Course Title: American Popular Culture

Course #: 1649

Course Description: Popular culture—or pop culture—is the term used to describe cultural behaviors and patterns that are favorites of large numbers of people. When you decide what you will bookmark on your phone or computer, what sports teams you will support, what clothes you will wear or how you will talk to your friends, you are participating in--and shaping--pop culture. This course will explore American popular culture against a backdrop of 20th century United States history. We will begin the year by defining popular culture, and then exploring how that culture is shaped by history, and vice versa. Students will consider the interplay of history and topics such as sports, music, fashion, print media, cultural icons, radio, television, movies, fads, technology and language. Class activities will include discussions, lectures, films, student presentations, and creative projects. Assessment tools will include regular homework assignments, quizzes, unit tests, short papers, and participation in class activities. While the course will be solidly tied to United States history, this course is a supplement to the 11th grade United States history course which meets the United States history requirement.

UC/CSU Approval: “g” approved

Grade Level: 11-12

Estimated Homework Per Week: limited reading; 0-30 minutes per week

Prerequisite: Recommended Prerequisite Skills:
- motivated to learn about American Pop Culture
- analytical writing (movie critiques)
- reading skills

Course Grade Scale:
- 30% - Journal Writing/Decade Projects
- 20% - Unit Tests/Reading Quizzes
- 15% - Final Project
- 35% - Daily Activities

Major Assessments/Units/Topics:
1950s
Unit 1: 3 weeks
Week 1: Historical Review- "Age of Conformity"
Week 2: Mainstream Cultural Examples
Week 3: Signs of a Counterculture
Topics: Consumer Culture, The Suburban Nation, The Birth of Television, Beginning of the Space Race, Youth Culture, Rock ‘n’ Roll

1960s
Unit 2: 3 weeks
Youth Culture: baby boomers grow up, the New Left, connection to the civil rights movement, Free Speech Movement (Mario Savio), "People's Park" in Berkeley, college campuses throughout America, Counterculture and the change in lifestyle Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, impact of Charles Manson...
Music: British Invasion (Beatles, Rolling Stones, The Who, The Grateful Dead, CSNY, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, "Mother's Little Helper"), Folk Music (Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Arlo Guthrie), Woodstock vs. Altamont...
The traumas of 1968 (RFK/MLK assassinations, Tet Offensive, Chicago)... Man on the Moon...
Sports: Green Bay Packers, Boston Celtics, Muhammad Ali

1970s
Unit 3: 3 weeks
Week 1: Historical Review- The Crisis of Authority
Week 2: Contemporary Design
Week 3: Culture of Despair and Disillusionment
Content for Lecture and Discussion for Unit 3 will include:
America's Distrust of Government: Watergate, Vietnam, Pentagon Papers, inflation and unemployment...
Politics: rise of the New Right, Moral Majority...
Women's Rights: Roe v. Wade, birth control, workplace inequality, equal rights amendment...
Sports: Munich Olympics, Mark Spitz, Steelers, Reds/Yankees/Athletics, Hank Aaron home run record, Rumble in the Jungle, "When We Were Kings"...
Music: Disco, Saturday Night Fever, the Bee Gees...
Movies: Star Wars, Jaws, the Godfather, Rocky, Apocalypse Now, Taxi Driver...
Cults: Jonestown
**1980s**

**Unit 4: 3 Weeks**

Week 1: Historical Review- "Age of Reagan"

Week 2: Yuppies Invade

Week 3: Culture of "New Right"

Politics in the 1980s: Reagan Revolution, Reaganomics, New Right, Sunbelt, Moral Majority, and Christian Coalition…

Television…beginning of cable news, ESPN, MTV, beginning of talk shows, testing the medium, stretching it, seeing what can be done with television. Experimental time that has profound impacts on the television we see today…

Music: impact of MTV, Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, Madonna, Prince, Duran Duran...Live Aid

Technology: Nintendo, Walkman, CD...

Sports: Magic and Bird-A Courtship of Rivals, 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Mike Tyson, San Francisco 49ers...

Fashion: shoulder pads, perms, big hair, jean jackets, neon, Cyndi Lauper...

**1990s**

**Unit 5: 3 weeks**

Week 1: Historical Review- "An Era of Good Feelings?"

Week 2: Generation "X" and "Y"

Week 3: Dot-com Culture

Music: Grunge, Alternative Rock, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Sublime, Hip-Hop, Gangsta Rap, Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Tupac, Notorious BIG, East vs. West Beef, Pop, Britney Spears, Backstreet Boys, New Kids on the Block...

Movies: Pulp Fiction, Clueless, Toy Story, Titanic, Austin Powers, Blair Witch Project, Wayne's World...

Fashion: Supermodels, neon, Grunge look, Skater subculture, the Rachel haircut...

Television: Friends, Seinfeld, The Simpsons, 90210, Fresh Prince of Bel Air...

Sports: Dream Team, McGwire vs. Sosa, Chicago Bulls, Michael Jordan, Harding vs. Kerrigan, Lance Armstrong, Dallas Cowboys, Duke Basketball (30 for 30), Mike Tyson, Tiger Woods, 1994 Women's World Cup...

LBGT, Gay Rights, AIDS epidemic...

**2000s**

**Unit 6: 3 Weeks**

Week 1: Historical Review- Shattered Dreams
Week 2: Inter Connected Culture

Week 3: Globalization and what it means to be an "American"

Technology and Communication: YouTube, camera phone, text messaging, Social Media, FaceBook, MySpace, Twitter, Instagram, Apple Products, iPod, iPhone, iPad, iTunes...

Television: The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, Birth of Reality Television Shows, The Bachelor, Laguna Beach, American Idol, South Park, The Wire, Mad Men…

Fantasy Literature and Movies: Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings films

Sports: USC Football (30 for 30) Patriots Football, Rebirth of Lakers Dynasty

Assessments at the end of each Unit will be either multiple choice questions or written assessment or a combination of both.

There will be a final project that takes the place of a final exam