



The University of Western Ontario  
**HISTORY 2132A**

**From Coney Island to The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills:**

**The History of American Popular Culture**

**Fall/Winter 2018-19**

**Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30 UCC 37**

**Instructor: Geoff Stewart, Assistant Professor**

Office Hours: TBA

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**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):***

History 3307E

**Course Syllabus:**

From Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show through Chuck Berry and *Star Wars* to *The Apprentice* a fascination has existed with the best and worst of American popular culture. Love it or hate it, we are all exposed to its pervasive presence in some form or the other. 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—literature, television, film, music, the internet, etc.—today. It will look at the ways in which different individuals and groups have used these various media to try to construct and exert a cultural influence on American life. It will attempt to determine what it is about this culture production that makes it "popular" and distinctly "American." And it will consider how American popular culture has influenced politics, social movements and, most importantly, American identity at home and abroad. Students will be evaluated by completing an assignment discussing the significance of an element of American popular culture of their choosing as well as a mid-term and final examination.

**Course Materials:**

Lauren Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland: Amusement Parks, Movies, and American Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012)

Marcel Desani, *From Flappers to Rappers: The Origins, Evolution, and Demise of Youth Culture* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2018)

## **Methods of Evaluation:**

Midterm Exam 30% (October 16)

Assignment 30% (Due November 13)

Final Exam 40%

## ***Policy on Accommodation for Illness***

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to [https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical\\_accommodations\\_link\\_for\\_OOR.pdf](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf) to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links to the necessary forms.

Students seeking academic accommodation on illness grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students should read carefully the Faculty of Social Science "Instructions for Students Registered in Social Science Who are Unable to Write Tests or Examinations or Submit Assignments as Scheduled." They are appended to this syllabus or on the History Department website. Pressures of work (too many assignments in a short period) or computer/printer difficulties do not constitute acceptable reason for an extension. Remember to back up all notes and coursework on your computer, including research notes and drafts, and retain all notes until after final grades are issued.

## **Course Schedule and Readings:**

**September 11** – Start the Presses: Popular Culture Forms in Antebellum America

### ***Readings:***

- Lauren Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland: Amusement Parks, Movies, and American Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 1-22

**September 18** – From Buffalo Bill to Coney Island: The Emergence of Popular Culture in the United States

### ***Readings:***

- Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 23-94

**September 25** – The Jazz Age

### ***Readings:***

- Marcel Danesi, *From Flappers to Rappers: The Origins, Evolution, and Demise of Youth Culture* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2018), 1-40

**October 2** – Radio Days

*Readings:*

- Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland*, 96-174

**October 9** – Fall Reading Week

- *No class*

**October 16** – Mid-Term – will include a question on **Lauren Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland***

**October 23** – “Hooray for Hollywood”

*Readings:*

- Review Danesi, *From Flappers to Rappers*, 1-40

**October 30** – “Hail, Hail, Rock n’ Roll”

*Readings:*

- Danesi, *From Flappers to Rappers*, 41-67

**November 6** – Ward, June, Wally, the Beave and Jack Kerouac: Conformity and Contention in the 1950s

*Readings:*

- Danesi, *From Flappers to Rappers*, 67-80

**November 13** – The Age of Aquarius: Peace, Love and the Weather Underground

*Readings:*

- Danesi, *From Flappers to Rappers*, 81-115

*Assignments Due*

**November 20** – Sucking in the Seventies: Watergate, the Fall of Saigon and the World According to Archie Bunker

*Readings:*

- Danesi, *From Flappers to Rappers*, 117-150

**November 27** – “Video Killed the Radio Star”: From the Me Generation to Generation X

*Readings:*

- Danesi, *From Flappers to Rappers*, 151-181

**December 4** – Fifty Shades of Crazy: Jon Stewart, Fox News and Donald Trump’s America

***Readings:***

- Danesi, *From Flappers to Rappers*, 183-208

**Additional Statements**

***Academic Offences:***

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ( <http://www.turnitin.com> ).

***Accessibility Options:***

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar’s website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

***Medical Issues***

The University recognizes that a student’s ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to:

[https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical\\_accommodations\\_link\\_for\\_OOR.pdf](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf)

to read about the University’s policy on medical accommodation. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: [http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

### ***Plagiarism:***

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to

make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

### ***Scholastic Offences***

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### ***Support Services***

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, [http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### ***Use of Electronic Devices***

Electronic devices are not permitted in the exams.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail [vangalen@uwo.ca](mailto:vangalen@uwo.ca).