Learning Outcomes

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

LECTURE/READING SCHEDULE:

**August 11: Introduction**

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

Readings:
Essential:

Further:
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:
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:
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**
Watch: *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)

**September 15: Music for Teenage Rebellion**
Watch: *King Creole* (1958) and excerpts from *The Ed Sullivan Show*

**September 22: Break Week (No Class)**
September 29: Satire, Defiance and “Kids”
Watch: *Bye Bye Birdie* (1963)

Section III: Race
October 6: Civil Rights and Sports in America
Readings:
Watch: Jackie Robinson clips from *Baseball* (1994)

October 13: Assimilation and the Suburbs
Reading:
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)

October 27: Sex, Censorship and Scandal
Reading:
Listen: US Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency hearings on

November 3: Disillusionment in the Suburbs
Reading:
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:

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 modules 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