

**The History of Nineteenth-Century American Popular Culture**  
History 326.01 Fall 2017

**Prof. Sarah J. Purcell**

Monday & Friday 10-11:50 Bucksbaum 161

Office: Mears 212 Phone: 269-3091 E-mail: PURCELL@grinnell.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1-2:30 pm, Wednesday 10 am-12 pm, Friday 1-2:30 pm, and by appointment.

Please come and see me during office hours, or make an appointment. Call my office or e-mail me at any time. Because I direct the Rosenfield Program, my hours can be unpredictable, but I will make time for you.

Students in this seminar will examine the creation and expansion of American popular culture in the nineteenth century as they focus on diverse cultural forms: dime novels, newspapers, music, sports, cartoons, material culture, theater, minstrel shows, magazines, etc. The seminar will focus particularly on how ideas and structures of race, class, and gender were changed and reinforced by American popular culture. Each student will produce a major research paper that will analyze popular culture in an historical context to consider how popular culture created or changed power dynamics in American society.

This semester, we will also take up a number of important theoretical issues involved in the study of popular culture. Questions we will consider include: What is the difference between popular and “high” culture? Did “the masses” help to shape popular culture, or were they controlled by it? Did the forms of popular culture influence the kinds of messages people could express? Was popular culture in the nineteenth century different from the forms of mass-media that took shape in the twentieth century and continue to develop in the twenty-first century? How did historical events of the nineteenth century influence popular culture and vice versa?

Together we will examine how various historians, popular culture critics, and theorists have analyzed nineteenth-century American popular culture, and we will analyze many forms of popular culture ourselves. We will focus heavily on matters of interpretation and evidence. Our group discussions will also inform each student’s individual research, which will explore in-depth a particular form of popular culture.

Students will hone a variety of skills over the course of the semester as they engage in the process of history. While the main goal of this course is to produce an excellent research paper, students will also focus on the methods of historical research, writing, and revision. Peer review will enhance the cooperative nature of the process. Students will also hone their speaking and presentation skills.

**Books:**

Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett* (1998)

Isabelle Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page: Popular Print Media in Antebellum America* (2000)

Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1988)

Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Boundaries of American Political Culture in the Civil War Era* (2005)

John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, An Introduction*, 7th ed. (2015)

Wayne C. Booth, et. al. *The Craft of Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (2016)

\*Books are on 2-hour reserve at Burling Library. We will also be reading many digitized articles and book chapters. It is your responsibility to print them out and bring them to class, or bring them on a device that is not disruptive to class.

**Assignments:** While this course is mainly focused around the major research paper (20-30 pages), students are expected to keep up with reading assignments for discussion in class. In the first half of the semester, all students will complete a 3-page paper analyzing a cartoon and formal research proposal.

Students will complete a series of assignments leading up to the final research paper. Preliminary topic selections are due September 22. On October 27, each student will turn in a paper proposal that discusses the research question, defines a proposed thesis, and outlines the paper. On November 13, students will turn in a bibliography and present for five minutes about one primary source. The research paper is due November 29, and class presentations and peer review will follow. The final, revised version of the research paper is due Friday, December 15 at noon in Ms. Purcell's office.

Grades will be assigned in the course according to the following formula:

cartoon paper	5%
paper proposal	10%
bibliography	5%
research presentation	5%
peer review	5%
class participation	20%
Research paper	50%

Attendance is essential. If you must miss class or an individual meeting due to illness or for any other reason, please let me know.

Please familiarize yourself with the Grinnell Student Handbook Academic Honesty policies, and abide by them. You must cite all your sources properly in University of

Chicago Style. Talk to Prof. Purcell if you need a refresher on citation style or academic honesty.

Grinnell College grants reasonable accommodations for diagnosed disabilities; please talk with Prof. Purcell right away if you need to arrange an accommodation.

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### **Week One: The History of Popular Culture**

**Friday, Aug. 25:** Meet to talk about class

### **Week Two: The Rise of Popular Culture**

**Monday, Aug. 28:** *JSTOR book chapter*, Jim Cullen, *The Art of Democracy*, New Edition (New York: NYU Press & Monthly Review Press, 2002), Introduction, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfnq1.4>; Chapter 1 "Novel Approaches, The Rise of Popular Culture," <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfnq1.5>; Storey, Preface and Acknowledgements (all) & Ch. 1

Recommended: John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* companion site <http://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9781138811034/default.php>

**Friday, Sept. 1:** Research Lab Meet in Burling Basement lab  
*Reading Due: Leroy Ashby, "The Rising of Popular Culture: A Historiographical Sketch" OAH Magazine of History 24 (April 2010): 11-14,*  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25701403>; *Craft of Research*, pp. 3-15, 29-31

### **Week Three: Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow***

**Monday, Sept. 4:** Reading Due: All of Levine; Storey Ch. 2-4

**Friday, Sept. 8:** Research Lab Meet in Burling Basement lab  
*Craft of Research*, pp. 33-48

Recommended: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/british/brit-7.html>

### **Week Four: Isabelle Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page***

**Monday, Sept. 11:** *Reading Due: All of Lehuu; Read Oxford critical dictionary definitions of "carnavalesque":*

\*<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095550811>

\*<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192806871.001.0001/acref-9780192806871-e-1337>

\*<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199213818.001.0001/acref-9780199213818-e-184>

**Friday, Sept. 15:** Last day to turn in Cartoon Paper (due by 4:15 pm at Ms. Purcell's Office)

**Week Five: Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett***

**Monday, Sept. 18:** Reading Due: All of Cohen; Storey, Ch. 5 & 7

**Friday, Sept. 22:** Preliminary Research Paper topic selection due in email to Prof. Purcell by noon

**Week Six: P. T. Barnum, the Market, and Political Power**

**Monday, Sept. 25:** Reading Due: James W. Cook, "From the Age of Reason to the Age of Barnum: The Great Automaton Chess-Player and the Emergence of Victorian Cultural Illusionism," *Winterthur Portfolio* 30 (Winter 1995): 231-257, **JSTOR** <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4618515>; James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), Introduction, chapter 2, and chapter 3 (**E-Reserve**); Storey, Ch. 6 & 8

**Friday, Sept. 29:** Reading Due: Neely, Ch. 4; Storey, Ch. 9; *Craft of Research*, pp. 49-104

Recommended: <http://www.lostmuseum.cuny.edu/home.html>

**Week Seven: Popular Culture in the Civil War Era**

**Monday, Oct. 2:** Reading Due: Neely, Preface-Ch. 3; Alice Fahs, "The Feminized Civil War: Gender, Northern Popular Literature, and the Memory of the War, 1861-1900," *Journal of American History* 85 (1999): 1461-1494 **JSTOR** <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2568268>

Recommended: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/perform/guide/musamer.html>

**Friday, Oct. 6:** Reading Due: Elaine Frantz Parsons, "Midnight Rangers: Costume and Performance in the Reconstruction-Era Ku Klux Klan," *Journal of American History* 92 (2005): 811-836, **JSTOR** <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3659969>; Storey, Ch. 10 & 11

**Week Eight: The U.S. and the World in Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Popular Culture**

**Monday, Oct. 9:** Reading Due: Gary Y. Okihiro, *Pineapple Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), Introduction & Ch. 8 (**E-RESERVE**); Listen to: "Studio 360, American Icons: Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show" <http://www.wnyc.org/story/96255-american-icons-buffalo-bills-wild-west/> (52 minutes)

**Friday, Oct. 13:** Reading Due: Jonathan Auerbach, "McKinley at Home: How Early Cinema Made News," *American Quarterly* 51.4 (1999): 797-832, **JSTOR** <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30041673>; view films at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/papr/mckhome.html>; Storey, Ch. 11

**FALL BREAK October 14-22**

**Week Nine: Turn of the Twentieth Century**

**Monday, Oct. 23:** *Reading Due: Robert W. Rydell, "Into the Heart of Whiteness: The Transnational Saga of John Tevi," European Contributions to American Studies 50 (2004): 23-33 (E-RESERVE); Jane Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i: The 'Ideal' Native and the Origins of Tourism, 1880-1915," Positions 7 (1999), **Project Muse**, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/27927>*

**Friday, Oct. 27: RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE IN CLASS**

**Week Ten:**

**Monday, Oct. 30** Small group proposal review

**Friday, Nov. 3** Writing Day (Prof. Purcell out of town)

**Week Eleven:**

**Monday, Nov. 6** Writing Day Please read: Craft of Research, pp. 107-172

**Friday, Nov. 10** Writing Day

**Week Twelve:**

**Monday, November 13 Bibliographies Due** in class Source Presentations

**Friday, November 17** Writing Day

**Week Thirteen:**

**November 20** Writing Day Please read: Craft of Research, pp. 175-213, 232-247

**THANKSGIVING November 23**

**Week Fourteen:**

**Monday, Nov. 27** Writing Day

**Special Deadline:** Wednesday, Nov. 29 **NOON Papers Due** to Prof. Purcell and Peer Review Partners

**Friday, Dec. 1** Peer Review Meetings  
*Reading Due: Craft of Research, 248-274*

**Week Fifteen: December 4 & 8** Research Presentations

**Wednesday, December 15 NOON FINAL VERSION OF PAPERS DUE** at Ms. Purcell's Office, Mears 212