

2017-18

History 2124B [001]



Sounds, Sights & Bits:

Explorations in 20th Century

Canadian Popular Culture

[Tentative]

Contact / Class Information

Tuesday 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Lecture room: SSC 3024

Instructor: Dr. Peter V. Krats

Office: Stevenson Hall 2123

Telephone: 661-2111 (X84983) / messages: 661-3645

Office hours: see below

e-mail: pkrats@uwo.ca

Office Hours / Contacting Me:

My Office Hours: tba; feel free to speak with me about appointments. If you “catch” me at my office, I will gladly discuss matters time permitting. I make an effort to respond to e-mails within 24 hours. Be sure to include a clear subject heading. Phone mail messages face a longer “turn-around.” Or, speak to me at class – I usually have time before or after !!

Course Description

Canadian popular culture is sometimes derided as “inferior mimicry” and “derivative” of “pop culture” from south of the 49th parallel. Was (is ?) that the case ? We trace the evolution of “Canadian popular culture,” offering glimpses into music, film and television, sport, consumption and more. What was enjoyed, why, and was it “Canadian ?” Scrutiny of “voices, images, and more reveal histories little appreciated, with both impressive originality and sycophantic imitation readily found. We will examine **popular** culture in various guises – from radio and television to film to music, sports and more. The character of that cultural product; the role of changing tastes and technologies; the influence of regulation versus free enterprise; national versus international perspectives; and the changing “mass” market all come into play. History

2124 challenges notions about Canadian popular culture, suggesting that “our” culture is more multifaceted than the caricatures provided by either nationalist “cheerleading” or dismissive rejection.

Course Learning Outcomes :

- ✓ identify key elements in the history of Canadian popular culture, including forces of continuity versus change; in doing so, better understanding some of forces shaping history overall
- ✓ recognize both strengths and weaknesses in historical assessment *and* cultural views of history – learning that “the” past reflects both conventional data and a land of myth, imagination and more
- ✓ show an ability to assess written historical work and cultural products and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both conventional and cultural historical sources
- ✓ summarize their ideas by synthesizing issues within reports, essays and examinations
- ✓ develop verbal and presentation skills, including both presentation and reaction to class materials
- ✓ begin to see the relevance of “pop culture” in understanding earlier and contemporary Canada

Course Requirements

Detailed explanation of these requirements below

Participation:	20 %	
Group Chat on OWL	10	
Individual Comments on Lectures on OWL	15	Due : tba
Thoughts on a Cultural Element	25	Due : tba
Final Exam :	30	

Given the brevity of the writing assignments, extensions will need to meet the University criteria provided at the end of the syllabus. There are suggestions about “good” writing practice on OWL under the “Resources” section (alongside course “headers” and copies of the Power point slides.)

There are no course texts – attendance at class is a crucial element of the Course.

Class Participation : [20 %]

History is inherently interpretive, so during most classes groups will discuss issues arising from lectures. After in-group discussion, ideas will be shared with the whole class. Discussions evaluated as follows:

Overall quality of shared classroom discussion :	4 %	
Four (4) Individual Website assignments (randomly assigned) :	12 %	[3 % each]
* postings due no later than Sunday noon once assigned		
"Group comments" sheets handed in weekly :	4 %	

* If you miss discussions postings contact me **within a week** – I will consider any reasonable explanation.

Group Chat on OWL : [10 %]

Each Participation Group will discuss what they see as "pertinent" issues on this **second** OWL "forum" site. You will individually post comments on the issues surrounding Canadian popular culture as "unravelling" in the course. Consistency is a key – one or two "bursts" of posts will not get as good a grade as a steady, ongoing "conversation". The postings are the responsibility of **all** group members. If in doubt about the task, consult with me.

Comments on Lectures : [15 %]

What do **you** see as **ONE** key theme within the evolution of Canadian popular culture **by 1939** ? Be concise -- the discussion need only be 3 double spaced pages. No outside research required, but if used, it must be properly cited. Proper English is expected.

Thoughts on a Cultural Element : [25 %] :

Students are expected to provide a well written discussion on **ONE** cultural element – be it a performer, a programme, a sport, a product, a business or more. Discuss your topic in light of ideas and trends emerging from the broader study of Canadian popular culture. What makes your choice "Canadian" ? What impact has it had on Canadian popular culture ? Does it share in a long tradition, or is it unique ?

Four pages, double spaced. You will likely need to do some research to supplement lecture materials. Proper citations (in any standard format) are expected. Your writing should be to university standards. [There are some hints about common writing errors on the OWL site under "Resources."]

Final Examination : [30 %]

- ◆ Two hours
- ◆ emphasizes broad issues, not the minutia of history
- ◆ Date : during the time period set by the University Registrar

There are few secrets to success on an exam. But there are ways to struggle:

- ✓ Trying to “catch up” at the last minute only creates substantial stress [I set the exam, not the textbook – so going to class is an excellent means of gaining insights into exam issues]
- ✓ Memorizing “all data” is also ineffective. History exams assess student understanding: do you know why events occurred, what events led up to/ followed from events? The degree of continuity and/or change?

***Tentative* Lecture Topics :**

*** several topics extend beyond one week; subject to change**

1. Introductions / Contexts of Canadian Culture / Culture Contemplated
2. Glimpses of 19th Century Popular Culture
3. Popular Culture Meets Urban-industrial Capitalism
4. Tiddly Winks to “Reaching for a Lucky”: Popular Culture as Control & as Site of Contention
5. Music & Machines → Mesmerizing the Masses
6. Entertaining Canadians : Expanding Media
7. Sporting Spectacles in a Modernizing Canada
8. Contexts of “Modern” Popular Culture: W.W. II to the 1980s
9. Consuming as Progressive Popular Culture
10. *Seeing Things* : Images & Popular Culture in Canada, 1939-1990s
11. “Bits” of Canadian Popular Culture since the 1990s