

Moravian College

SOC 370 - Seminar: American Culture

Dr. Joel Nathan Rosen, Assistant Professor of Sociology

PPHAC 317

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Office Hours: M 4-6 & W 1-2 / 3:30-4:30 or by appointment

Required Text:

- Collection of text chapters (on reserve at Reeves Library)
- Supplemental readings as necessary

Course Description:

This course will introduce and in some cases reintroduce students to varying avenues of sociological research by examining the role of popular culture in late nineteenth and twentieth century American society. Students will explore the development, introduction, and reception of the changing nature of American popular culture by looking at a variety of cultural artifacts from twentieth century American life up to and including sport, music, and a wide variety of media forms.

Course Objectives and Purpose:

The basic aims of this course are to introduce the study of American popular culture as an interdisciplinary mode of inquiry while developing a working vocabulary for its research in order to trace knowledge about American society and culture and the values and beliefs that have given meaning and shape to the experiences of its peoples. In addition, we will examine ways in which Americans have responded to dominant or mainstream social institutions and values through the construction of a 20th century American popular cultural idioms.

Course Requirements:

Students will be required to take a midterm exam, review a book (*TBD*), write a 10-15 page paper, take a final exam, which will be cumulative, and perform other tasks as befitting a 300 level course (See Misc.). The midterm will be spaced at approximately 1/2 of the way through the course while fair warning will precede the exam and any other due dates.

Using a traditional grading scale, the breakdown of grades is as follows:

- Book Review 20%

- Midterm Exam Grade (both combined) 20%
- Research Paper 20%
- Final Exam Grade 20%
- Participation and Other Misc. Tasks 20%

As I typically employ letter grades on written assignments, I offer the below list of how each letter translates numerically:

- A+=100/A= 96/A-=92
- B+=89/B=86/B-=82
- C+=79/C=76/C-=72
- D+=69/D=66/D-=62
- F=59-50 [actual score depends on the severity of the error(s)/student will be notified]
- Failure to turn in work translates into a *ZERO*

Classroom Decorum and Expectations:

Attendance – Class attendance is mandatory and vitally important to your success. Failure to attend on a regular basis not only puts your grade in jeopardy but may also be met with a lowered mark for participation.

- **Remember – there are no excused absences. If you have a legitimate emergency, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of your instructor at your earliest convenience.**

Tardiness – Tardiness to class is not only detrimental to the learning process but quite disruptive and unfair to those who make it to class on time regularly. Recurring tardiness shows a lack of respect for the classroom, the instructor, and one’s fellow students and will not be tolerated. Therefore, once the door has been shut, you will not be permitted to enter.

Deadlines – Assignment deadlines are exactly that. Students are expected to comply with deadlines in accordance with all rules, guidelines, and expectations of each assignment proffered. Failure to do so will result in a tendering of no-grade for work not done to expectation or submitted on time.

Participation – Classroom discussions are a big part of the learning process. Your participation is not requested—it is required. Failure to do so is both in bad taste and could conceivably be detrimental to your ability to learn effectively.

Disruptions – Disruptive behavior, including talking, unengaged behavior, i.e. reading a book, magazine, or newspaper, sleeping, chronic tardiness alongside loud entrances, and any other unfortunate breach will not be tolerated. Learning is an active process, and failure to actively engage not only threatens the

individual's ability to learn but also affects those around him or her.

Academic Honesty – You are all responsible for knowing and adhering to the code of academic honesty here at Moravian College. For those of you unfamiliar with this code, it can be found on pages fifty-two through fifty-seven in your student handbook.

- **Please note:** It is your responsibility to see to it that these expectations and guidelines are met satisfactorily and consistently. I take the classroom quite seriously, and I expect all of you to do the same as well.

On Writing and Research:

As this instructor is particularly moved by the written word, you should expect that there will be an emphasis placed on written expression in this course. I should also like you to know from the start that I spend a great deal of time pouring over your writing and expect that you will read and explore my commentary on all things ranging from content to grammar, punctuation, and syntax. Please try to check your ego at the doors and realize that this is a learning experience while convincing yourself that blips and missteps are all part of the process.

You should also note that where applicable, this instructor expects his students to deal directly with all matters relating to the citation process. Failure to do so will be dealt with harshly with penalties ranging from a zero on work not properly documented to a formal report to the proper academic disciplinary committee.

Submission Expectations:¹

All finished writing product must include:

- a title page with a suitable title, your name, the course, section, and my name all spelled correctly (*for major works*)
- 12 font (in black) with default margins and spacing set at 1½ to 2
- page numbers at the bottom center of each page
- a References section (if necessary) at the end of the work done in the most recent MLA form (for every unedited internet cite you must have at least **two** published sources)²
- with few exceptions, single & two-digit numbers (*zero through ninety-nine*) are to be spelled out; three digits are to be written numerically
- be wary of over use of abbreviations and/or contractions

¹ In class work is to be submitted in blue or black ink.

² Please note, I **will not** grade a paper without proper citations. It will simply be handed back to you without a grade, and I reserve the right to submit it to the proper committees on academic honesty

- a staple in the upper left hand corner (no frilly covers)

Film Night:

There will be an announcement to come regarding a film showing or other activity outside the class that you will want to attend of possible.

*All objects, all phases of culture are alive. They have voices.
They speak of their history and interrelatedness.
And they are all talking at once!*

-Camille Paglia³

Schedule of Topics:

Unit I:

Introduction to the Course

- What Is Popular Culture? Overman – Calcutt (Pieper handout)

Media and Entertainment in the USA

- Part I: Vaudeville Steinberg - Stark
- Part II: Radio and Film
- Part III: Television

Sport in Society

- Part I: Sport and the Protestant Ethic Dyreson & Campbell - Kean
- Part II: The Golden Age of Heroes
- Part III: The Age of Jackie Robinson
- Part IV: Sport Today

Unit II:

Popular Music in the 20th Century

- Part I: Black Country Music Franklin through Martin & Seagrave
- Part II: White Country Music
- Part III: The 1950's and the Rise of Youth Culture
- Part IV: The Rock and Roll Revolution

³ Source: *NonStop English* Online. http://nonstopenglish.com/reading/quotations/k_Popular-Culture.asp
Accessed 3 January 2006.