

American Culture in the 20th Century

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Planning Blocks: blocks 1, 4, 7

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Course Introduction:

Welcome to American Culture!

What is American Culture? It's a class where you're going to study the foods, fads, fashion and entertainment that we're surrounded by every day. Those things are often referred to as pop culture and pop culture all around us constantly, influencing how we think, how we feel, and how we live our lives.

This year we're going to be exploring how the things we choose to watch, buy, listen to and consume for entertainment are actually historical artifacts. What does that mean?

DEFINE: "historical"

DEFINE: "artifact"

- Well, the tv shows we watch are not just amusing; if we think about those shows more critically, they can also tell us something about the values, beliefs and norms of the people who watch and make those shows.
 - For instance, if we watch a tv show that was made in the 1950s, we can study the storyline, the relationships between the characters, look at who was writing the show, what types of people they cast in the show, and the response people at the time had to the show as a way to understand something about the 1950s.

Make sense? Let's practice.

Think about something you enjoy as entertainment. EXAMPLE: _____

What could someone 50 years from now learn about you as a person or American society today if they were to study it?

Well, we're not only going to study tv shows this year, we're also going to cover topics ranging from celebrities to sports to music and advertising. We'll also spend time talking about radio, art, dance, fashion, video games, comic books, and technology. All of these topics can't be divorced from the history and events happening in the time that they were made. You will need to use on your knowledge of U.S. history, but no worries, we'll review the relevant details at the start of each unit!

Why are we going to do this?

- A. It's fun.
- B. If you're going to learn about history, why not do it in a way that is fun?
- C. It'll help you to be a more thoughtful consumer of popular culture today, which is important given how much of your time is spent consuming pop culture!

Goals of the course:

- To consider how history influences American popular culture.
- To think critically about the way that popular culture influences our attitudes, behavior & society.
- To develop stronger writing, studying and organizational skills.

Class Websites/Technology:

- **The class website:** <http://melisashen.weebly.com> (The course syllabus, weekly syllabi, and links to all readings, handouts, Powerpoints, etc. are on this site. It is also linked at the top of Google Classroom so you can always get to it from there.)
- **Google classroom:**
 - Block 1's class code to join is: **uv6ske**
 - Block 6's class code to join is: **43pewgz**

Assignments/Tests:

The primary assessment tool in this class is projects. This is designed to give you a chance to explore topics that you personally find interesting in whatever unit we're studying. In general, you will have 1 test/quiz, 1 writing assignment and 1-2 projects each quarter.

This class is designed to help support you in a way that works best given how you learn. Given that, before every test, project or paper, there will be plenty of class time devoted to review/prep. This will give you time in class to ask questions, get help when you need it, get teacher feedback and make edits before you hand something in. It also will give you a chance to get most, if not all, of your work done in class. In an ideal world, you shouldn't have to do work outside of class if you stay focused and get your work done in class. Sounds good, right?

Also, if internet/computer availability is ever an issue outside of class, please talk to me and we'll figure out an alternative plan if you need the web to access or work on assignments outside of class.

Rewrites and Retakes:

You may always rewrite a paper or retake parts of a test that you had trouble with. If you would like to do a rewrite of a paper or retake a test, you need to meet with me one-on-one outside of class within a week of receiving the paper/test back to review it and make a plan to redo it.

Extra Help:

Asking for extra help is a good thing. The best times to get a hold of me are during free blocks (for me Blocks 1, 4, and 7), before or after school.

Class Participation:

Class is more productive and fun when you participate. There will be days where I'm lecturing but we will also be doing a lot of in-class readings, discussions, small group work and projects where you'll be asked to participate more actively. Because we're a small class, it's important that we all work together and that everyone pulls their weight. Pulling your weight means playing along, giving it your best effort and being willing to be a part of whatever we're doing, whether it be reading a few sentences out loud, discussing a question with your tablemates, or sharing your thoughts in a class discussion. No worries, if you're not a big talker! Participation doesn't have to mean talking 24-7; participation also includes offering opinions, asking questions when there's something that you don't understand, helping others, or leading in a small group. If you are terrified of speaking in class, talk to me privately and we'll come up with a plan together.

Academic Honesty:

Any written work that is copied or plagiarized will earn a failing grade. Please refer to the L-S Code of Conduct for the consequences of subsequent occurrences of cheating.

Classroom Expectations:

1. I expect you to be respectful to me and to one another. Be respectful of other peoples' opinions and be open-minded when someone has a different way of seeing or experiencing the world.
2. I expect you to be on time to class. "On time" means in your seat and ready to learn at the official start time of class give or take a minute. Your bag does not get credit for being on time – *YOU* physically need to be in the classroom. Please bring a note from a teacher if you are coming late from another class.
3. If you are absent, it is *YOUR* responsibility to ask about work you may have missed and to make plans to make up the work.
4. I don't want to see your cell phones out during class. Please make sure that during class it is silenced & put away. I will take it if I see you using it inappropriately during class.

Grading Policy:

You will be graded on a point system. At the end of the quarter, your total points earned are added up and divided by the total number of possible points.

The following is designed to give you an idea of the rough point value of various activities and assignments:

Homework – 10 points

Projects - 10-50 points

Tests and Essays – 100 points