Summary:
This writing-intensive course investigates popular cultures in the United States from the late 1800s through World War II. By considering literature, films, music, and radio, we will ask how popular culture mattered: 1. to debates about immigration, and to changing race and gender relations; 2. to the federal government and policy-making; and 3. to social movements. Throughout, we ask what films, literature, radio, and music tell us about changing values and contested issues in a particular time period. More specifically, how did entertainment shape debates about what it meant to be a “good American” in different historical moments?

The format of the course will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and group activities. We will often read, watch, and discuss together primary sources from the period in question, including films. Class will be an opportunity for us to review sources that you will have already read/watched/listened to for homework, and will be a place where we bring in new materials for the first time. Because of the central role discussion will play, it is essential that you complete the assigned required readings and/or the required viewings by the date indicated on the syllabus. 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.

Required Texts:
BOOKS (for sale at the Rutgers University Bookstore. Books are also available on reserve at the Dana Library.)
Burroughs, Edgar Rice. Tarzan of the Apes (Penguin/Signet, 1990; 1914)
Inada, Lawson Fusado, ed.. Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience (Heyday Books, 2000) (recommended; this is a great collection, but I will include the required pages on bb).

ONLINE READINGS, INDICATED BY * ON THE SYLLABUS.
The online readings will either be available on blackboard or through links listed here on the syllabus. You MUST print out and bring hard copy of these readings to class.

FILMS (available for rental on Netflix, Amazon, and/or on Youtube, etc.; films are also on reserve on the 4th floor of the Dana Library)
The Great Train Robbery (1903)
The Sheik (1921)
Modern Times (1936)
Casablanca (1943)

While we will be watching sections of these films (and others) together in class, you will also need to see these sources in their entirety on your own. You MUST plan accordingly.

Grading, Requirements, and Expectations:
• Attendance and Class Participation (20%)  
• Quizzes (15%)  
• Midterm (15%)
• Paper and revision (25%)
• Final exam (second “midterm” plus a take home written component): (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, note-taking during lectures, and completion of in-class assignments, is required. All of these elements will be counted toward your final grade. 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. More than four unexcused absences (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 1-2 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. EVERYONE must complete a first response paper based on Tarzan on Tuesday, September 8. Please note that class will not be meeting that day and that you must submit this response via blackboard (you should bring hard copy of all other response papers to class). You may complete the second response paper at any point before October 20. On November 10, EVERYONE must submit a response paper. You may submit the fourth and final response at any point in November-December. When you are not writing a response paper, please use the discussion questions to help guide your reading and come to class prepared to discuss your thoughts about those questions. You may submit up to two additional responses as extra credit.
Note: Unless otherwise indicated, you must submit response papers based on the material we are discussing that day in class; you may not, for example, answer response paper questions about Tarzan and submit that response in November.

2. FIVE-SIX unannounced quizzes (15%).
• During the first 10 minute of four classes, there will be a short quiz, based on the material required for that day of class. 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.
  • At the end of one-two classes, there will be a longer quiz, based on the material that we have covered in class that day.
The lowest quiz grade may be dropped at the end of the semester.
If you arrive late or leave early on a “quiz-day,” you will miss that quiz and receive a failing grade.

3. Midterm exam, November 3 (15%).
The midterm exam will consist of an in-class “blue book” exam. More TBA.

4. Essay. (4-5 pg., 12 pt font), Tuesday, November 24, 25%
Everyone must write an essay and then expand upon and revise that draft. 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:
  • Tuesday, September 22 (for the first set of topics)
OR:
• FRIDAY, October 23 (for the second set of topics)

Final Essay due:
• Tuesday, November 24, by 2:30 pm.

6. Final exam. December 17, 11:45 am. 25%
Take home essay (to be distributed the last day of class), plus in-class blue book exam. The blue book exam will be on material from the midterm through the end of the semester; the take home essay will focus on the material from the second half of the semester.

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, community and expectations.
--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. We will review what is and is not allowed further in class, but please note that ignorance is not an excuse when it comes to plagiarism. 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 feel offensive or otherwise be controversial. In this context especially, it is crucial for us to combine the free expression of ideas with respect for each other. If anyone has any questions or concerns about the material, please be in touch with me.

--The Writing Center. While we will be talking a great deal about writing over the course of the semester, it is important to note that this is not a “writing” class per se, and we will focus more on how to write about historical sources than on issues of grammar/technique, etc. With that in mind, there may be times when I feel, and/or you may feel, that you need additional support to strengthen your writing. The R-N Writing Center is in Conklin 126; there, students can take advantage of trained tutors whose job it is to help students succeed with writing and reading skills. This is a terrific resource; I encourage all of you – and at times I may strongly encourage or expect some of you-- to take advantage of the Writing Center. I have heard that it can be difficult to get an appointment, especially toward the end of the semester, so please plan accordingly and do not wait until the last minute to make an appointment. For more information, see: http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter

--Please turn cell phones off and PUT PHONES & IPODS (etc.) AWAY before class begins. If you want to take notes on a laptop, you must email me in advance to receive written permission, and remember that 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. During class, only one student may leave the class at a time.

--This class 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. If you are unfamiliar with the Office of Disability Services but have
noticed that you have trouble completing timed assessments, please feel free to be in touch with me to discuss further.

--Finally, please note that this syllabus is a work in progress. As we get to know each other and I learn more about your interests and learning styles, I may make modifications.

Class Schedule and Readings:

**UNIT I:**
*Making a New Century: Consumption and Modernity in Leisure, Literature, and Film, 1890-1920s*

**September 1:**
*Introductions and Setting the Scene: Work & Leisure in the Early 20th Century*

**September 8:**
*NO CLASS. Tuesday is Monday at RN.*

• Please use this week to read *Tarzan*, chapters 1-14. (This may be available on google books: https://books.google.com/books?id=ZbBOAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=tarzan+of+the+apes+1914&hl=en&sa=X&ei=l0VvVfbxB4qFspAWep4E&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Response paper **required** via blackboard.

Question: Early on in *Tarzan*, Burroughs compares the young boy to the apes with whom he has been raised (pp. 52-55). Read the passage below several times, and then describe some of the ways that Burroughs makes these comparisons. What kind of language and images does Burroughs use, and what is the significance of his language and imagery? Also, (and you will likely not have space to answer this, but it is worth considering): what effects might it have had on readers in the early 1900s to see that Tarzan feels that the apes are superior-- and more attractive than he is?

“He was nearly ten before he commenced to realize that a great difference existed between himself and his fellows. His little body, burned brown by exposure, suddenly caused him feelings of intense shame for he realized that it was entirely hairless, like some low snake, or other reptile…”

...“As they leaned over, both little faces were mirrored on the placid pool; the fierce and terrible features of the ape beside those of the aristocratic scion of an old English house.

“Tarzan was appalled. It had been bad enough to be hairless, but to own such a countenance! He wondered that the other apes could look at him at all.

That tiny slit of a mouth and those puny white teeth! How they looked beside the mighty lips and powerful fangs of his more fortunate brothers.

“And the little pinched nose of his; so this was it that it looked half starved. He turned red as he compared it with the beautiful broad nostrils of his companion. Such a generous nose! Why it spread half across his face! It certainly must be fine to be so handsome, thought poor little Tarzan.”

**September 15:**
*Looking Outward, I: Civilization, Modern Life, and the “Primitive”*

**Required:**
• Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914), finish.
• PRIMARY SOURCE, TBA
Question: More than halfway through *Tarzan*, Tarzan and Jane meet (pp. 186-89), as Tarzan rescues Jane from the ape, Terkoz. Read the passage below several times, and then describe the ways that Burroughs depicts these two characters and the effects each has on the other. What kind of language and images does Burroughs use, and what is the significance of his language and imagery? Also, (and you will likely not have space to answer this, but it is worth considering): what effects might it have had on readers in the early 1900s to read about Jane’s behavior here?

“To Jane Porter, the strange apparition of this god-like man was as wine to her sick nerves….”

AND TWO PARAGRAPHS LATER:

“To Jane Porter—her lithe, young form flattened against the trunk of a great tree, her hands tight pressed against her rising and falling bosom, and her eyes wide with mingled horror, fascinating, fear, and admiration—watched the primordial ape battle with the primeval man for possession of a woman—for her.

“As the great muscles of the man’s back and shoulders knotted beneath the tension of his efforts, and the huge biceps and forearm held at bay those mighty tusks, the veil of centuries of civilization and culture was swept from the blurred vision of the Baltimore girl.

“When the long knife drank deep a dozen times of Terkoz’ heart’s blood, and the great carcass rolled lifeless upon the ground, it was primeval woman who sprang forward with outstretched arms toward the primeval man who had fought for her and won her.

“And Tarzan?

“He did what no red-blooded man needs lessons in doing. He took his woman in his arms and smothered her upturned, panting lips with kisses.

“For a moment, Jane Porter lay there with half-closed eyes. For a moment—the first in her young life—she knew the meaning of love.

“But as suddenly as the veil had been withdrawn it dropped again, and an outraged conscience suffused her face with its scarlet mantle, and a mortified woman thrust Tarzan of the Apes from her her and buried her face in her hands.”

**September 22:**

TBD.

**DRAFT DUE DATE 1:** Submit essays (3-4 pages) via blackboard. Please name your essays with: `lastname.docx`

Please see blackboard for more details about this assignment and writing guidelines.

**Paper topics:**

1. In reading *Tarzan*, Americans had the opportunity to imagine Africa. How might they have used that imagined space **EITHER** to reinforce, **OR** challenge ideas about either American race relations or gender relations? **Draw on at least two examples from the novel to develop and explain your thesis.**

2. In the late 19th and early 20th century, many Americans were excited, but also anxious about the modern life and consumer culture that was developing around them. In what ways did Burroughs seek to relieve those anxieties? **Draw on at least two examples to develop and explain your thesis.**

3. Choose one scene from *Tarzan*; with a focus on technique, content, character (choose at least two of those), consider its significance in historical context.

**September 29:**

Looking Outward, II: Modernity, Popular Culture, and Empire

**Required:**

  Read: [http://www.bartleby.com/58/1.html](http://www.bartleby.com/58/1.html)
  Listen: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlYms_ViYcE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlYms_ViYcE) (start at 2:15 to match text).
**Mark Twain, “To the Person Sitting in the Darkness” (1901).**
Read: [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR/sitting.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR/sitting.html)
Listen: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHRoKLGW-tl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHRoKLGW-tl)
(start at 14 minutes to match the text)

Question 1: Draw on the passage below to consider why Teddy Roosevelt thinks the “strenuous life” is a good thing. What kinds of language and imagery does he use to make his points? What does this passage suggest about who and what is (and is not) important to him?

“We have a given problem to solve. If we undertake the solution, there is, of course, always danger that we may not solve it aright; but to refuse to undertake the solution simply renders it certain that we cannot possibly solve it aright. The timid man, the lazy man, the man who distrusts his country, the over-civilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues, the ignorant man, and the man of dull mind, whose soul is incapable of feeling the mighty lift that thrills "stern men with empires in their brains"—all these, of course, shrink from seeing the nation undertake its new duties; shrink from seeing us build a navy and an army adequate to our needs; shrink from seeing us do our share of the world's work, by bringing order out of chaos in the great, fair tropic islands from which the valor of our soldiers and sailors has driven the Spanish flag. These are the men who fear the strenuous life, who fear the only national life which is really worth leading.”

Question 2: Read the passage below several times. What is the “argument” here that Twain says “we” should offer to the “Person Sitting in Darkness”? What kinds of language, imagery and TONE does he use?

“Having now laid all the historical facts before the Person Sitting in Darkness, we should bring him to again, and explain them to him. We should say to him:
"They look doubtful, but in reality they are not. There have been lies; yes, but they were told in a good cause. We have been treacherous; but that was only in order that real good might come out of apparent evil. True, we have crushed a deceived and confiding people; we have turned against the weak and the friendless who trusted us; we have stamped out a just and intelligent and well-ordered republic; we have stabbed an ally in the back and slapped the face of a guest; we have bought a Shadow from an enemy that hadn't it to sell; we have robbed a trusting friend of his land and his liberty; we have invited our clean young men to shoulder a discredited musket and do bandit's work under a flag which bandits have been accustomed to fear, not to follow; we have debauched America's honor and blackened her face before the world; but each detail was for the best. We know this. The Head of every State and Sovereignty in Christendom and ninety per cent. of every legislative body in Christendom, including our Congress and our fifty State Legislatures, are members not only of the church, but also of the Blessings-of-Civilization Trust. This world-girdling accumulation of trained morals, high principles, and justice, cannot do an unright thing, an unfair thing, an ungenerous thing, an unclean thing. It knows what it is about. Give yourself no uneasiness; it is all right.”

October 6:
Silent Films, I: The Allure of Spectacle

Required:


3. one more essay, TBA
• **Watch:** 1. four-five silent films about the Spanish American War (you must watch these before class; they are short, and you will need to watch each one more than once to understand them).
   - “Advance of Kansas Volunteers at Caloocan” (1899): [http://www.loc.gov/item/98501192/](http://www.loc.gov/item/98501192/)

   2. One other film from this list, that you may choose: [http://www.loc.gov/collection/spanish-american-war-in-motion-pictures/?q=&sb=title_s](http://www.loc.gov/collection/spanish-american-war-in-motion-pictures/?q=&sb=title_s)

   3. *The Great Train Robbery* (1903): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oTdPklBE0Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oTdPklBE0Y)

   **Question:** *The Great Train Robbery* is known as a milestone in film history, and as the first narrative film. Pick one scene or moment that stood out to you in this film, and with that scene as your focus, explain why it would have been significant to audiences in 1903.

**October 13:**

**Silent Films, II: Film Culture, Race, and Nation**

**Required:**


(**NOTE:** The above two are the main readings for this week.)


**Question:** What kind of language and logic did D. W. Griffith and/or Thomas Dixon use to respond to the criticisms they received? Draw on at least two examples in your response.

**October 20:**

**Silent Films, III: Film Culture, Immigration, and Ethnicity**

**Required:**

**• Read:**


• **Watch:** FILM: *The Sheik* (1921)
Question 1: Madison Grant was not an ignorant racist; he was a highly educated and published university professor. Why did he see the "new" immigrants as "the survival of the unfit"? What did he think immigrants were doing to the U.S.?

Question 2: The Sheik is known as a milestone in film history, particularly because of the ways in which it helped to make Valentino a star. Pick one scene or moment that stood out to you in this film, and with that scene as your focus, consider what made the Sheik a significant character.

ESSAY, DUE DATE 2: FRIDAY, October 23, 9 pm.
Submit essays, (3-4 pages) via blackboard. Please name your essays with: lastname.docx
Please see blackboard for more details about this assignment and writing guidelines.

Paper Topics:
1. In the late 19th and early 20th century, many Americans were excited, but also anxious about the modern life, consumer culture around them, and the role of the US in the world. In what ways did either Teddy Roosevelt, Mark Twain, or (a little later in the 20th century), Madison Grant seek to relieve those anxieties? Draw on at least two examples from your primary source to develop and explain your thesis.

2. The film Birth of a Nation made its controversial debut in 1915. Some voices in the conversation about Birth argued that the film was a mark of progress and a step forward -- for the movie industry AND for race relations in the Progressive Era. Drawing on debates about the film from the time of its release AND a scene from the film itself, explain how and why this perspective took shape.

3. Choose one scene from one film we have watched; with a focus on technique, content, character (choose two of those), consider its significance in historical context.

4. How does Mark Twain build his argument against U.S. foreign policy? Consider both the content AND the style of his argument to answer this question. Draw on at least three examples from his essay to develop and explain your thesis.

5. What is the significance of romance to either The Sheik or Tarzan? Draw on at least three examples from your source to develop and explain your thesis.

October 27:
The Great Migration, Popular Culture, and the “Roaring Twenties”

Required:
• *Read: 1. Alain Locke, “The New Negro” (1925)
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/locke_2.html


3. TBA

• *Watch/Listen: TBA

Question: TBA

November 3:
November 10:
The Depression, I: Class, Consumption, and the New Deal

Required:

• *Read and Listen: 1. Franklin Roosevelt, “Fireside Chat,”
  Read: http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat1.html
  Listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iipnhL1Tdh-0

  2. * Dorothea Lange, "Drawing Beauty Out of Desolation," NPR, April 2010. You may read or listen to the story, and read the excerpt up until paragraph that starts, "As I write at the end of 2008..."

• *Look and Read: 1. FSA Photographs: See “15 Staff Selections from the FSA-OWI Collection” (Review ALL 15--enlarged).

  2. FSA Photographs: See "15 Popular Requests from the FSA/OWI Collection" (Review ALL 15--enlarged).


Question: (EVERYONE MUST SUBMIT A RESPONSE WEEK). Which photo had the biggest impact on you, and why do you think it did so?

November 17:
The Depression, II: The Left and Popular Culture

Required:

• *Read: Clifford Odets: “Waiting for Lefty” : http://www.unz.org/Pub/CerfBennett-1943n02-00521

• *Watch: FILM: Modern Times

• *Listen: 1. "Strange Fruit," performed by Billie Holiday: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9FZMHNhJ80

Question: Who or what is Odets most critical of in his play? 
OR: Who or what is Charlie Chaplin most critical of in the film Modern Times?

**November 24:**
TBA
Revised Essays Due

**December 1: World War II, I: Producing Nationalism in the 1940s**

**Required:**
• *Read:* 1. Executive order 9066: Click here to read online.

2. Primary Sources from the Inada, ed., anthology (see blackboard):
   - Preface
   - Editorials in the Wake of Pearl Harbor
   - Eleanor Breed- War Comes to the Church Door
   - Photo Essay- And uncertain future
   - WRA Center Lexicon
   - FDR Presidential Statement
   - Appendix A


2. Popeye the Sailor (1942),
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwzUqA53xeQ;

3. Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips (1944):
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsCZKjR8NI

Question: How did people in the 1940s discuss and make sense of the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II? Consider this question with a focus on 1-2 documents from the collection.

**December 8**

**World War II, II: Performing and Consuming Nationalism in the 1940s and after**

**Required:**

   http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/bureau_casablanca.cfm

3. Allen Berube, TBA.

• *Watch:* Film: Casablanca (1942)

Question: How does the narrative in Casablanca either support or oppose U.S. intervention into World War II?

**Final Exam: December 17, 11:45-2:45. Location TBA**