COURSE DESCRIPTION

U.S. Modern popular culture acts like a mirror to the broader society. It reflects the values, economics, politics, biases, hopes, and fears of the American public. In more general terms, all cultural behaviors have their origins in social functions. But this culture varies greatly, running the gamut from multi-million dollar mass media created by international conglomerates to the more casual, day-to-day activities conducted by consumers, fans, and the general citizenry. In this class we will examine five varieties of commercial popular culture: consumerism, motion pictures, music, sports, and the internet.

The goals of this course are to explore these examples, to appreciate how contemporary Americans understood these events, and to become familiar with some of the leading historical interpretations and theories that can help us to interpret these phenomena. The heart of the course will be the informed discussions that take place during regular class meetings. Ironically (and the modern world loves irony), the culture we develop in class will help to determine how successful we will be in this endeavor.

Throughout the term we will be examining examples of U.S. popular culture that may contain language, images, and express ideas that some could deem objectionable. Rather than censor our analysis or discussion we will address these controversies head-on. Moreover, while this course may be your first exposure to popular culture as an academic discipline rest assured that the quality of your questions, discussion, research, and writing is of far greater importance than your current depth of knowledge.

REQUIRED READING

The course demands active and attentive reading. The readings and informed class discussion comprise the core of the course objectives and a critical component of the term grade. If you do not plan to do the reading, you will not pass the course.

Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Consumerism Won in Modern America*
David Blanke and David Steigerwald, *A Destiny of Choice*
Brent Toplin, *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood*
Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America*

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the term:
- Students will be familiar with five key historical narratives pertaining to modern U.S. popular culture, including consumerism, motion pictures, and subject identified by the class-at-large.
- Students will understand and be able to use conventional historical terminology to describe these phenomena and events.
- Students will understand and be able to communicate their knowledge of historical cultural change by using primary source materials.
- Students will understand and be able to communicate their knowledge of historical cultural change by using a small sample of secondary sources.
- Students will synthesis their knowledge to create a defensible historical thesis supported by primary and secondary sources. Some may choose to use this product as the basis for their HIST-4385 capstone paper.

GRADED ACTIVITY

Specific instructions for the following assignments are provided below, will be discussed in class, and can be further clarified by speaking with the instructor during regular office hours.

- Three take-home exams covering the assigned readings, worth 50% of the term grade
- An analysis of a suitable historical topic and possible thesis for a subject suitable for the study of U.S. Modern Popular Culture, and worth 10% of the term grade.
• A paper evaluating three specific primary sources suitable to your thesis, worth 10% of the term grade.
• A paper evaluating three specific secondary sources suitable to your thesis, worth 10% of the term grade.
• A complete outline for your paper, proposing a unique historical thesis and a review of three key primary and three secondary sources suitable to your thesis, worth 10% of the term grade.
• A class participation grade based on regular attendance, participation in class discussion, shorter response assignments, and evidence of reading conducted throughout the term, worth 10% of the term grade.

Your attendance and participation is required. You must show evidence that you have read the assigned materials due in class on the days listed below. This can take the form of turning in your reading notes, so be sure these are in a format suitable to turn in while in class.

Grading Scale for all assignments and the final term grade:
• A = 90-100
• B = 80-89
• C= 70-79
• D = 60-69
• F = 0-59
• Plagiarized materials will earn a zero for that assignment and possibly the course.

DESCRIPTION OF GRADED EVENTS
Three take-home exams will be based on the assigned readings. You will be given a choice of essay questions to respond to using these readings. Your answers must be footnoted using proper citation methods.

An analysis of a suitable historical topic and possible thesis for the study of U.S. Modern Popular Culture, and worth 10% of the term grade.
Students must provide a narrative description of a historical topic they wish to study and propose a thesis for this subject. A review guide will be provided in-class and posted to the web.

A paper evaluating three specific primary sources suitable to your thesis due in class Friday, worth 10% of the term grade.
Students must provide a narrative description of three primary sources suitable to their thesis. In addition, students will write a short, informal paper analyzing the censorship papers related to Cecil B. De Mille’s The Sign of the Cross (1932), a film shown in class. Students who do not attend the in-class screening are responsible for acquiring and viewing the film on their own. A review guide will be provided in-class and posted to the web.

A paper evaluating three specific secondary sources suitable to your thesis worth 10% of the term grade.
Students will write a short paper analyzing at least three secondary sources (using only books published by an academic press). The topic of study will be determined by students in consultation with the instructor. Specific instructions on the length and content of this paper will be provided through an in-class handout and posted to the web.

A complete outline for your paper, proposing a unique historical thesis and a review of three key primary and three secondary sources suitable to your thesis, worth 10% of the term grade.
In this assignment, students will write a short paper that describes a historical thesis related to U.S. popular culture, the theoretical positions supporting this thesis, a review of three unique primary sources, and a brief analysis of three secondary sources. The assignment should be (but does not have to be) the culmination of previous work completed throughout the term. Please note: the final paper will be graded with the knowledge that I have already graded and made comments for improvements on these previous assignments. Specific instructions on the length and content of this paper will be provided through an in-class handout and posted to the web.

A class participation grade based on regular attendance, participation in class discussion, shorter response assignments, and evidence of reading conducted throughout the term, worth 10% of the term grade.
This should be self-explanatory. Students may be required periodically to turn in their reading notes (so don’t write these on something that cannot be submitted to the instructor). If plagiarism between students (copying the notes from someone who has read the material) is evident, BOTH STUDENTS will earn a grade of zero that they will not be able
to replace. In addition, reading quizzes may be given periodically (and un-announced) in class.

CLASS POLICIES

Formats and Citations
All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and free of significant spelling and grammatical mistakes. Papers must have page numbers, one inch margins, and use a 12-point font. Failure to follow these standards will lower your grade for that assignment. All citations must use Turabian (the Chicago Manual of Style). Footnotes and bibliographic citation formats will be graded.

Late work
All assignments are due the day specified in the syllabus and are considered late thereafter. Late work will be penalized one letter grade for each calendar day the assignment is overdue. If an assignment is not turned in by the end of term, it will count as a zero for that component of the term grade. Even very late work can receive credit (earning an F is better than a zero). Students may not make up any in-class activities.

Plagiarism
The penalty for academic dishonesty is clearly specified in the current Undergraduate Bulletin. I will follow these guidelines. In addition, students will be awarded zero points for any assignment in which cheating is detected. Plagiarism is considered by me and the University to be cheating. This is your first and only warning not to cheat in this class. If plagiarism between students is evident, BOTH STUDENTS will earn a grade of zero for that assignment that they will not be able to replace. If cheating is detected, the instructor will retain possession of the original document (a copy will be made available on request).

Hurricane policy
In the event of a hurricane, I follow the policy of TAMU-CC. If the campus officially remains open during the time when our class normally meets then class will proceed as scheduled (including all graded events). If the university closes campus then, of course, you will not be held responsible for that day’s assignment. In the event of a major disruption it is possible that the class will continue on-line via Blackboard and/or email.

Attendance
Since active participation is required to pass this course, reminding you to show up seems redundant. Still, I reserve the right to lower your final term grade by a full letter grade should you miss four scheduled classes. If you miss more than this I expect you to drop the course or accept a failing grade for the term.

ACADEMIC ADVISING
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466 or log onto http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac.

DISABILITY SERVICES
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.
If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.
GRADE APPEALS PROCESS
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, clu.tamu.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

See me if the material, course description, or assignments are confusing in any way. See me if you have any special physical needs or require any unique arrangements in order to attend and successfully complete the course.

PRELIMINARY CLASS TOPIC AND READING SCHEDULE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY/DATE</th>
<th>LECTURE TOPIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/25-27</td>
<td>Introduction to U.S. Popular Culture, End-of-term topic selection Lecture and Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/1-3</td>
<td>Consumerism Cross, vii-109</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/8-10</td>
<td>Consumerism Cross, 109-251</td>
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<td>Thesis/Topic assignment given, due in class Wednesday 2/10/16</td>
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<td>2/15-17</td>
<td>Consumerism Blanke/Steigerwald, Ch. 1, 2, 3, 7</td>
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<td>Take-Home Exam #1 due 2/22/16</td>
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<td>2/22-24</td>
<td>Introduction to Historical Theory Lecture Blanke/Steigerwald, Ch. 8</td>
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<td>2/29-3/2</td>
<td>Introduction to American Film Sklar, ix-140</td>
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<td>3/7-9</td>
<td>American Film Sklar, 141-305</td>
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<td>Primary Source assignment due in class Wednesday 3/9/16</td>
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<td>Spring Break, 3/14-8</td>
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<td>3/21-23</td>
<td>Film and History Toolin, 1-138</td>
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<td>Take-Home Exam #2 given, due in class Wednesday 3/30/16</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/28-30</td>
<td>Film and History Blanke/Steigerwald, Ch. 10</td>
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<td>4/4-6</td>
<td>Introduction to Film Analysis In-class viewing of The Sign of the Cross (1932)</td>
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<td>4/11-13</td>
<td>Class Topic #3 Readings TBA (available via Blackboard)</td>
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<td>Secondary Source Assignment due in class Wednesday 4/13/16</td>
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<td>4/18-20</td>
<td>Class Topic #3 Readings TBA (available via Blackboard)</td>
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<td>4/25-5/2</td>
<td>Class Presentations of Research Topics</td>
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<td><strong>Outline Assignment due in class Wednesday 4/27/16</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Take-Home Exam #3 due in class Wednesday, May 11 1:45PM</strong></td>
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