

AMS 2270.001

TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN CULTURE

CRN: 11886

3 credit hours

Semester: Spring 2024

Class Meeting Days: MW

Class Meeting Time: 11-12:15

Class Meeting Location: CPR 481

Instructor: Professor Daniel Belgrad

Office: Cooper 372

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays by appointment (email dbelgrad@usf.edu)

University Course Description: An examination of cultural patterns in America from 1900 to the present with emphasis on the texture of everyday life.

Course Prerequisites: none

General Education Statement: This course is part of the University of South Florida's General Education Curriculum. It is certified for Ethical Reasoning and Civic Engagement (ERCE). Students enrolled in this course will be asked to participate in the USF General Education assessment effort. This will involve submitting copies of writing assignments for review via Canvas.

The fundamental goal of the ERCE is to help prepare students for their public lives as citizens, members of communities, and professionals in society. Among the basic requirements of the ERCE are for students to demonstrate an understanding of their own values, an ability to articulate those values, and express their reasoning as to why they hold these values. Students will also demonstrate awareness of – and respect for – competing values. Moreover, students will express their values in action within our communities in a process of positive civic engagement.

Course objectives:

To develop students' awareness of the patterns of cultural practice that characterize contemporary American culture and of the history of those cultural practices, in order to help students to prepare for their public lives as citizens, members of communities, and professionals in society; to develop in students a critical understanding of their own values and competing values, and how these values and beliefs are rooted in historical processes; to make students aware of their agency in shaping their civic environment.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of the course,

* Students will be able to articulate an interdisciplinary knowledge of how texts, artifacts, and practices have embodied cultural values

- * Students will be able to articulate how cultural values are related to their social and historical contexts.
- * Students will be able to produce a close reading of a cultural text, describing how specific elements contribute to overall meaning.
- * Students will be able to develop effective written arguments, integrating their own analyses and interpretations of primary texts with information from class lectures and discussions
- * Students will demonstrate active engagement with global and national problems with relevance to the Tampa Bay area
- * Students will be able to evaluate the impact of individual choices on local and global communities.
- * Students will be able to communicate ideas and information to diverse audiences.
- * Students will connect and extend knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from their own academic fields of study to civic engagement and their own participation in civic life, politics, and government.
- * Students will demonstrate the ability to comprehend, express, and adapt to ideas based on others' perspectives.
- * Students will independently and accurately apply ethical perspectives and concepts to ethical questions or civic projects as appropriate and demonstrate the ability to consider the full implications of this application.
- * Students will utilize collaborative skills to plan and execute a rigorous project central to the course learning outcomes, employing flexibility and internal conflict resolution as necessary.

Integration of This Course into Your Academic Experience:

Your undergraduate experience at USF is necessarily framed by the larger context of contemporary American culture. The social, political, and economic trends that you are subjected to reflect the values and the choices that have been implemented in the past. In completing this course, you will repeatedly be brought to reflect on the role that your upbringing and education, including your university education, has played in shaping your views on a number of key social issues. You will carry the critical analytical skills learned in this course with you throughout the rest of your education and beyond, and you will be able to apply that analytical perspective in your respective majors and in your lives after undergraduate studies. Many of the topics of this course -- including colonialism and race, gender and sexuality, efficiency and interdependence, "real life" and cyber-reality, are applicable to your everyday lived experience both in and after college.

Class Policies:

Attendance will figure as part of your class participation grade.

Notes or tapes of class lectures may not be sold.

Any student with a disability is encouraged to meet with the instructor privately during the first week of class to discuss accommodations. Policies about **disability access, religious observances, academic grievances, academic integrity and misconduct, academic continuity, food insecurity, and sexual harassment** are governed by a central set of policies that apply to all classes at USF. These may be accessed at: <https://www.usf.edu/provost/faculty/core-syllabus-policy-statements.aspx>

Late Work Policy: Late work will be accepted up to one week after the assignment deadline, with a 1/3 letter grade deducted for lateness.

Extra Credit Policy: There is no extra credit available in this course.

Grades of “Incomplete”:

An “I” grade may be awarded to a student only when a small portion of the student’s work is incomplete and only when the student is otherwise earning a passing grade. The time limit for removing the “I” is to be set by the instructor of the course. For undergraduate students, this time limit may not exceed two academic semesters, whether or not the student is in residence, and/or graduation, whichever comes first. For graduate students, this time limit may not exceed one academic semester. “I” grades not removed by the end of the time limit will be changed to “IF” or “IU,” whichever is appropriate.

Required Texts:

Classes **require your participation** in discussions of the **assigned texts**. Make sure you come to discussions having completed the assigned readings or viewings. **Bring the texts and your notes**, and come prepared to participate in the discussion.

Books available for purchase:

Gilbreth and Carey, *Cheaper by the Dozen* (ISBN 0-06-008460-x)
Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (ISBN 0-440-31488-7)

Other assigned materials are posted to Canvas and are denoted by an asterisk (*) in the following class schedule.

Grading for the course is as follows:

Grading scale: $A \geq 93.5$; $93.5 \geq A- \geq 90$; $90 \geq B+ \geq 86.5$; $86.5 \geq B \geq 83.5$; $83.5 \geq B- \geq 80$; $80 \geq C+ \geq 76.5$; $76.5 \geq C \geq 73.5$; $73.5 \geq C- \geq 70$; $70 \geq D+ \geq 66.5$; $66.5 \geq D \geq 63.5$; $63.5 \geq D- \geq 60$; $F < 60$.

Grade Categories and Weights:

- * **Two tests: 25% each**
- * **Discussion Participation: 15%**
- * **4-page paper due Wed., Feb. 8: 10%**
- * **Collaborative Learning and Civic Engagement Group Project (#GEA2): 25%**

The University of South Florida defines collaborative learning as learning that occurs by working with others in an intellectual endeavor, during which the insights of various group members are integrated in the common product. For the **collaborative learning and civic engagement group project**, you will be assigned by your professor to a group of 3-4 students. You will engage in processes of group decision-making and action with the other members of your group, and for this portion of the course the same grade will be assigned to everyone in the group. By the specified due dates, your group will:

- * agree on an aspect of contemporary American culture (a “pattern of practice”) that you want to encourage or to change
- * research and summarize the history of that practice
- * determine, based on this history, what you think is the best way of intervening in the

pattern

- * ascertain how this intervention could most practicably be achieved in the Tampa Bay area
- * act to achieve this intervention
- * reflect critically as individuals on the collaborative learning and civic engagement experience.

Course Schedule

M January 8: Introduction: Course Structure and Civic Engagement Projects

Social Issues and Cultural Contexts

W January 10

Reading: * Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy*, pp. 18-28 and 139-145

Lecture: Poverty

M January 15: No school: MLK Day

W January 17

Reading: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/texas/articles/2023-12-19/groups-sue-over-new-texas-law-that-lets-police-arrest-migrants-who-enter-the-us-illegally>

Lecture: Rights and freedoms

M January 22

Reading: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/19/nyregion/reparations-new-york-slavery.html>

Lecture: race relations

W January 24

Reading: <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20231010-mar-menor-saving-europes-largest-saltwater-lagoon>

Lecture: environmental change

M January 29

Reading: <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/why-america-has-a-youth-mental-health-crisis-and-how-schools-can-help/2023/10#:~:text=Young%20people%20were%20apart%20from,loved%20ones%20to%20COVID%2D19.>

Lecture: youth and adolescent psychological health

Cultural History: 1980s to 2010s

W January 31

Lecture: Reaganism and protective barriers

M February 5

Viewing: * *The River* (1984)

W February 7

Due: 4-page paper (#GEA1) on a cultural cause of a social problem. Use this paper as an opportunity to **demonstrate your ability to connect and extend knowledge from the field of American Studies to your own civic engagement.** and to **demonstrate your ability to comprehend, express, and adapt to ideas based on others' perspectives.** Use credible sources and cite them properly.

Lecture: media simulacrum and the performative self

M February 12

Lecture: posthumanism and neurodiversity
(groups of 4 assigned)

W February 14

Viewing: * *Sorry to Bother You* (2018)

Cultural History: 1900s-1920s

M February 19

Due: 1-page identification and justification of your group's civic-engagement issue (#GEA2)

Lecture: the industrial city, immigration, and social science

W February 21

Reading: * Andrew Carnegie, from "Wealth"

Lecture: Preservation and Fitness

M February 26

Due: 4-5-page group paper summarizing the **history** of your group's civic-engagement issue as a pattern of cultural practice, and using this history to **analyze the best point of intervention** in that pattern. (#GEA2)

Lecture: Efficiency and Advertising (Human Engineering)

W Feb 28

Midterm Test (in class)

M March 4 Reading: *Cheaper by the Dozen*, chapters 1, 5-6, 10-11, 13, 15, and 17

Lecture: Modernism

W March 6:

Due: 1-page description of your group's planned civic-engagement activity (#GEA2)

Lecture: Mass Culture and the Folk Revival

SPRING BREAK

Cultural History: 1930s-1950s

M March 18

Lecture: The Total State as Dream and Nightmare

W Mar 20

Reading: * Pettit, "The Inquisition"

Lecture: Ecology (Interdependence) and the Green Revolution

M March 25

Due: 1-page progress report on your group's civic-engagement activity

Lecture: the Civil Rights Movement and racist resistance

W March 27

Reading: *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, chapters 3, 10-11, and 21-22

M April 1

Lecture: Adolescence and Juvenile Delinquency

Cultural History: 1960s and 70s

W April 3

Due: 1-page progress report on your group's civic-engagement activity

Lecture: Countercultures and Identity Politics

M April 8

Reading: * SDS, "Triple Revolution"

Lecture: abortion, busing, and the crisis of liberalism

W April 10:

Reading: * Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, chapters 7 and 8

Lecture: The Vietnam War

M April 15:

Lecture: post-industrialism and postmodernism

W April 17:

Viewing: * *Saturday Night Fever* (1977)

Due: Powerpoint photo essay documenting your civic-engagement activity and describing its potential impact (#GEA2)

M April 22 5 presentations

W April 24: 4 presentations

Final test: in-class. See final exam matrix for time.

Due (along with final test): 2-3 pp. individual critical reflections on the collaborative learning experience (#GEA2)