

Honors 1300: U.S. Cultural History
Professor Victoria Grieve
MWF 10:30-11:20am
Fall 2007

Classroom: GEOL 105
Office Location: MAIN 323
Office Hours: Mon. and Wed. 1-2pm, Thurs. 10-11am
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NOTE: This syllabus is subject to changes and/or additions at the discretion of the professor.

USU 1300 courses are intended to provide “a basic understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States” with “an emphasis on ideas and critical thinking rather than dates, names, and places.” This course will achieve those goals by critically examining the political, economic, and historical relationships between government, culture (broadly speaking), and cultural institutions in the United States. The course is divided into three sections: History and Culture; Government and the Arts; and Culture in the Public Sphere. We will consider: theories of popular culture; representations of minorities in popular culture; the history of government involvement in the arts; issues surrounding public art and museums; cultural policies in wartime; censorship of literature and music; First Amendment questions of censorship and freedom of expression, the “culture wars,” and current events in cultural politics.

Class discussions, in both large and small groups, will be an important part of this class. You are expected to come to class having completed the reading for the day and thought about the issues and questions raised by the readings.

Course Objectives:

- 1.) Understand historical and contemporary developments in American arts policy and cultural issues.
- 2.) Develop critical thinking skills by examining various perspectives of cultural debates, defending positions with thoughtful arguments, and writing coherently about cultural debates and positions.

Why is history a useful and important field of study, and what is its value for the non-historian?

Historical study teaches us how and why change occurs over time. It can teach us where political systems and cultural values come from and how they evolve. More generally, it is invaluable for learning how to understand the significance of a primary source (text, image, or artifact). The past and the present provide an overwhelming number of facts and events that are not equally important. Many are inconsequential. Historical inquiry helps us discern which are most important and why. The late E. P. Thompson, a brilliant historian, once remarked: “Only we, who are now living, can give a 'meaning' to the past. But

that past has always been the result of an argument about values. What we may do is identify with certain values which past actors upheld, and reject others. ... Our vote will change nothing. And yet, in another sense, it may change everything. For we are saying that these values, and not those other values, are the ones which make this history meaningful to us, and that these are the values which we intend to enlarge and sustain in our own present.”

---Michael Kammen, Professor of American History and Culture at Cornell University

Course texts: (available in USU Bookstore)

- Zimmerman, Jonathan. *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools* (Harvard University Press, 2005).
- Course readings packet.
- Additional readings will be available through online reserves, websites, or in-class handouts.
- Weekly on-air broadcasts or podcasts of “The Politics of Culture,” available for listening or download at <http://www.kcrw.com/show/pc>. These will be discussed in class each Wednesday – come prepared for written quizzes!

Assignments and Grading

1.) Three writing assignments (10% each) and (quality) class participation. Occasional quizzes will be given on the assigned readings for the day and podcasts, especially if it becomes clear that students are not completing the readings. If you miss a quiz, you may not make it up for any reason, but your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

2.) Policy essay (10%)

Question: Should the federal government support the arts? Why or why not? If yes, how? Drawing on what you’ve learned in class so far this semester, write a 3-5 page essay either supporting or opposing federal support for the arts. Take a *reasoned position* expressing an *informed opinion*, taking into consideration the positions of your opponents. Note this is not a polemical diatribe or a research paper, but you may draw on the assigned readings to support your opinions. Cite every source! **Due: Oct. 17**

3.) Critical Book Analysis (15%)

Jonathan Zimmerman’s book *Whose America?* provides historical background for culture wars in the public schools, focusing on debates over History textbooks and religious and ethical issues such as prayer and sex education. In a five-page paper, respond to the following two questions: 1.) Discuss two examples of how politics influenced history textbooks in the 20th century. How did Americans compromise in each case, and how did the controversy effect on how history is taught? 2.) Zimmerman proposes a solution to the debates over religion in the public schools. What is his solution, and do you think this it is a workable one? Why or why not? **Due: Nov. 16**

4.) Cultural Policy in the News – Group Paper and Conference Presentation (25%)

The class will be divided into groups of three students (You might also consider these colleagues a study group). Your assignment is to research a significant issue regarding contemporary cultural policy or a cultural event. To encourage you to get to work early in the semester, your **proposed topic and a list of sources will be due** in class on **Monday, October 9**. Presentations will be held in conference format with other Honors 1300 classes on Friday evening, November 30. The conference will last for three hours and you are required to attend the entire conference. More information will be provided throughout the semester. Your paper is due at the end of the conference.

5.) One test worth 20% of your grade. The test will be composed of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. If you have a **valid** reason (see me to define “valid”) for inability to take the exam at the scheduled time, you must let me know **immediately**. You must have a **documented and significant** reason. **Test date: Oct. 29**

6.) Attendance. More than two absences will result in a half-letter deduction from your course grade for each additional absence.

IMPORTANT NOTE: All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and 10 or 12 point font with no extra spaces between paragraphs. Please include a separate title page with your name, and cite all sources with footnotes, **not** in the body of the text. Papers that do not meet these specifications will not be accepted.

A half-letter grade will be deducted for each day late an assignment is late. No excuses!

Academic Honesty

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this course, and will be grounds for a failing grade for the assignment or the course. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, which includes knowingly “representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.” (*Code of Policies and Procedures for Students*, Article V, Section 3A.1) The penalties for plagiarism are severe. They include “#1) warning or reprimand and #2) grade adjustment” (see: Article VI, Section 1A): Other penalties may also be imposed at the Dean’s discretion. These include probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, referral to psychological counseling, and other appropriate disciplinary actions. Please review “The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University” for more information.

Disability Resource Center


Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability must register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), which will issue a verification letter. DRC is located in University Inn 101, and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon-Fri; 797-2444.


Course Schedule

Readings in your packet are followed by (P) in the schedule below.

| Monday | Wednesday | Friday |
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| 8/27 Introduction to the course and to one another; Start reading Zimmerman, <i>Whose America?</i> | 8/29 Section I: History and Culture Why Study Popular Culture? READ: “Reading and Writing About American Popular Culture” (P) | 8/31 Popular Culture READ: George Lipsitz, “Popular Culture: This Ain’t No Sideshow” (P) <u>Assignment:</u> Choose a popular culture “text” that is important to you. Write a one-page analysis of the cultural meaning of your example. Refer to the readings if possible. |

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| <p>9/3 No Class... but who is Samuel Gompers, anyway???</p> | <p>9/5 Popular Culture and American Identity</p> <p><u>Assignment Due: Popular culture text</u></p> | <p>9/7 What are Primary Sources?</p> <p>READ: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpe/du/lessons/psources/pshome.html</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> Art and the Shaping of Identity http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6875</p> |
| <p>9/10 Visualizing the Past:</p> <p>READ: Myth, Memory, and Amnesia in American Historical Art (P)</p> | <p>9/12 Progressive-era Photography</p> <p>READ: Making Sense of Documentary Photography http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/photos</p> | <p>9/14 Popular Culture and Class</p> <p>READ: “Popular Culture and Middle Class Respectability in the Early 20th Century” (P)</p> <p>Art and the Shaping of Identity <u>Assignment due</u></p> |
| <p>9/17 Race and Representation in Popular Culture</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> A Bad Rap: http://chnm.gmu.edu/exploring/20thcentury/badrap/index.php</p> | <p>9/19 Video: “Ethnic Notions” by Marlon Riggs</p> | <p>9/20 The White Man’s Indian: Native Americans in Popular Culture</p> <p>READ: “The Indian and the Rise of an American Art & Literature” and “The Western and the Indian in Popular Culture” (P)</p> |
| <p>9/24 Section II: Government and the Arts Culture and the State before 1935 (P)</p> <p><u>Assignment due:</u> A Bad Rap</p> | <p>9/26 Film viewing: <i>Irving Norman: To Whom it May Concern</i></p> | <p>9/28 Class visit and panel discussion; Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art</p> <p><i>Dark Metropolis: Irving Norman’s Social Surrealism</i></p> |
| <p>10/1 Cultural Policy and the New Deal</p> <p>READ: “Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal” (P)</p> | <p>10/3 Photos of the Great Depression</p> <p>READ: Making Sense of Documentary Photography http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/photos</p> | <p>10/5 Cultural Policy and the New Deal – The Federal Writers’ Project</p> <p>FILM SHOWING – <i>Salt of the Earth</i>, 4pm; Location TBA; On reserve in library afterward. Must be viewed by Monday</p> |
| <p>10/8 Culture and the Cold War</p> <p>READ: “Hollywood’s Cold War: The Suppression of <i>Salt of the Earth</i>” (P)</p> | <p>10/10 NEA-NEH</p> <p>READ: “Visionaries and Outcasts” (P)</p> | <p>10/12 The Culture Wars</p> <p>READ: “Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts” (P)</p> |

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| 1-pg discussion of museum visit due Group Project paper topic proposals due | | |
| 10/15 The Culture Wars (cont) | 10/17 Class Discussion: Should Government Fund the Arts? PAPER DUE | 10/19 FALL BREAK No Class |
| 10/22 War and Propaganda: Federal Policy during World War I READ: "How We Advertised America" (P) | 10/24 Federal Policy during World War II READ: "The Censored War" (P) | 10/26 Federal Policy and the "War on Terror" |
| 10/29 Test  | 10/31 Section III: Culture in the Public Sphere READ: Freedom of Expression and Its Limits http://www.csulb.edu/%7Ejvanca mp/freedom1.html | 11/2 Class Discussion Zimmerman, Section I |
| 11/5 History in Museums READ: Case Study: The Enola Gay Exhibit http://www.lehigh.edu/%7Eineng/enola/ | 11/7 The Case of Mark Twain's <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> | 11/9 Huck Finn, cont. |
| 11/12 Public Art: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Tilted Arc | 11/14 Who Decides? How and Why? READ: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/whodecides/index.html | 11/16 Class Discussion: Zimmerman, Section II and PAPER DUE |
| 11/19 Research Day – Meet with your group in the library | 11/21 Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class | 11/23 Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class |
| 11/26 "You Decide" exercise http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/index_1.html | 11/28 Course evaluations | 11/30 In-class preparation for evening conference presentations Conference – 3 hours in the evening, time and place TBA |

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| <p>12/3</p> <p>Class optional</p> | <p>12/5</p> <p>Class optional</p>  <p>Happy Holidays!</p> | <p>12/7</p> <p>Class optional</p> <p><i>Grades will be posted 96 hours after the final exam. Due to FERPA restrictions, I cannot email exam results or final grades. Thank you for not asking!</i></p> |
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