

Sociology 163: Popular Culture (Spring 2017)
Wednesdays, 16:10-19:00 / 3106 Etcheverry
John Lie, 486 Barrows, johnlie@berkeley.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 14:15-15:45 and by appointments

Popular culture is culture tout court for most people. Paradoxically, it's largely a twentieth-century phenomenon and something that's rarely studied – at least until very recently. The course attempts to make sense of the significant slice of the way we live by reviewing briefly the history and theory of popular culture and then by engaging in two extended case studies: popular music and television. The course is unorthodox in that students will present much of the materials (the best way to learn may very well be 'learning by doing,' or learning by teaching).

Evaluation

Class participation and presentation: 25%
Examination: 25%
Final project and presentation: 50%

Reading

The reading materials will be available electronically, except for the following books, which you should read in entirety:

David Hajdu, Love for Sale, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2016.
David Thomson, Television, Thames & Hudson, 2016.

Schedule

18 January: Introduction

Raymond Williams, "Art," "Culture," "Media," "Popular," and "Taste" in Keywords, rev. ed., Oxford University Press, 1983, available at:

<https://tavaana.org/sites/default/files/raymond-williams-keywords.pdf>

25 January: The Birth of Culture and Popular Culture

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry," in Dialectic of Enlightenment, ed. G.S. Noerr, tr. E. Jephcott, Stanford University Press, 2007, available at:

https://web.stanford.edu/dept/DLCL/files/pdf/adorno_culture_industry.pdf

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, ed. M.W. Jennings, B. Doherty, and T.Y. Levin. Harvard University Press, 2008, available at:

https://monoskop.org/images/6/6d/Benjamin_Walter_1936_2008_The_Work_of_Art_in_the_Age_of_Its_Technological_Reproducibility_Second_Version.pdf

1 February: The Emergence of Popular Music

Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, American Popular Music, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 2007.

Peter van der Merwe, Origins of the Popular Style, Oxford University Press, 1992.

8 February: Technology and Commerce

John Seabrook, The Song Machine, Norton, 2016.

Timothy D. Taylor, The Sounds of Capitalism, University of Chicago Press, 2012.

15 February: Youth Culture and Generational Change

Dick Hebdige, Subculture, Routledge, 1979.

Mitchell K Hall, The Emergence of Rock and Roll, Routledge, 2014.

22 February: Aesthetics and Authenticity

Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, Faking It, Norton, 2007.

Elijah Wald, How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll, Oxford University Press, 2009.

1 March: The Rise and Fall of Hip Hop

Jeff Chang, Can't Stop Won't Stop, St. Martin's, 2005.

Dan Charnas, The Big Payback, NAL, 2010.

8 March: History of Television

Gary R. Edgerton, The Columbia History of Television, Columbia University Press, 2007.

Harry Castleman and Walter J Podrazik, Watching TV, 3rd ed., Syracuse University Press, 2016.

15 March: Television and Cultural Criticism

Jerry Mander, Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, William Morrow, 1978.

Pierre Bourdieu, On Television, tr. P.P. Ferguson, New Press, 1999.

22 March: Long-Form Television

David Bianculli, The Platinum Age of Television, Doubleday, 2016.

Alan Sepinwall, The Revolution Was Televised, updated ed., Touchstone, 2013.

29 March: Spring Vacation

5 April: Television and Social Media

Joshua Meyrowitz, No Sense of Place, Oxford University Press, 1985.

Sherry Turkle, Alone Together, Basic Books, 2011.

12 April: **EXAMINATION**

19 April: Final Project Presentations

26 April: Final Project Presentations

Final Project Due on 28 April