

# HY2260

## HISTORY AND POPULAR CULTURE

2016/2017, Semester 1

Arts & Social Sciences (History)

Modular Credits: 4

Class Size: [62](#)

Tags: --

ASSOC PROF [Ian Gordon](#)

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### [Learning Outcomes](#)

[Top](#) This module examines the ways popular culture shapes understandings of history on two different levels. First, it examines how the popular culture of a specific era can reveal much of the social milieu of the time and help contextualise events of that period. Second, it will examine how popular culture, such as a film, created at a later time can influence perceptions about an earlier era. This module will examine instances and eras of popular culture to discuss the challenges of deriving historical knowledge from popular culture. Each iteration of the module may vary in its focus. This semester the module will focus on Popular Culture in America during the 1950s.

This module requires an active, critical reading of the material. You are thus required to read the assigned texts and be prepared to discuss your ideas and raise questions actively in the discussion forums that constitute the tutorials for this module. The readings for the module are available in the Library E-Reserves on the IVLE, or through links to webpages.

### [Syllabus](#)

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## LECTURE/READING SCHEDULE:

### August 11: Introduction

### August 18: The “1950s” and Popular Culture

Readings:

Essential:

Ulla Haselstein, Berndt Ostendorf and Peter Schneck, "Popular Culture: Introduction," *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 46. 3 (2001): 331-338.  
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/stable/pdf/41157662.pdf>

Further:

Michael Schudson, "The New Validation of Popular Culture: Sense and Sentimentality in Academia," *Critical Studies In Mass Communication* 4 (1987): 51-

68. <http://www.tandfonline.com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/doi/abs/10.1080/15295038709360112>

## **Section I: Suburbia, Conformity, and American Ideals**

### **August 25: The Suburbs**

Readings:

Mary Beth Harolovich, "Sitcoms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950s Homemaker", *Quarterly Review of Video and Film* 11, 1 (1989): 61-83.

<http://www.tandfonline.com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/doi/abs/10.1080/10509208909361287>

Watch: Episodes of *The Honeymooners*, *I Love Lucy* and *Leave It to Beaver*

### **September 1: Disneyland**

Readings:

Michael Barrier, "He Was Interested in Something Else," in *The Animated Man*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2007: 235-269.

Erika Doss, "Making Imagination Safe in the 1950s: Disneyland's Fantasy Art and Architecture," in *Designing Disney's theme parks: the architecture of reassurance*, edited by Karal Ann Marling, New York: Flammarion, 1997: 179-190.

Steven Watts, "Walt Disney: Art and Politics in the American Century," *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 84-110.

<http://jah.oxfordjournals.org.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/content/82/1/84.full.pdf+html>

Watch: Episodes of *Mickey Mouse Club* and *Davey Crockett*

## **Section II: Youth and Conformity**

### **September 8: The Invention of the Teenager**

Thomas Doherty, "The Teenage Marketplace," in *Teenagers & Teenpics*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988: 42-70.

Watch: *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)

### **September 15: Music for Teenage Rebellion**

Readings: Peter Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), pp. 57-65, 89-101.

Watch: *King Creole* (1958) and excerpts from *The Ed Sullivan Show*

**September 22:** Break Week (No Class)

## **September 29: Satire, Defiance and “Kids”**

Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History*. New York: Basic Books, 1996, pp. 155-173.

Watch: *Bye Bye Birdie* (1963)

## **Section III: Race**

### **October 6: Civil Rights and Sports in America**

Readings:

Jules Tygiel, “Jackie Robinson: ‘A Lone Negro’ in Major League Baseball,” *Sport and the Color Line: Black Athletes and Race Relations in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Patrick B. Miller and David K. Wiggins (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 196-222.

Victor H. Green, *The Negro Travelers' Green Book: The Guide to Travel and Vacations* (New York: Victor H. Green and Co, 1954). Available

at: <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/3c85ba30-9374-0132-9292-58d385a7b928/book#page/3/mode/2up>

Listen: "The Green Book" from *99% Invisible* [Available in Multimedia].

Watch: Jackie Robinson clips from *Baseball* (1994)

### **October 13: Assimilation and the Suburbs**

Reading:

Kristin L. Matthews, “The Politics of ‘Home’ in Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*,” *Modern Drama* 51, 4 (2008): 556-78.

<https://muse-jhu-edu.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/article/259354/pdf>

Watch: *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961)

## **Section IV: The Cold War, Control and Censorship**

### **October 20: Enemies**

Reading:

Barry Keith Grant, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. London: British Film Institute. (This very short work is in the RBR in the Central Library)

Watch: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1955).

### **October 27: Sex, Censorship and Scandal**

Reading:

Harvey Cox, “Playboy’s Doctrine of the Male,” from *The Secular City*. New York: Macmillan, 1965.

Jack Gould, “Elvis Presley on the Ed Sullivan Show,” [New York Times \(September 16, 1956\), p. X13](#)

Nora Johnson, “Sex and the College Girl,” *The Atlantic*, (November 1957): [www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1957/11/sex-and-the-college-girl/305753/](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1957/11/sex-and-the-college-girl/305753/)

Amy Nyberg, “Fredric Wertham,” in *Icons of the American Comic Book* eds. Matthew Smith and Randy Duncan, Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2013.

Listen: US Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency hearings on

comic books. April 21, 1954. Testimony of Dr. Fredric Wertham and William Gaines.

### **November 3: Disillusionment in the Suburbs**

Reading:

Heather Lunney, "Exploring the Cold War through the Twilight Zone: Five Episodes in a Journey to a Dimension of Sight, Sound and Mind," *History in the Making* 3, 1 (2014), pp. 39-50.

<https://historyitm.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/lunney.pdf>

Crista D. Scaturro, "'Between the Pit of Man's Fears and the Summit of His Knowledge': Cold War America and The Twilight Zone," Unpublished MA Thesis, George Washington University, 2009, pp. 5-34. See [Files](#) or download full thesis here:

<http://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/304880336.html?FMT=AI>

Watch: *Twilight Zone* Episodes.

### **Wrap-Up**

#### **November 10: The Nostalgia of Innocence?**

Reading:

Greg Dickinson, "The Pleasantville Effect: Nostalgia and the Visual Framing of (White) Suburbia", *Western Journal of Communication* 70, 3 (2006): 212-233.

<http://www.tandfonline.com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/doi/full/10.1080/10570310600843504>

Paul Grainge, "Nostalgia and Style in Retro America: Moods, Modes, and Media Recycling," *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 23, 1 (2000): 27-34. [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/doi/10.1111/j.1537-4726.2000.2301\\_27.x/epdf](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/doi/10.1111/j.1537-4726.2000.2301_27.x/epdf)

Watch: *Pleasantville* (1998).

[Practical Work](#)

#### **Top Discussion Forums**

You will be assigned to a forum. You need to discuss the essay question for a given section in the discussion forum. Discussion means just that. If your first post is 10 minutes before the deadline you are not discussing. You have three weeks for each discussion so plan accordingly. Read the forum at least once a week and say something regularly. You will be graded on quality and not quantity. Do not ramble.

#### **Discussion 1: Deadline Sunday September 4 at 8pm**

How did the suburbs and/or media shape American ideals in the 1950s?

#### **Discussion 2: Deadline Sunday October 2 at 8pm**

Did conformity or rebellion shape the American teenager in the 1950s?

#### **Discussion 3: Deadline Sunday October 16 at 8pm**

What role did popular culture and the American Dream play in racial issues, particularly integration, in the 1950s?

#### **Discussion 4: Deadline Sunday November 6 at 8pm**

What role did popular culture and the American Dream play in racial issues, particularly integration, in the 1950s?

#### [Assessment](#)

[Top](#) This module is a 100% Continuous Assessment module.

Your final grade for this module will consist of the following marks:

Participation in IVLE Tutorial Discussion (10% x 4):	40%
Short Essays (750-1000 words) (15% x 4):	60%
Total:	100%

#### **Essay 1 Due: Monday September 5 at 5pm**

How did the suburbs and/or media shape American ideals in the 1950s?

#### **Essay 2 Due: Monday October 3 at 5pm**

Did conformity or rebellion shape the American teenager in the 1950s?

#### **Essay 3 Due: Monday October 17 at 5pm**

What role did popular culture and the American Dream play in racial issues, particularly integration, in the 1950s?

#### **Essay 4 Due: Monday November 7 at 5pm**

How was the political climate represented in popular culture in 1950s America?

Essays must be submitted in Hard Copy to the History Dept Office (AS 1 05-27) and in Soft Copy to turnitin. There is a 5% per day penalty for late papers.

For turnitin go here: <https://plagiarism.cit.nus.edu.sg/>

Sign in using your NUS ID and password. Then follow the Access Turnitin link.

Add yourself to the Module using Class ID: 12752189 and Password: 2260