Course Introduction:
Welcome to Pop. Culture! You may only have a vague sense of what popular culture is. Don’t worry! By the end of the year, you will be experts on the subject. America is in many ways defined by its popular culture and has been for the past century. It is all around us, influencing how we think, how we feel and how we live our lives. Our popular culture not only influences Americans; economically, popular culture has become the nation’s leading export.

In spite of its influence, popular culture is often viewed as “trivial.” Academic interest in popular culture is still a relatively new phenomenon. Only recently has the larger historical community begun to recognize popular culture as a field worthy of study. For years, many historians dismissed popular culture as “a monstrous ugly beast designed to appeal to the uneducated tastes of the working class.”

Despite their criticism, the field of popular culture is growing and as we will see this year, it is worthy of study. Popular culture provides us a window into the perspectives of the everyday person and allows us to consider the values and experiences of Americans in different historical periods. It “comprises a hugely complicated and layered story about evolving technologies; varied entertainment forms; competing companies; censorship; politics; laws and public policies; the concept of celebrity; changing public tastes; fresh talent; and issues of race, class, and gender. It can, in other words, tell us much about U.S. history as a whole.”

Over the course of the year, we will cover topics ranging from celebrity and heroes to sports and leisure. We will also spend time talking about movies, television, radio, art, fads, fashions, and literature. All of these topics cannot of course be divorced from the history and events happening in that time so you will be asked to draw on your knowledge of the various decades of the 20th century (but don’t worry, we will review the relevant details at the start of each unit!)

In a world that is increasingly more saturated with media, it is vital that you be savvy consumers of popular culture. This course will draw on your own expertise as consumers of popular culture as a starting point for exploring the various roles played by popular culture in our lives.

Objectives
It is my goal for all of you to accomplish the following by the end of this year:

• To gain or hone an appreciation for American culture and history.
• To consider the cultural and social significance of popular culture in shaping 20th century American society.
• To identify and examine social, economic, and political influences on American popular culture.
• To evaluate the roles print media, art, music, radio, television, motion pictures, the internet, sports, fashion, and technology have played in the development of American popular culture.
• To think critically about the various elements of popular culture and how they inform/reflect our attitudes, behavior, and society as a whole.
• To be able to apply information learned in class to better understand events occurring in your own lives.
• To develop stronger writing, studying and time-management skills.

Reading and Texts: There is no textbook for this course. Your homework will be drawn from online and print sources. Often times you will be asked to do these readings online (either from the class website or online news sources) and respond either online or in writing. If internet/computer availability is ever an issue for you, please speak to me outside of class and we will come up with an alternative plan.

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Class Websites/Technology: Technology is a huge part of our everyday lives, and this class is no different! There are a few websites that are crucial for success in class. I strongly suggest that you bookmark them on your browser as you will be visiting them all quite often.

- **The class website:** [http://melisashen.weebly.com](http://melisashen.weebly.com) (The course syllabus, weekly syllabi, and links to all readings, handouts, Powerpoints, etc. are on this site.)
- **Celly:** [http://cel.ly/](http://cel.ly/) (Celly works like Twitter, except that it is geared for educational use and is totally private. Each class has its own cell, which is a private communication group that works with any mobile phone or internet device. Members can join instantly with one text and exchange group messages, polls, reminders, and alerts.)

The majority of information for class can be found on the websites mentioned above. This means that class can be accessible from anywhere there’s internet! Given this fact, there is no excuse for “not knowing” what assignments are due or for “losing” a handout/assignment.

**Assignments/Tests:**
All homework will be collected and graded. I expect that you turn in all assignments **at the beginning of class** on the day they are due. I will remind you of this but you should assume that all homework is handed in and to this end, you should hand it in first thing when you get to class each day.

There will be a test or culminating paper or project assigned at the end of each unit. **Tests** will typically consist of some combination of matching, multiple choice, and short answers. Before each test, there will always be a review day.

You should always have a copy of your weekly syllabus (it is also posted on the website), therefore it is your responsibility to be clear about due dates and expectations.

**Papers:**
Because it is very important that you develop strong writing skills and possess the ability to make clear arguments, we will be writing a number of essays this year. You will be expected to complete outlines for most papers.

You will write a 3-5 page essay 1st and 4th quarter and a number of short 1-2 page papers this year. These essays are designed to help you improve your writing skills in anticipation of writing a more in-depth research paper in quarters 2-3. You will write ONE 6-9 page research paper that will enable you to engage in a more detailed study of a topic of your choosing in American popular culture history. The research paper will be due at the beginning of quarter 3 (more information to come on the research papers as the time draws nearer.)

I expect that you hold onto all of the essays you write for this course, and refer back to them with each new essay assignment. You will be asked to set writing goals for each essay and to reflect on areas for improvement before and after each written assignment. Part of your grade for each essay you write will involve improvement from the last one.

**Re-Writes:**
The opportunity to re-write papers is offered at the discretion of the teacher. In order to earn the opportunity to re-write a paper, you need to meet with me one-on-one outside of class within a week of receiving the paper back to discuss your paper and set goals for the re-write. It is up to you to initiate and set up a paper conference.

**Late Work:**
Late homework will be docked a point for each day that it is late (e.g. a homework assignment worth 10 points will lose one point for each day it is late) and papers will be also be assessed a late penalty for each day they are late. **Saturday & Sunday count as one day.**

Just because class does not meet does not mean that you can not and should not hand in late work – if this is the case, please put the assignment in my mailbox by the main office or on my desk in the history dept. office or email it to me. The same policy applies if you are not in class for some reason but are in fact in school.

I realize that you all lead busy lives and that you are taking five other classes. I am also aware that my class is not necessarily always on the top of your priority list. Recognizing this, I will give each of you 4 “Late Passes” which will
permit you to hand in an assignment one day late without loss of credit. **You get four passes for the ENTIRE year, so you need to be wise about priorities and time management.** The pass does not work for tests or group projects. You may use them one at a time or save them and use all 4 on one assignment. You may NOT hoard them and trade them in for extra credit at the end of the year. They are yours to use as you need so please use them.

**Extra Help:**
I am available for extra help during most of my planning blocks (Blocks 2, 4, and 7) or before or after school by appointment (I typically arrive at school by 7:00 am and leave around 4:15 pm.)

**Class Participation:**
The success of this course is dependent on your participation, and, in fact, will figure into your quarter grade (roughly 40 points each quarter.) Productive class participation includes offering opinions, asking questions about material that you may not understand, helping others, and leading in small groups. I hope that you feel comfortable sharing your opinion, answering questions, helping your classmates, and asking questions when you have them. Everyone will be expected to participate in class discussion. For those of you who are chatterboxes, your responsibility is to work on your listening skills and to give others the chance to talk. For you non-talkers, please know that you cannot escape talking in this class. If you are terrified of speaking in class, please speak to me outside of class and we can work on a plan.

**Academic Integrity:**
Any written work that is copied or plagiarized will automatically earn a failing grade. Cheating will similarly not be tolerated. 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 toward others’ differences.
2. Please respect my right to teach and your peers’ right to learn. Being disruptive in class not only inhibits your own learning, but also the learning of your peers. Excessive chatting with fellow students can be disruptive and will negatively affect your class participation grade.
3. 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.
4. In case of an absence, it is YOUR responsibility to ask me about any work you may have missed and to make arrangements to make up the work. If you have an excuse absence on the day a major assignment is due, you should give it to me or put it in my mailbox on the day of your return (NOT the next class day!). If you miss a test or a quiz due to an excused absence, you have two days to schedule a make-up. If you decide to cut class on the day a major assignment is due (i.e. test, quiz, project, or paper), you will get a ZERO for the assignment—no exceptions!
5. Cell phones do not belong in class. Please make sure that during class it is turned OFF or silenced & placed in your bag. If I see you using your phone in class, be prepared to forfeit it to me until the end of the day.

**Grading Policy:**
You will be graded on a point system. Each assignment will be given a point-value and at the end of the term, your total points will be tabulated and divided by the total number of possible points. (Note: each quarter's overall grade distribution will vary according to the type and number of assignments that are given.)

The following is designed to give you an idea of the point value of various activities and assignments:
- Homework – 10-25 points
- Tests and Essays – 100 points
- Debates – 50 points
- Research paper – 200 points