

American Studies 401T

Adolescent America: A Cultural History and Contemporary Study of the Teenager in America

California State University, Fullerton
Spring 2009
M/W 1:00-2:15
UH-333

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Office Hours: Mondays 7-8 PM, Tuesdays 1:30-3:30, & by appointment

Course Description

Many of our cultural ideas and ideals about adolescence are of recent vintage. The idea that adolescence is a distinct life stage characterized by "storm and stress" first emerged at the end of the 19th century. The term "teenager" did not come into popular usage until the 1940s. Only recently have researchers identified ways in which the "teen brain" is structured differently from the adult brain. This research proseminar therefore approaches "adolescence" as a historically constructed identity in American society. We will pursue our interdisciplinary inquiry on twin tracks: on the one hand, we will consider how the category of "adolescence" has been defined and understood by psychologists and childrearing experts; the media and the culture industry; and institutions such as schools and the juvenile justice system. On the other hand, we will study how young people themselves actively perform, resist, and renegotiate their age-graded identity as teenagers.

Course themes include, but are not limited to, the following: work and leisure habits of young people; institutional efforts to influence and discipline adolescents; youth marketing and the commodification of the teen body; unified youth culture vs. fragmented and diverse youth cultures/subcultures; conventional wisdom about the "American teenager" as shaped by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and region; the ways in which national identity is grafted onto adolescents; processes whereby young people negotiate the various "cultural scripts" that tell them how adolescents should think and behave.

Course Prerequisites: AMST 201 and ASMT 301.

Required Texts

- Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard, eds. *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998)
- Ilana Nash, *American Sweethearts: Teenage Girls in Twentieth-Century Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006)
- William Graebner, *Coming of Age in Buffalo: Youth and Authority in the Postwar Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
- Douglas E. Foley, *Learning Capitalist Culture: Deep in the Heart of Texas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990)
- Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* (New York: Random House, 1998)
- J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991) (orig. 1951)

All books are available for purchase at Little Professor bookstore, 725 N. Placentia Ave (near the corner of Nutwood and Placentia).

Course Assignments and Grading Standards

The major writing assignment for this course is a 15-20-page research paper on a topic of your choice that is related to the general topic of this course. You are expected to identify and progressively fine-tune a topic; conduct research using primary and secondary sources; provide periodic project updates; report your findings to the class in a ten-minute oral presentation; and write a paper in which you lay out a clear argument and make extensive use of evidence.

Because 401T is the capstone for the American Studies major, you should view this assignment as an opportunity to demonstrate your acquired abilities in cultural analysis and interdisciplinary thinking. Feel free to meet with me as often as you like in my office (as well as by email/phone) to discuss your ongoing research process. Specific guidelines for each component of the research project will be distributed separately in class.

There are two assignments in addition to the research paper. For the *Image Assignment*, you need to bring to class a visual image (e.g., photograph, advertisement, painting, drawing) that you believe captures the meaning of "adolescence" in the United States. The image should be accompanied by a short written discussion (1-2 pages) of why you selected this image and what you think it conveys.

For the *Film Analysis*, you must view a film (of your choosing: any genre, any year) that is in some way about teenagers in the United States, and write a short analysis of the film (2-3 pages). The analysis should focus on how teenagers are depicted in the film and on what adolescence means in this particular movie. You should also relate your analysis to one or more of the themes or issues that have emerged from our course readings and/or class discussions. You may turn in your paper at anytime, but no later than April 15.

Attendance and class participation represents 20% of your final grade. Seminars work best when students are actively engaged with the classroom community, the concepts, and the coursework. I encourage you to envision this course as a collaborative process of ongoing dialogue and inquiry.

Please come to every class prepared to 1) explain the central argument and methodology of the assigned reading; 2) assess the assigned reading for its relative strengths and limitations; 3) raise questions about the reading; 4) connect the readings to one another; and 5) connect the readings to your broader understanding of contemporary and historical issues in American culture. Attendance is required at every class meeting.

Grading

Proposal	5%
Two (2) project updates	10% (5% each)
Research Presentation	10%
Final Paper	40%
Image Assignment	5%
Film Analysis	10%
Participation	20%

For this course, +/- grading will be used. No extra credit will be offered. Keep all graded work so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out. An assignment is considered late if it is not turned in at the beginning of the class session in which it is due. Late assignments will be lowered one mark **per day** (NOT per class meeting) after the due date (for example, C to C-). Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis for legitimate reasons and only when a student asks for an extension at least 24 hours before an assignment is due.

A+ 97-99; A 94-96; A-90-93; B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83; C+ 77-79; C 74-76; C- 70-73; D+ 67-69; D 64-66; D- 60-63; F 0-59

Graduate Students

See me to discuss additional requirements for graduate credit.

Student Accommodations

CSUF complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing a process for disclosing disabilities and arranging for reasonable accommodations. On the CSUF campus, the Office of Disabled Student Services has been delegated the authority to certify disabilities and to prescribe specific accommodations for students with documented disabilities. DSS provides support services for students with mobility limitations, learning disabilities, hearing or visual impairments, and other disabilities. Counselors are available to help students plan a CSUF experience to meet their individual needs. Prior to receiving this assistance, documentation from a qualified professional source must be submitted to DSS. For more information, please contact DSS in UH 101; phone 714-278-3117.

Academic Integrity

Integrity is an essential component of all students' academic experience. Students who violate university standards of academic integrity are subject to disciplinary sanctions, including failure in the course and suspension from the university. Since dishonesty in any form harms the individual, other students, and the university, policies on academic integrity are strictly enforced. I expect that

you will familiarize yourself with the academic integrity guidelines found in the current student handbook. [<http://www.fullerton.edu/handbook/>]

Cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means, or helping someone commit an act of academic dishonesty. (UPS 300.021). Examples include, but are not limited to:

Unacceptable examination behavior: communicating with fellow students, copying material from another student's exam or allowing another student to copy from an exam, possessing or using unauthorized materials, or any behavior that defeats the intent of an exam.

Plagiarism: taking the work of another and offering it as one's own without giving credit to that source, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.

Unauthorized collaboration on a project, homework or other assignment where an instructor expressly forbids such collaboration.

Documentary falsification, including forgery, altering of campus documents or records, tampering with grading procedures, fabricating lab assignments, or altering medical excuses.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Date	Topic	Due
M, Jan. 26	Introduction to Course	
W, Jan. 28	Young lives in Premodern America: A brief history, Colonial to 1900	
M, Feb. 2	<i>Theory and Practice I:</i> Studying Youth Culture and Young People	-Intro, GOY, 1-20 -Image Assignment
W, Feb. 4	The Invention of Adolescence and Juvenile Justice in the Progressive Era	-Getis, GOY, 21-35 -Odem, GOY, 50-64
M, Feb. 9	The Teenage Girl in Popular Culture, 1930s-1940s	- <i>American Sweethearts</i> , 1-119
W, Feb. 11	<i>Theory and Practice II:</i> Designing the Research Project	-Scheiner, GOY, 81-94
M, Feb. 16	NO CLASS: Presidents' Day.	Campus closed
W, Feb. 18	The Teenage Girl in Popular Culture, 1950s-1960s Film excerpt: <i>Gidget</i>	- <i>American Sweethearts</i> , 117-229
M, Feb. 23	Library Day: We will meet as a class in the library for a workshop	(be reading <i>Coming of Age in Buffalo</i> for Wednesday)

W, Feb. 25	Coming of Age in Buffalo the 1950s	- <i>Coming of Age in Buffalo</i>
M, Mar. 2	The Rebel and Delinquent in Postwar Popular Culture Film excerpts: <i>Rebel Without a Cause</i> (1955), <i>Blackboard Jungle</i> (1955)	-Research Proposal Due
W, Mar. 4	<i>Theory and Practice III:</i> Making Sense of Subculture and Style Film excerpt: <i>Dogtown and Z-Boys</i> (2001)	-España-Maram, GOY, 118-135 -Kelley, GOY, 136-156
M, Mar. 9	Coming of Age in Texas in the 1980s	- <i>Learning Capitalist Culture</i> , Introduction and 1-158
W, Mar. 11	Studying School Sports: Football and Boxing	-Bloom, GOY, 65-80
M, Mar. 16	Biology, Culture, and Girlhood	- <i>The Body Project</i> , Introduction and 1-94
W, Mar. 18	Contemporary Youth Cultures	-Addison and Comstock, GOY, 367-378 -Bright, GOY, 412-426
M, Mar. 23	Body Projects and Youth Marketing Film excerpt: <i>Merchants of Cool</i>	- <i>The Body Project</i> , 97-192
W, Mar. 25	Research Groups	-Project Update #1
	Spring Break	
M, Apr. 6	The Lessons of Holden Caulfield	- <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>
W, Apr. 8	<i>Theory and Practice IV:</i> Ways of Understanding <i>Catcher in the Rye</i>	-Bring <i>Catcher in the Rye</i> , <i>Coming of Age in Buffalo</i> to class
M, Apr. 13	In-class film screening: <i>Thirteen</i> (2003)	
W, Apr. 15	In-class film screening: <i>Thirteen</i> , cont.	-Last day to turn in Film Analysis
M, Apr. 20	<i>Theory and Practice V:</i> Ways of Understanding <i>Thirteen</i>	-Bring <i>Body Project</i> , <i>American Sweethearts</i> to class

W, Apr. 22	Research Groups	-Project Update #2
M, Apr. 27	The Globalization of Youth Culture	
W, Apr. 29	Research Presentations	
M, May 4	Research Presentations	
W, May 6	Research Presentations	
M, May 11	Research Presentations	
W, May 13	Conclusion of Course	
W, May 20		Final Research Paper Due by 4 PM in UH-313