

American Studies 448 American Popular Culture and the World

“Culture plays a critical role in our interpretation and reaction to the phenomena of globalization.”
--Merry M. Merryfield

Fall 2012
Mondays, 7:00-9:45 • EC 011
California State University, Fullerton

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Course Description

This upper division American Studies course situates the historical and contemporary study of American popular culture in a global context. Three central questions will guide our interdisciplinary inquiry:

- 1) How have the themes, forms, and ideological content of American popular culture been shaped by diaspora, colonialism, and globalization?
- 2) What policies, technologies, and cultural processes have facilitated the global circulation of American popular culture?
- 3) How has American popular culture been received and interpreted by different audiences around the world?

In short, this course looks at American popular culture “in the world,” and the “world” in American popular culture. Instead of viewing the globalization of U.S. popular culture as a one-way process, we will consider popular culture as a transnational, multidirectional encounter between diverse producers, audiences, and ideologies. Major topics for study will include the interconnections between popular culture and imperialism pre-World War II; the politics and efficacy of cultural diplomacy during the Cold War; globalization and youth identity formation; and the transnational production and reception of popular genres (including comedy and horror).

Required Texts

Books

Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of The World, 1869-1922*

Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*

Rattawat Lapcharoensap, *Sightseeing: Stories*

Firoozeh Dumas, *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America*

William Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters*

Kyle William Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture*

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

Additional required reading assignments (will be available on the course Titanium site)

- Brian Rouleau, "In the Wake of Jim Crow: Maritime Minstrelsy Along the Transoceanic Frontier." *Common-Place* 12:4 (July 2012).
- Bill Brown, "Waging Baseball, Playing War: Games of American Imperialism." *Cultural Critique* 17 (Winter 1990-91): 51-78.
- Peggy Von Eschen, "Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz, Race, and Empire During the Cold War," from *Here, There, and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*, Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, eds. (Salzburg, 2000).
- Ida Fadzillah, "The Amway Connection: How Transnational Ideas of Beauty and Money Affect Northern Thai Girls' Perceptions of their Future Options," in *Youthscapes: The Popular, The National, The Global*, Sunaina Maira and Elisabeth Soep, eds. (University of Pennsylvania, 2004).
- Louis S. Warren, "Buffalo Bill Meets Dracula: William F. Cody, Bram Stoker, and the Frontiers of Racial Decay," *The American Historical Review* 107.4 (2002).

Films (see course schedule for screening instructions and dates)

Sugar (dir. Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, 2008)
Exporting Raymond (dir. Philip Rosenthal, 2010)

Course Learning Goals

- Students will develop an interpretive framework for studying popular culture in a global context, and will be able to independently apply this framework to complicated problems and issues on a local, national, and global scale
- Students will be able to identify the links between popular culture and history, geopolitics, economics, and technology
- Students will develop skills in analyzing and evaluating primary and secondary sources
- Students will develop skills in synthesizing diverse issues, themes, and materials
- Students will develop skills in critical thinking
- Students will develop skills in oral and written communication

Department of American Studies Student Learning Goals

- Develop a rigorous concept of culture and cultural process as well as an interdisciplinary sensibility, becoming aware of connections among the social sciences and the humanities.
- Gain a thorough understanding of cultural diversity by examining the creative tension between unity and multiplicity in American experiences.
- Understand and interpret the ways in which culture creates meaning and guides behavior.
- Learn research, writing, and expressive skills to see connections among complex materials and to clearly communicate an understanding of the underlying meanings and causes of cultural/historical events.
- Become informed and engaged American citizens, able to situate current political and social issues

within their historical and cultural contexts.

Course Assignments

Because this is an interdisciplinary American Studies course, the writing assignments will be varied and will allow you to explore different modes of cultural analysis while addressing course learning goals. There are three required assignments.

• Paper #1: Change Over Time

This is a three-part assignment. You will...

1) create a timeline (in visual format, either by hand or via computer) that depicts the history of the globalization of American popular culture, from the 19th century through the Cold War, drawing on assigned course reading; the timeline must include at least 20 events.

2) write a paper in which you describe in detail **three specific events** from your timeline that, in your view, represent significant shifts or developments in the history of the globalization of American popular culture, and explain why you think so. At least one event must come from the *Buffalo Bill* book, and one event from the *Coca-Colonization* book.

3) include a section at the end of your paper in which you focus on the contemporary scene (post-cold war era). Identify **one technology** and **one pop culture phenomenon** (for example, a film, book, musician, television show, fashion style, leisure site [Euro Disney], etc.) that, in your view, represent important developments in the ongoing history of globalization. Explain how you think this technology and pop culture phenomenon each fit into the longer history of transnational U.S. popular culture.

Your primary goal here is to synthesize our various readings and provide a clear sense of chronology and historical/cultural change. In addition, I am challenging you to think creatively and critically about how the past informs the present.

Length: Paper should be at least 5 pages in length, double-spaced, 12-point font.

• Paper #2: Globalization and Youth Cultures

“When it comes to globalization or transnational connections, youth cultures are in the forefront of theoretical interest; youth, their ideas and commodities move easily across national borders, shaping and being shaped by all kinds of structures and meanings.”

--Helena Wulff, *Youth Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*

Use this prompt as a starting point for thinking about *Sightseeing*, *Funny in Farsi*, and *Sugar*. Write a paper in which you analyze the ways in which each text depicts the relationship between popular culture and youth identity formation. What do these three stories tell us about the globalization of American culture and its impact on youth culture? Use specific examples from all three texts in your analysis.

Length: 6-10 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font

• **Paper #3: The Cultural Work of Transnational Popular Culture**

This is a two-part assignment:

“An influential horror film does not necessarily create a pattern of anxiety or fear within a culture; instead, elements within the film resonate—connect in some sympathetic manner—to trends within the broader culture.”

--Kendall R. Phillips, *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture*

1) Use this prompt to think about the horror genre in a transnational context. Drawing on assigned readings, write a paper in which you explain how Dracula, Godzilla, and the zombie each embody particular fears about globalization. How does each monster resonate with broader anxieties and fears? How does each connect to a broader historical context?

2) In the second half of your paper, pick a popular culture phenomenon (e.g., a film, book, song, television show, fashion style, leisure site [Euro Disney], etc.) that, in your view, offers an important commentary on the globalization of American culture. This commentary can be positive, negative, ambivalent, or perhaps more complicated. Describe your pop culture phenomenon in detail, and then explain how it comments on the globalization of American culture. Questions to address: does your phenomenon reproduce, challenge, subvert, exaggerate, reimagine, satirize, (or fill in another verb) dominant ideas about the globalization of American culture? What is the underlying ideology of your phenomenon regarding globalization and American culture? How can you fit your phenomenon into the longer history of globalization that we have studied in this course? As you approach this assignment, think about how we have analyzed and discussed various pop culture phenomena in class this semester, such as Buffalo Bill, *Sugar*, *Exporting Raymond*, *Funny in Farsi*, and so on. This is your chance to go through the same process with a topic of your choice.

Length: 10-15 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font

• **Participation**

Attendance and class participation make up 10% of your final grade. Upper-division seminars work best when students are actively engaged with the classroom community, concepts, and coursework. Please come to every class prepared to 1) describe the central argument or theme of the assigned reading; 2) assess the reading for its relative strengths and limitations; 3) raise questions about the reading; 4) connect the readings to one another; 5) connect the readings to your broader understanding of contemporary and historical issues in American culture; 6) relate the readings to your own experience and/or areas of expertise.

Attendance is required at every class meeting.

Additional assignment for graduate students

M.A. students are required to read one additional book for the course (a book that you have never read before), selected in consultation with the instructor from the list below, and write a 6-8-page response paper that 1) summarizes AND evaluates the author's main argument and methodology

and 2) ties the book into larger themes/issues/questions examined in the course. This paper is due no later than Monday, November 26.

--John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882*

--Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*

--E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*

--Anthony Macías, *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935-1968*

--Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*

--Melani McCalister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945*

Grading Standards

	<u>Undergraduates</u>	<u>Graduates</u>
Assignment #1	30%	30%
Assignment #2	30%	20%
Assignment #3	30%	30%
Participation	10%	10%
Book Review (Graduate Students)	N/A	10%

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

A Note to Graduate Students

In keeping with university-wide requirements for graduate study, graduate students enrolled in this 400-level course will be expected to demonstrate, in both written and oral performance, quality higher than that expected of an undergraduate. Graduate students should demonstrate an advanced level of competence in interdisciplinary cultural analysis and synthesis.

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, contact DSS in UH 101; 657-278-3117.

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:

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.

Campus Emergency Procedures

Students should be familiar with campus **emergency procedures**:

http://www.fullerton.edu/emergencypreparedness/ep_students.html.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Date	Topic / Due
M, Aug. 27	Introduction to Course
M, Sep. 3	<i>Labor Day – Campus closed</i>
	POPULAR CULTURE AND EMPIRE
M, Sep. 10	<p>--Brian Rouleau, "In the Wake of Jim Crow: Maritime Minstrelsy Along the Transoceanic Frontier"</p> <p>--Bill Brown, "Waging Baseball, Playing War: Games of American Imperialism"</p> <p>--Rydell and Kroes, <i>Buffalo Bill in Bologna</i>, Introduction & Chapters 1, 2, 3</p>
M, Sep. 17	--Rydell and Kroes, <i>Buffalo Bill in Bologna</i> , Chs. 4, 5, and Conclusion (not 6)
	CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND THE COLD WAR
M, Sep. 24	<p>--Wagnleitner, <i>Coca-Colonization</i>, Introduction and Chs. 1-3</p> <p>--Peggy Von Eschen, "Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz, Race, and Empire During the Cold War"</p>
M, Oct. 1	--Wagnleitner, <i>Coca-Colonization</i> , Chs. 5, 7, 8, 9 (not chapter 4 & 6)
	GLOBALIZATION AND YOUTH CULTURE(S)
M, Oct. 8	<p>--In-class film screening and discussion: <i>Sugar</i> (dir. Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, 2008)</p> <p>DUE: Assignment #1</p>

M, Oct. 15	<p>--Rattawut Lapcharoensap, <i>Sightseeing</i>: Read “Farangs,” “At the Café Lovely,” “Sightseeing,” “Priscilla the Cambodian,” and “Don’t Let Me Die in This Place”</p> <p>--Ida Fadzillah, “The Amway Connection: How Transnational Ideas of Beauty and Money Affect Northern Thai Girls’ Perceptions of their Future Options”</p>
M, Oct. 22	--Firoozeh Dumas, <i>Funny in Farsi</i>
	COMIC INTERLUDE: LAUGHTER LOST IN TRANSLATION
M, Oct. 29	<p>--In-class film screening and discussion: <i>Exporting Raymond</i> (dir. Philip Rosenthal, 2010)</p> <p>DUE: Assignment #2</p>
	TRANSNATIONAL HORRORS
M, Nov. 5	--Tsutsui, <i>Godzilla on My Mind</i>
M, Nov. 12	<i>Veterans Day – Campus closed</i>
M, Nov. 19	<i>Thanksgiving Recess – Campus closed</i>
M, Nov. 26	<p>--Bishop, <i>American Zombie Gothic</i></p> <p>--Louis S. Warren, “Buffalo Bill Meets Dracula: William F. Cody, Bram Stoker, and the Frontiers of Racial Decay”</p>
M, Dec. 3	--In-class screening and discussion of excerpts from various horror films
M, Dec. 10	Conclusion of Course
TBA	Due: Assignment #3