

Carleton University
Fall 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English
ENGL 3702/American Culture
Topic: United States Culture, 1945-79
Instructor: Franny Nudelman
Email: frannynudelman@cunet.carleton.ca

***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

Course description:

This course explores the role of experimentation in the culture and politics of the US during the Cold War era. The decades following World War Two witnessed the development of new kinds of warfare; transformative movements for gender and racial equality; the widespread use of hallucinogenic drugs and other techniques for altering consciousness. In the realm of culture, innovation was afoot as writers, painters, filmmakers, and musicians explored an aesthetic of spontaneity, intensity, and interiority that might adequately represent the strange conditions of modern life. We will consider significant trends in the culture of the era—including abstract expressionism, new journalism, collage, hard bop, armed propaganda—as well as the social conditions that generated these new forms of expression. And we will ask after the relationship between the art and politics of the Cold War period and our own.

Learning Outcomes:

In this course, I hope you will learn how to interpret and interrelate a variety of texts in different media; think deeply about the relationship between culture and history; develop interesting and original ideas that evolve over the course of the term; express those ideas in clear and concise prose; generate questions and ideas collectively through discussion.

Texts will include:

Books

John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946)
Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)
Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965)

Essays, Speeches, Manifestos

James Baldwin, “Notes of a Native Son” (1955)
Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement” (1977)
Joan Didion, “The White Album” (1979)
Betty Friedan, “The Problem with No Name” (1963)
Martin Luther King, selected speeches
Students for a Democratic Society, “The Port Huron Statement” (1962)

Films

Greta Gerwig, *Barbie* (2023)
John Frankenheimer, *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962)
John Huston, *Let There Be Light* (1946)
Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (2017)
David and Albert Maysles, *Cut Piece* (1966)
Sol Saks, Episode 1 of *Bewitched* (1964)
William Wyler, *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946)

Images

Jackson Pollock, selected paintings
Martha Rosler, *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967-72)

Listening

Zayd Dohrn, *Mother Country Radicals*, episodes 1-5 (2022)
Jimmy Hendrix, "Star-Spangled Banner," live at Woodstock (1969)
Charles Mingus, "Better Git It In Your Soul" and "Fables of Faubus" from *Mingus Ah Um* (1959)

Evaluation:

Class participation is essential to your learning in this course. I expect you to attend class regularly; complete the reading/viewing and prepare to discuss it; contribute thoughtfully to our weekly conversations. Your final grade will be based on your attendance and class participation (40%); a mixed-media journal with three entries that reflect creatively on some aspect of the course (35%); impromptu in-class writing assignments (25%).