

Pop Culture: European-American Trends

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Time Slot:	Mondays, 1:30 p.m.
Language of Instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	45
ECTS Credits:	6

Course Description

With the divide between mass culture and high art disappearing, popular culture has become a prolific field of study. In this seminar, we will consider the many facets and dimensions of pop culture, including its cultural history and the possibilities hidden within what is often assumed to be nothing more than entertainment.

Some of the topics we will address are popular culture's reflection of discourse, its capability of criticizing or affirming the status quo, and the various modes of ideology within. We will cover various relevant pop culture representations: street art, film, comic books, fiction, music, paintings etc. and discuss their significance within the given frame of reference. We will also have a look at the international social impact of pop culture representations, their ability to critically comment on geo-political events, be it lyrics and stage performances of Childish Gambino or Taylor Swift or Banksy's murals in destroyed Ukrainian cities.

Secondary texts will introduce a range of theoretical perspectives through which pop culture may be explored, analyzed, questioned, and understood. We will discuss the function of pop culture in the public sphere on both sides of the Atlantic, its representations in texts, images, and music and most importantly, the mutual influences between US-American and European pop culture.

Learning Objectives

In this course students are meant to learn about the history of popular culture and the mutual influences between its US-American and European representations. Another skill practiced in this class is the application of theoretical concepts from both sides of the Atlantic to cultural practices of a given time. The course features a wide spectrum of representations, allows for establishing cross-disciplinary connections between them and to trace national and international tendencies. It encourages to think outside of a single discipline and see links between movements, trends and ideologies.

Student Profile

Should be in their fourth semester of college/university education or beyond.

Assignments and Grading

Active participation and in-class discussion: 100 Points

Independent Project Report: 100 Points

Presentation: 150 Points

Midterm Exam: 300 Points

Final Exam: 350 Points

Completion of the Midterm Exam as well as the Final Exam is needed for a grade.

FUB Grade	Points of 1,000
1.0	980-1,000
1.3	950-979

1.7	900-949
2.0	850-899
2.3	800-849
2.7	750-799
3.0	700-749
3.3	650-699
3.7	600-649
4.0	500-599
5.0	< 500

Attendance

Attendance in class is mandatory. We also expect you to be punctual out of respect to both your instructor and your fellow students. If you cannot attend class because you are ill, please report sick to the FU-BEST office (info@fubest.fu-berlin.de) and to your instructor by e-mail before class.

Absences are **excused** in case of **illness**; however, for the fifth sick day and every other sick day after that (consecutive or cumulative, counted not per individual course but for the program overall), you will need to turn in a doctor's notice ("Attest" in German) to the FU-BEST office in order for them to count as excused, too.

If you miss an exam due to an excused absence, your instructor and the FU-BEST team will arrange a make-up exam for you; you may also be entitled to a term paper deadline extension. If you, however, do not fulfill all course requirements needed for a grade by the (later) date determined by the program, passing the course is no longer possible.

Please also note that if you miss more than half of a course's sessions (even if due to excused absence), passing the course is no longer possible.

Personal travel and visits by relatives or friends are **not** accepted as reasons for absence (i.e., absences for these reasons always count as unexcused).

Regarding **unexcused** absences, please note the following:

- Any unexcused absence has consequences for at least the participation portion of the grade.
- Two unexcused absences lead to a formal warning and a lowering of the course grade by a fraction.
- Three unexcused absences will result in an "F" (5.0) on the transcript.

An absence for more than half of a particular day's session will be considered an absence for that day.

Literature

Digitized readings posted on the online learning platform Blackboard.

Course Schedule

Calendar	Topics, Readings, etc.
Session 1	<p>Topic: The Americanization of Popular Culture: Introduction to a Global Phenomenon in Cultural History.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluck, Winfried. "The Americanization of Modern Culture: A Cultural History of the Popular Media." <i>Romance with America? Essays on Culture, Literature, and American Studies</i>. Ed. Laura Bieger and Johannes Voelz. Heidelberg: Winter, 2009. 239-267.

<p><i>anything in advance for the first session.</i></p> <p><i>Readings assigned to all other sessions are meant to be read in advance in preparation for each class.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macdonald, Dwight. "A Theory of Mass Culture." <i>Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America</i>. Ed. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White New York: The Free Press, 1957. • Hall, Stuart. "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular'". <i>People's History and Socialist Theory</i>. Ed. Raphael Samuel. London: Routledge, 1981. 64-71.
Session 2	<p>Topic: What do Pictures Want? Decoding Visual Culture</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "What is visual culture?" <i>An Introduction to Visual Culture</i>. New York: Routledge, 1999. 3-13. • McLuhan, Marshall "The Medium is the Message," <i>Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man</i>. London: Routledge, 1964. 22-27.
Session 3	<p>Topic: What is Art? Comic Books, Graphic Novels, and Street Art</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCloud, Scott "The Vocabulary of Comics." <i>Understanding Comics. The Invisible Art</i>. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993. 24-59. • Visconti, Luca M. et al., "Street Art, Sweet Art? Reclaiming the "Public" in Public Place," <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i> 37.3, 2010. 511-529. • Spiegelman, Art. <i>Maus, A Survivor's Tale</i>. New York: Pantheon Books. 1986. Excerpts.
Session 4 <u>Independent Project Report due</u>	<p>Topic: Sampling Culture and Copyright Law</p> <p>Guest Lecture: Dr. Frédéric Döhl</p> <p>User Generated Content and the European Copyright Reform of 2021</p>
Session 5	<p>Topic: Roll Over Beethoven: A Cultural History of 1950s Youth Culture</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marcus, Greil. "Presliad." <i>Mystery Train</i>. New York: Plume, 2000. 132-196. • Wicke, Peter. <i>Rock Music: Culture, Aesthetics, and Sociology</i>, 1990, Chapter 2: "Rock Around the Clock': Emergence" (pp. 28-47). • Mintz, Steve and Susan Kellogg, "The Golden Age: Families of the 1950s." <i>Domestic Revolutions</i>. New York: The Free Press, 1988. 177-201.
Session 6	<p>MIDTERM EXAM</p>

Session 7	<p>Topic: Confronting Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in Hip Hop</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rose, Tricia. "A Style Nobody Can Deal With: Politics, Style and the Postindustrial City in Hip Hop." <i>Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture</i>. Ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose. New York: Routledge, 1994. 401-415. • Strick, Simon. "Competent Krauts – Following the Cultural Translations of HipHop to Germany." <i>Traveling Sounds. Music, Migration, and Identity in the U.S. and beyond</i>. Ed. Wilfried Raussert. Berlin: LIT, 2008. 265-247. • Dyer, Richard: <i>White</i>. London: Routledge. 1997. Chapter 1: "The matter of whiteness," 1-40. • Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic, <i>Critical Race Theory: An Introduction</i>, Chapter 1 (Please consider the questions at the end of this excerpt!)
Sessions 8 & 9 Double Session Excursion 1:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.	<p>Topic: The City as an Open Air Gallery: Street Art in Berlin</p> <p>Guided tour through Teufelsberg: details follow</p> <p>In preparation for the excursion we will watch excerpts of the film installation by Julian Rosefeldt <u><i>Manifesto</i></u> starring Cate Blanchett, shot partly at Berlins Teufelsberg.</p>
Session 10	<p>Topic: Gender and Performance in Pop, Rock, and all that's in between</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walser, Robert. "Forging Masculinity: Heavy Metal Sounds and Images of Gender." <i>Popular Music</i>. London: Routledge, 2004. 343-371. • Butler, Judith. "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions." <i>Gender Trouble</i>. New York: Routledge, 1990. 175-193. • Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices." <i>The Spectacle of the 'Other'</i> (excerpts as close reading in class).
Session 11	<p>Topic: Imagining the End – Apocalyptic Fantasies and the Fear of Disasters</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sontag, Susan. "The Imagination of Disaster." <i>Against Interpretation</i>, New York: Farrar, 1966. 209-225. • Page, Max. "The Future of the City's End." <i>The City's End: Two Centuries of Fantasies, Fears and Premonitions of New York's Destruction</i>. New Haven: Yale UP, 2008. 199-232. <u>and</u> • "Utopian and Dystopian Fantasies of the Stone Colossus in the 1920s and 1930s." 61-69.
Session 12	<p>Topic: National Trauma and Popular Culture</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neal, Arthur G. "Collective Sadness, Fear, and Anger." <i>National Trauma and Collective Identity. Major Events in the American Century</i>. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998. 3-20. • Goldsmith, Kenneth. <i>Seven American Deaths and Disasters</i>. New York: powerHouse Books 2013. Excerpts ("John F. Kennedy" 9-41)

