

## Pop Culture Current Events Assignment

We've spent the past year studying the ways that American pop culture in the 20th-21st century is both reflective of historical events and a force which influences society as well. With our last month together, we're going to shift our focus specifically to popular culture that surrounds us today and the things you want to talk more about.

**YOUR ASSIGNMENT:** You are responsible for:

1. finding an article/video/podcast on a current pop culture topic that interests you
2. editing the article/video/podcast down (as needed) to something we can read/watch/listen to in class
3. leading a 5-7 minute class discussion about your topic (this will happen on Fridays for the month of May)

**Point Value:** 20 points for leading your discussion & 10 points for positively participating in other people's discussions.

### **EXPECTATIONS:**

**Step 1:** Find, read, and take notes on an article/video/podcast. Articles should be about 1 ½-3 pages long and videos or podcasts should be roughly 2 ½ - 4 minutes in length (you need to lead a 5-7 minute discussion on this topic so if it's too brief you'll have a harder time with that task.)

**Step 2:** If you have an article, edit it down to about 1 page in length (you'll need to copy and paste it from your online source into Google Doc and format it. The text should be 11-12 pt font, single spaced. Cut the ads, etc. and make sure pictures don't take up a ton of space.) If you have a video or podcast that is longer than 2 ½-4 minutes, figure out what segment you want the class to listen to or watch. Share the video/podcast or edited article with Ms. Shen.

**Step 3:** Every Friday for the month of May, we will read the articles or listen to the podcast/watch the videos and you will lead a 5-7 minute discussion of the topic and participate in a discussion of other people's topics.

**LEADING THE DISCUSSION:** Come prepared with a good understanding of the video/podcast/article and topic. Prepare some questions in advance so that you'll be able to lead a discussion with the class.

- As you try to figure out those discussion questions, think about what drew you to the video/podcast/article.
  - Why do you find this topic interesting, worth discussing, important?
  - Do some additional reading if needed to give you some cultural context on the topic. Find ways to connect it to larger issues or trends in pop culture or history.
  - If it applies, think about how your topic relates to other topics we've discussed this year.
- Ask the class questions and ask them to share their thoughts, opinions and to make connections to their own knowledge of the topic/related issues.

**PARTICIPATION:** You will be leading a discussion which you hope others will participate in - you need to reciprocate for others and be a positive, thoughtful and active participant in their discussions.

**SOURCES:**

- You will need to spend some time to find a good article/video or podcast. *One goal of this assignment is to encourage you to read high quality news sources. Blog posts are NOT acceptable sources for this assignment.*
  - My website has a number of general pop culture resources which regularly provide commentary on all things pop culture. To access this source, go to the “Pop Culture” tab and “Pop Culture Resources” (<https://melisashen.weebly.com/pop-culture-sources.html>).
  - Some good starting places are NPR’s Pop Culture site, Flavorwire, PopMatters, Mashable, Deadspin, The Ringer, *Paste*, *Slate*, *Bustle*, *Variety* or *Vox* magazines, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, PopDose and *Rolling Stone*.
- Remember, you want to find a source that is of a substantial enough length to give you something to talk about. It also should be something that brings multiple perspectives to the conversation.
- Make sure you understand your source! (If you don’t really get it, you’re going to have a hard time leading a conversation about it.)
- If you are concerned about sustaining a discussion on your topic, consider looking for a high interest topic, something that elicits a little controversy or opinion, or a topic we have covered at some point in class.
- If you have any doubt about a source/article, check with me first.