2**; you must submit another response paper at some point during the second unit of the class (2/23, 3/1, or 3/8),

and a third at some point during the third unit (3/29, 4/5, 4/12). You may submit the other response at any other point. You may submit up to two additional responses as extra credit; however, to receive the extra credit, these response papers must be thoughtful and clear considerations of the question for that week. When you are not writing a response paper, please use the discussion questions to help guide your reading.

- Also to facilitate participation, at TWO points during the semester (at any point when you are not writing a response paper), you must submit TWO discussion questions based on the required materials for that week. These discussions questions must be posted on blackboard by Tuesdays at 9 am. These questions must show that you have read/watched/listened with care, and are asking thoughtful questions about the material. In other words, these questions should not generate answers that simply summarize the material.

2. FOUR-FIVE unannounced quizzes (15%).

During the first 10 minute of four classes, there will be a quiz, based on the material required for that day of class; or during the last 5 minutes of class, there will be an open-book quiz based on the material we cover that day in class. These quizzes are designed both to help you to keep up with the homework, and to pay attention and take notes during class. The lowest quiz grade may be dropped at the end of the semester. Please note that class will begin promptly at 2:35 each week. If you arrive late, you may not take the quiz, and you will receive an F for that quiz. If you have specific issues complying with this rule on a consistent basis, please be in touch as soon as possible.

3. Midterm exams. Feb. 16 & March 22 (20%, combined).

These two short midterms will consist of an in-class “blue book” exam. More TBA.

4. Essay. (5 pg., 12 pt font), April 19 (25%)

Everyone must write and then revise and expand on that essay. You will receive a list of potential topics from which to choose, and you will have two possible due dates for submitting an essay draft. Your grade will be based on how you engage with the process as a whole and not just your final essay. The draft and revision are mandatory; if you turn in one component and not the other, you will receive an “F” for this assignment—even if the one component itself is well-written.

Draft due dates:

- **FRIDAY, Feb. 12** (for the first set of topics, based on Unit I)

OR:

- **FRIDAY, March 11** (for the second set of topics, based on Unit II)

Final, Revised and Expanded Essay:

- **April 19**

5. Final exam. Tuesday, May 10, 3-6 pm (25%)

NOTE: All assignments are due on the dates indicated. **Grades will be lowered on late papers**, unless you have talked with me in advance and received an official extension.

A few other important points about citizenship and community.

--Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. In your papers, you must cite and provide a reference for all language **and/or** ideas that are not your own. The essays for this class are based **ONLY** on required readings on the syllabus. You need not—and indeed should not—be going to any sources beyond the syllabus as you write your papers. However, should you make the choice to look at other sources, you still **must** cite those sources. Violations of the university honor code will be prosecuted to the full extent that is permitted. All students will sign the Rutgers University Honor Code Pledge.

--In this course, we will be reading and discussing material on which we may not all agree; some of the themes and imagery we encounter in the sources may seem offensive or otherwise controversial. In this context especially, it is crucial for us to combine the free expression of ideas with respect for each other.

--Please turn cell phones off and **PUT PHONES & IPODS AWAY** before class begins. If you want to take notes on a laptop, please email me in advance to receive written permission (and note that I may say no); if you do receive permission to have a laptop in class, only that document (or related required sources) may be open. Texting or emailing or otherwise using technology in an inappropriate way at any time during class is **prohibited**. If your phone rings during class, I will ask you to leave the room to turn it off. If this happens more than once, a student will be counted as absent for that entire day. If any phones or ipods are visible during class, this will create an impression of texting, etc. That student will be counted as absent for that day.

--Food and drink are permissible as long as neither is disruptive. We will usually have a 5-10 minute break during the class, but not always. In general, one student may leave the class at a time.

--This class warmly welcomes all kinds of learners. If you have a documented disability that could have an impact on your work, please be in touch with me directly outside of class to discuss accommodations confidentially. If you have not already done so, please also contact the Office of Disability Services at the Robeson Center as soon as possible.

Required Texts:

Books (on reserve at the Dana Library; I will make relevant chapters available on bb as well.)

Doherty, Tom. *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2005).
(U of Chicago, 1992).

King, Martin Luther. *Why We Can't Wait* (Signet Classic, 2000)

Films and television (films and tv episodes are available either on youtube or inexpensively for rent on Netflix, hulu or amazon; I encourage you to team up to watch together and cut down on costs.)

I Love Lucy, "Job Switching" (1952) "Vitameatavegamin" (1952)

Mean Streets (1973)

Jaws (1975)

Rocky (1976)

Online readings, viewings and listening: links are in the syllabus and/or readings are on blackboard under course documents. Please print out a hard copy and **bring these readings to class**.

CLASS SCHEDULE:**UNIT I: Television and the Cold War****Jan. 19: Introductions****Jan. 26: Television and Television Families in the Cold War****Required Reading:**

- Doherty, chapter one.

• An account of the exchanges in Moscow between Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev in 1959. These are known as the “Kitchen Debates.”

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=176>

Required Viewing:

- Newsreel of Nixon and Khrushchev (1959):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIJ1S9wAGbA>

- *The Honeymooners*, “TV or not TV” (1955):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMgIH9t62OI>

QUESTION: What images of families do Nixon and/or Khrushchev offer in their “Kitchen Debates”? (Or a related question: Why were these two world leaders arguing about kitchens?)

Feb. 2: Television, Ethnicity and Gender in the Cold War**Required Reading:**

- Doherty, chapter 3.

• Gustavo Perez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* (Texas, 1994), chapter one, “I Love Ricky,” pp. 23-45.

- “The Shadow of Incipient Censorship”: The Creation of the Television Code, 1952.

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6558>

Required Viewing:

- *I Love Lucy*, “Job Switching” (1952)

- *I Love Lucy*, “Vitameatavegamin” (1952)

(viewing options TBA)

QUESTION: To what extent was the character, Lucy Ricardo a “traditional” housewife? Did she do more to conform to that role or more to challenge that role?

Feb. 9: Television, News, and Entertainment**Required Reading:**

- Doherty, chapters 8-9.

- The “Army-McCarthy Hearings” (1954), excerpts: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6444>

- **"Damage": Collier's Assesses the Army-McCarthy Hearings (1954):**
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6449>

Required Viewing:

- Edward R. Murrow, "A Report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy," (March 1954)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YOIueFbG4g>

QUESTION: Based on your reading, did television do more to **strengthen and prop up** McCarthy and fears about domestic communism, OR did television do more to **thwart** McCarthy's efforts?

FIRST DUE DATE FOR ESSAY DRAFT: FRIDAY, Feb. 12, via blackboard.

Feb. 16:
Midterm I.

UNIT II: Music and Black Activism, 1955-1970s

Feb. 23: The Music and the Movement, I: "Race'ing" the Cold War-- Jazz, Civil Rights, and American Foreign Policy

Required Reading:

- Penny Von Eschen, "'Satchmo Blows Up the World': Jazz, Race, and Empire in the Cold War," in R. Wagnleitner and E. May, eds., *"Here, There, and Everywhere": The Foreign Poetics of American Popular Culture* (University Press of New England, 2000) pp. 163-178.

- Letter from Jackie Robinson to President Dwight Eisenhower, May 13, 1958 (click on "view letter pages"- 2 pages):

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/jackie_robinson_letter/

Required Listening:

- Dave Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors, An Original Musical Production* (Sony/Columbia, 1994; orig. 1962),

1. track 2, "Cultural Exchange":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWmicId9ldk>

2. track 10, "The Real Ambassadors":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtbN0cNIRJg>

- Charles Mingus, "Fables of Faubus":

1. on the album, *Mingus Ah Um* (1959):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l24FZCmtY0Q>

2. on the album released a year later, *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus* (1960):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXuZBywW4gA>

see lyrics: <http://www.bluesforpeace.com/lyrics/fables-of-faubus.htm>

QUESTION: Why did State Department officials think it was a good idea for jazz musicians to represent the United States abroad, according to Von Eschen?

March 1: Freedom Songs-- and More-- in the Early 1960s

Required Reading:

- William C. Banfield, "The Music Kept Us from Being Paralyzed: A Talk with Bernice Johnson

Reagon,” in Banfield, *Black Notes: Essay of a Musician Writing in a Post-Album Age* (Scarecrow Press, 2004), pp. 193-197. (OR, read, watch, and listen- Bill Moyers with Bernice Johnson Reagon, “The Songs are Free,” Feb. 6, 1991: <http://billmoyers.com/content/songs-free/> (DETAILS TBA)

- King, *Why We Can't Wait*, Introduction, Chapters 1-2, chapter 5

Required Listening:

- The Freedom Singers, *Newport Broadside: Topical Songs at the Newport Folk Festival, 1963*:
 1. “This Little Light of Mine”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOZJg2KyP5M>
 2. “Woke Up This Morning”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TszIXdKfOsE>
- Nina Simone, *In Concert* (1964):
 1. “Mississippi Goddam”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scGVEwaUsdg> (or a 1965 performance:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVQjGGJVSXc>)
 2. “Pirate Jenny.”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKTg0UYxCso>

QUESTION: Choose one song and consider what emotions it conveys as well as how it conveys those emotions (lyrics?, rhythm?, other performance strategies...?)

March 8: Music and the Black Arts Movement in the late 60s and 70s

Required Reading:

- Primary sources about James Brown, from Nelson George, ed., *The James Brown Reader: 50 Years of Writing About the Godfather of Soul* (2008).
- Larry Neal, “Black Art and Black Liberation,” (*Ebony*, 1969), reprinted in Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, eds., “‘Takin’ it to the Streets’”: *A Sixties Reader* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 159-163.
- “Self Determination and the Black Aesthetic: An Interview with Max Roach,” (*Black World* 1973), reprinted in John Bracey, ed, *SOS-Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader* (U Mass. 2014), pp. 185-187.

Required Listening:

- James Brown, *Say it Loud and Live: Live in Dallas, 08.26.68*, (1968)
 1. Track 4: “Introduction to Say it Loud—I’m Black and I’m Proud”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUP4MafTDb0&index=4&list=PLoSoYZTklMZeXhiDPOATYM8HGH68oRjm8>
 2. Track 5: “Say it Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud”:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJ2TLOky_kk&list=PLoSoYZTklMZeXhiDPOATYM8HGH68oRjm8&index=5
- Marvin Gaye, *What’s Going On*, (1971) “What’s Going On”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5Z-kjrSomw>
- Nina Simone, “To Be Young, Gifted and Black”
 1. 1970 introduction and live performance:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nbG3f9NGg8>
 2. 1972 on *Sesame Street*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-f3PYJT5mU>

QUESTION: Open Response—anything you’d like to write about based on the required material.

SECOND DUE DATE FOR ESSAY DRAFT: FRIDAY, March 11, via blackboard.

March 15: Spring Break

March 22: Toward Unit III.

Midterm II.

Unit III:
Hollywood Films and Rise of the Right

March 29: A Film Industry (and Nation) in Flux: Ethnicity, New Hollywood, and the “Auteur”

Required Reading:

- Eric Porter, “Affirming and Disaffirming Actions: Remaking Race in the 1970s,” in Beth Bailey and David Farber, eds., *American in the 70s* (2004), pp. 50-74.

- Primary Sources, TBA

Required Viewing:

- *Mean Streets*

QUESTION: In what ways does PLACE matter to the film *Mean Streets*?

April 5: A Film Industry (and Nation) in Flux, II: Backlash

Required Reading:

- Matthew Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Harvard, 2006), pp. 97-108.

- Primary sources, TBA

Required Viewing:

- *Rocky* (1976)

April 12: Blockbuster Films/Blockbuster Politics: the New Right and the End of the Cold War

Required Reading:

- Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), ch. 1, “Future Tense” (pp. 11-26); ch. 6, “Sheik

to Sheik” (pp. 72-80); and ch. 11, “The Ultimate Trip” (135-45).

- Ronald Reagan, selected speeches. TBA.

Required Viewing:

- *Jaws* (1975)

QUESTION: If you did not have a date to accompany *The Late Great Planet Earth*, what are some clues from the text that it came out in 1970?

April 19: TBA

Final Essay Due

April 26: Looking Back/Looking Ahead: A Cultural History of the War on Terror

Required Reading:

- TBA

FINAL EXAM: May 10, 3-6 pm.