

Spring 2005 Course Outline

History 0321 Topics in World History/Geography 321 Special Topics

Histories and Geographies of Popular Culture

MWF - 12:40-1:30 – Gladfelter Hall Rm.925

Instructor: Dr. Sean Purdy, Assistant Professor,
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Office Hours: MWF 10:30-11:30am or by appointment

This course looks at selected topics in the history and geography of popular culture. In addition to an ample introduction to theories and methods in the study of popular culture, the course will explore topics such as consumption, sport, leisure and music in various historical periods and countries. Students will read and discuss secondary readings from a wide range of historical and geographical perspectives as well as analyze various primary sources. Class participation by students will be central in this seminar course.

Class Readings

Required Text: Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness: Night Travels in the Histories of Transgression* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000). Available at Temple University Bookstore.

Other Required Readings: Unless otherwise noted, all other required readings will consist of digitalized copies of articles either on our Blackboard site or on Paley E-Reserve. The instructor reserves the right to change articles now and then if necessary.

Blackboard Course Management System

We will be using Blackboard, Temple's Online Course Management System. Digitalized images and documents, readings, and interesting links can be accessed on this site as well as class announcements. All assignments should be sent to the instructor through the Assignment link on Blackboard (not Digital Drop Box). All students should be automatically enrolled in the system, but it is their responsibility to learn how to access and use the system. If a student is unable to use the system for some reason, talk with the instructor in the first class.

Class Format/Participation/Attendance/Conduct

The class will be organized around short lectures, audio-visual presentations and introductions to thematic topics by the instructor as well as critical group discussion led by student teams. Generally, the Monday class will be devoted to an introductory lecture by the instructor; the Wednesday class will be led by student teams and involve

participation of all students; and the Friday class will focus on small group work, analyzing in detail secondary and primary sources. **Success depends upon student preparation and active discussion of the issues, constructive responses to reading materials and others' opinions, articulating and supporting arguments and timely completion of the assignments. All reading material should be completed by the Monday or at the latest by the Wednesday class each week.** Attendance and participation will count for 20 per cent of the final mark. Attendance at the weekly class meetings is, of course, mandatory. Please clear absences, except for emergencies, in advance. Please treat all fellow classmates with respect and do not engage in abusive/discriminatory behaviour.

Team Presentations

Each student will contribute to two (2) team presentations of 2, perhaps 3, students each on two of the classes covered in the course. You will have a chance to choose which classes early in the course. Each team presentation will take roughly 20-30 minutes maximum with the rest of the class devoted to discussion. Students will be responsible for summarizing and critically analyzing the assigned readings (and any other relevant sources) and organizing the presentation and discussion for the day. Students themselves will be responsible for getting together before class to plan their approaches. Student teams should work out a division of labour for their presentation and must follow the guidelines for critical analysis which will be read and discussed in class during the first week. Each team presentation will be awarded a mark of 15 per cent for a total of 30 percent.

Short Writing Assignments

There will be two written assignments of 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages (regular margins and 12 point font.) Each will count for 15 per cent of the mark totalling 30 per cent. These short essays are expected to demonstrate a careful utilization of appropriate sources, insights into the topic and coherent organization and writing. An excellent guide by Patrick Rael, Bowdoin College, to reading primary and secondary sources and writing essays in History can be found under Course Documents on our Blackboard web site. I strongly recommend you read this document.

Short Writing Assignment #1 – Due Monday February 21 – 15% of final mark

How and why has popular culture come to be a distinct and significant field of study in history and geography? Your paper should rigorously engage with all the theoretical/methodological readings in the first few weeks of class as well as discuss at least two other secondary sources relevant to the question that you are responsible for finding. You should refer in the paper to general developments in the field (definitions of popular culture, key concepts, intellectual trends, etc.) as well as to a few sub-fields (i.e. music, literature, food, material culture, etc.). In addition to a review of the literature, I would like you to at least briefly state your own opinion on the possibilities/pitfalls of the field. Please carefully cite your sources and acknowledge ideas that have been

borrowed. Give your paper a title and number all pages. Please proof read beforehand for spelling errors, typos, awkward grammar, etc.

**Short Writing Assignment #2 – Due Monday April 1 (not an April Fool’s Day joke)
– 15% of final mark**

Choose one (1) of the following two questions:

- 1) Write a detailed review of a current exhibition on some aspect of popular culture at an area museum (or in another city if you like). It should mention/discuss/explore at least the following points:
 - i) Full names, titles etc. of the organizers, sponsors, curators and the museum. What are the objectives of the exhibition?
 - ii) Content: What historical problem/s does it explore? Why is it important?
 - iii) Presentation: how is the material presented? Did you like this aspect? Why or why not?
 - iv) Analysis: How useful is it for historians, the general public, etc.? Why? Did it fulfill its objectives? What are your general opinions on the topic? How insightful is the exhibition?

Points ii) and iv) are the most important and should occupy the majority of your paper.

- 2) Philadelphia is home to many diverse communities. Choose one aspect of the popular culture of one community, experience it first hand, research its origins, etc. and argue why it is important for historians and geographers. What does it tell us about a community, etc.? How did the cultural feature emerge, where, when, among whom and why? How has the distribution of this feature changed over time? How has its place in local, regional, national culture changed over time?

Final Historiographical or Research Essay – Due May 2 – 20% of final mark

Final Paper Proposal Due April 15

Your final essay should be a 10-15 pages (double-spaced) 1) synthesis of theory and previous research on a specific problem in popular culture from a historical or geographical perspective **OR** 2) an intensive examination of a set of primary sources with some attention to relevant secondary sources. It may deal with any period or area in the history and geography of popular culture that interests you.

If you choose 1), you need to adequately summarize the main arguments and debates, identify important questions for future research and potential methods for addressing

those questions. An excellent essay will critically evaluate the debates, issues and problems; demonstrate insight and creativity; and utilize a substantial bibliography.

If you choose to do 2) , you need to undertake a close “reading” of an adequate set of primary sources (any source, period or area). It should be backed up by some relevant secondary sources. However, the main objective of this essay is to work through, analyze and draw preliminary conclusions from the primary sources.

Week 1

Wednesday January 19 – Introduction and welcome to class; explanation of course outline; sign up for team presentations; questions.

Reading for next class: pp.13-33, Patrick Rael, Guide for History Students. Found under Course documents on our Blackboard site.

Friday January 21 – In-class discussion, group work on the Rael reading. Critically analyzing primary and secondary sources.

Week 2 - *Popular Culture: This Ain't No Sideshow*, An Introduction to Theories, Concepts and Contexts

Monday January 24 – Introductory Lecture

Wednesday January 26 – Model student-team presentation presented by instructor.

Friday January 28 – Group Work

For the rest of the semester we will generally follow the above weekly format.

Bryan Palmer, “Introduction,” in *Cultures of Darkness*, class text.

Anahid Kassabian, “Popular,” in Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss, eds., *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp.113-123. (Paley E-Reserve)

George Lipsitz, “Popular Culture: This Ain't No Sideshow,” in George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (University of Minnesota Press, 1990). (Blackboard)

Week 3 - Space and Time in Popular Cultures

Wednesday February 2 – Student Team Presentation

Bryan Palmer, "A Walk on the Dark Side: The Metaphorical Night," in *Cultures of Darkness*, class text.

Eric Hobsbawm, *On history* (New York : The New Press, 1997), chap 16. D16.8H637x 1997

R.J. Johnston [et al.], eds. *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Malden, MA : Blackwell Publishers, 2000), "Cultural Geography," pp.134-138; "Culture," pp.143-146. Reference Stacks GF4 .D52 2000

Week 4 - Robin Hoods from Sherwood Forest to Brazil

Wednesday February 9 – Student Team Presentation

Rodney Hilton, "The Origins of Robin Hood," in Rodney Hilton, ed. *Peasants, Knights and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp.221-235.

Linda Lewin, "The Oligarchical Limitations of Social Banditry in Brazil: The Case of the 'Good Thief' Antonio Silvino," *Past and Present*, no. 82 (February 1979), 116-146.

Bryan Palmer, "Blood, Bread and Blasphemy: Peasant Nights," in Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, class text.

Week 5 – Early Spaces of Consumption

Wednesday February 16 – Student Team Presentation

Bryan Palmer, "Libertines, Licentiousness and Liberty: The Underworld of Pornography's Political Beginnings," in Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, class text.

M. Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London geographies, 1680-1780* (New York : Guilford Press, 1998), pp. 116-157.

P. Glennie and N. Thrift, "Consumers, identities, and consumption spaces in early-modern England," *Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 28 (1996), 25-45.

Week 6- Custom and Culture in the Atlantic World

Wednesday February 23 – Student Team Presentation

Bryan Palmer, "Conspiracies of the Night: Anglo-French Radicalism, Jacobinism, and the Age of Revolution," in Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, class text.

Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The many-headed hydra : the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic* Boston : Beacon Press, 2000, ch. 5.

Daniel Vickers, Daniel, "An Honest Tar: Ashley Brown of Marblehead," *New England Quarterly*, 69 (1996), 531-53.

Week 7 - Tavern Lives

Wednesday March 2 – Student Team Presentation

Bryan Palmer, "Sociabilities of the Night: Fraternalism and the Tavern," in Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, class text.

James Kneale, "A Problem of Supervision': moral geographies of the nineteenth-Century British public house," *Journal of Historical Geography* vol. 25 (1999): 333-48.

D. Reid, D (1976) 'The Decline of Saint Monday, 1766-1876', *Past and Present*, vol. 71 (1976): 76-101.

Week 8 – Imperial Cultures

Wednesday March 16 – Student Team Presentation

Bryan Palmer, "Dark Continents: Empire and Race," in Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, class text.

Silvia Hunold Lara, "The Signs of Color: Women's Dress and Racial Relations in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, ca 1750–1815," *Colonial Latin American Review*, Vol. 6, no.2 (December 1997), 205-224.

Allen Warren, "Citizens of empire: Baden-Powell, scouts and guides and an imperial ideal, 1900-1940, " in John MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism & popular culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 232-256.

Week 9 – America’s Game: Baseball and the People

Wednesday March 23 – Student Team Presentation

Colin D. Howell, "Borderlands, Baselines, and Bearhunters: Conceptualizing the Northeast as a Sporting Region in the Interwar Period," *Journal of Sport History*, 29 (Summer 2002), 251–70.

Steven A. Riess, *Touching base : professional baseball and American culture in the Progressive Era* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1999), GV867.64 .R54 1999

Movie: *Eight Men Out*, dir. by John Sayles.

Week 10 - Celluloid Cities

Wednesday March 30 – Student Team Presentation

Stuart Aitken, "Textual Analysis: Armchair Theories and Couch-Potato Geography" in *Methods in Human Geography*, eds. Robin Flowerdew and David Martin (London: Longman, 1996), 197-212.

Will Straw, "Urban Confidential: The Lurid Cities of the 1950s" in David B. Clarke, *The Cinematic City* (London: Routledge, 1997).

Bryan Palmer, "Noir: The Cultural Politics of Darkness," in Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, Class Text.

Week 11 – Landscapes of Power, Leisure and Violence

Wednesday April 6 – Student Team Presentation

Goheen, P G (1998) 'Public space and the geography of the modern city', *Progress In Human Geography*, 22 (4), 479-496.

Don Mitchell, "The end of public space? Peoples' Park, definitions of the public and democracy," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 85 (1995): 108-133.

Bryan Palmer, "The Implosion of the City: Nights of Race Rage and Riot in Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, Class Text.

Week 12 - Festivals of the Oppressed: Popular Culture and Revolution

Wednesday April 13 – Student Team Presentation

Palmer, "Festivals of Revolution: Light Out of Dark," in Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, class text.

Mark Vallen, "N O P A S A R A N !: Posters of the Spanish Civil War," *Art for Change Website*, <http://www.art-for-a-change.com/NoPasaran/spain.html>

Cary Nelson, *Shouts From the Wall: Posters and Photographs Brought Home from the Spanish Civil War by American Volunteers* (University of Illinois Press, 1996).

Week 13 – Musics and Places

Wednesday April 20 – Student Team Presentation

Bryan Palmer, "Blues, Jazz and Jookin," in Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, class text.

Larry Ford, "Geographic factors in the origin, evolution & diffusion of Rock & Roll music," in George Carney, ed., *The sounds of people & places: a geography of American folk & popular music* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 203-214.

Lily Kong, "Ideology, Social Commentary and Resistance in Popular Music: A Case Study of Singapore," *Journal of Popular Culture*, Summer 96, Vol. 30, 215-232.

Week 14 – The Un/Realities of Reality TV

Wednesday April 29 – Student Team Presentation

Pat Stack, "Out of Touch With Reality," *Socialist Review*, July/August 2002.

B. Griffen-Foley, "From Tit-Bits to Big Brother: A Century of Audience Participation in the Media," *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol.26, no.4 (July 2004), 533-548.

Sarah Eschholz, Brenda Sims Blackwell, Marc Gertz, Ted Chiricos, "Race and attitudes toward the police: Assessing the effects of watching "reality" police programs," *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 30 (2002) 327– 341.