

History 572/6
Studies in European History:
Popular Culture and Society in Modern Europe
Fall 1992
9:30-11:30 T, 4014 Vilas

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4120 Humanities
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This course discusses topics in the history of European and North American popular culture over roughly the last century. It treats popular culture broadly, focusing on the production, distribution, and consumption of commercially viable cultural products in relation to social, economic, and political history. Its main goal is to consider popular culture's role in the formation of collective and personal identities rooted in historically specific notions of self, class, gender, generation, ethnicity, region, subculture, and nation. Although the course discusses a range of activities, it places particular emphasis on popular literature, cinema, and rock music.

There are no exams. Aside from regular class participation (which includes designated discussion leaders for each reading), assignments consist of two essays of approximately 4-5 typed, double-spaced pages each as well as one take-home final, which is a research paper of 15-20 pages or a project of comparable scope. I will distribute questions for the first two writing assignments. Students will be expected to give brief in-class presentations of their final paper/project during the last three course sessions. The two short papers account for about thirty percent of the total grade, the long paper for about fifty percent, and participation and in-class presentations twenty percent. This course is a seminar devoted to critical debate and all students must keep up with the reading in order to make the class a success. All required reading and much of the recommended reading will be on reserve at the College Library.

Required Reading:

- Peter Fisher, Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic (Wisconsin)
- John Fiske, Reading the Popular (Unwin Human)
- Dick Hebdige, Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things (Routledge/Comedia)
- Siegfried Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film (Princeton)
- George Lipsitz, Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture (Minnesota)
- Greil Marcus, Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century (Harvard)

Sept. 8 Introduction

1. Popular Culture in Contemporary Society

- Sept. 15: Fiske, Reading the Popular, 1-42, 95-132, 199-217
Video: Madonna, "Material Girl"
Sept. 22: Lipsitz, Time Passages, 3-26, 99-160
Sept. 29: Hebdige, Hiding in the Light, 17-36, 45-115, 233-244
Video: Talking Heads, "Storytelling Giant" (1988)

Recommended:

- Steven Connor, Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary (Blackwell, 1989) PN 98 .P67 C66 1989
--John Fiske, Understanding the Popular (Unwin Hyman, 1989) CB 151 .F574 1989
--Lawrence Grossberg, We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture (Routledge, 1992) E 169.04 G757
--Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, eds., Cultural Studies (Routledge, 1992) GN 357 .C844 1991
--Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Duke, 1991)
--E. Ann Kaplan, Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture (Routledge, 1987) PN 1992.8 M87 K36 1987

2. Popular Culture in Contemporary History: Three Case Studies

A. Popular Literature in Weimar Germany

- Oct. 6: Fisher, Fantasy and Politics, 3-156
Oct. 13: Fisher, Fantasy and Politics, 157-226
First essay due in class

Recommended:

- Volker Berghahn, Modern Germany: Society, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century, 2nd. ed. (Cambridge, 1987), 38-128
DD 232 .B43 1987
--R.A. Fullerton, "Towards a Commercial Popular Culture in Germany: The Development of Pamphlet Fiction, 1871-1914," Journal of Social History 12 (1979): 489-511.
--Peter Gay, Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider (Harper & Row, 1970)
Walter Laqueur, Weimar: A Cultural History 1918-1933 (Putnam, 1974)
--Detlev Peukert, The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity, trans. (Hill & Wang, 1989) DD 237 .P4313 1992
--Jochen Schulte-Sasse, "Toward a 'Culture' for the Masses: The Socio-Psychological Function of Popular Literature in Germany and the U.S., 1880-1920," New German Critique 29 (Spring-Summer 1983): 85-106.

--Gary D. Stark and Bede Karl Lackner, eds., Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany (Texas, 1982) DD 66 E7 1982
--John Willett, Art and Politics in the Weimar Period 1917-1933: The New Sobriety (Pantheon, 1978) DD 240 .W58 1978
B. Film in Weimar Germany

Oct. 20: Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, 3-128
Oct. 27: Film: "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (1920)
Nov. 3: Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, 131-272

Recommended:

--for background reading: Berghahn, Gay, Laqueur, Peukert, Stark & Lackner, and Willett, as cited in 2.A.
--Miriam Hansen, "Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?" New German Critique 29 (Spring/Summer, 1983): 147-184.

--New German Critique, Special Issue: "Siegfried Kracauer," 54 (Fall 1991)
--New German Critique, Special Issue: "Weimar Film Theory," 40 (Winter 1987)
--New German Critique, Special Issue: "Weimar Mass Culture," 51 (Fall 1990)
--Patrice Petro, Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany (Princeton, 1989) PN 1993.5 G3 P435 1989
--Marc Silberman, "Shooting Wars: German Cinema and the Two World Wars," in 1914/1939: German Reflections of the Two World Wars, eds. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Wisconsin, 1992), 116-136. NX550 A1 A17 1992

C. From Dada to British Punk Rock

Nov. 10: Marcus, Lipstick Traces, 1-152
Video: excerpts from "The Punk Rock Movie" (1988)
Nov. 17: Marcus, Lipstick Traces, 163-322
Second essay due in class
Nov. 24: Marcus, Lipstick Traces, 323-447

Recommended:

--Iain Chambers, Urban Rhythms, Pop Music and Popular Culture (St. Martin's, 1985) ML 3492 C52 1985
--Simon Frith, Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n'Roll (Pantheon, 1981) ML 3790 .F74
--Dick Hebdige, Subculture: The Meaning of Style (Methuen, 1979) HQ 799 G7 H4 1979
--Hebdige, Hiding in the Light
--David Laing, One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock (Open University, 1985) ML 3561 .R62
--Helena Lewis, "Introduction: Dada and the Great War," The Politics of Surrealism (Paragon, 1988), 1-16. NX 549 A1 L48 1988
--Timothy Ryback, Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Oxford, 1990) ML 3534 .R9 1990

3. Student Presentations

Dec. 1: In-class Presentations

Dec. 8: In-class Presentations

Dec. 15: In-class Presentations

TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE IN HUMANITIES 4120, W, DEC. 23, 10AM