

**AMS 2270.005**

**TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN CULTURE**

**CRN: 24968**

**3 credit hours**

**Semester: Spring 2022**

**Class Meeting Day: Friday**

**Class Meeting Time: 2:00-2:50**

**Class Meeting Location: SOC 285**

**Instructor:** Professor Daniel Belgrad

Office: Cooper 372

Office hours: Wednesdays and Fridays by appointment

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**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:**

**This is a hybrid course, meaning that part of the delivery is online and part is face-to-face.**

**Attendance at weekly discussion sessions** will figure as part of your class participation grade. These **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. Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to the observation of a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor in writing.

Lectures will be recorded and uploaded to Canvas using Panopto. You can access them by clicking on the link "Panopto Cloud" on the left side of your Canvas screen for the course. **You are required to watch the relevant lectures before each discussion session, and this also figures into your participation grade.** Notes or tapes of lectures may not be sold.

**The first two tests will be face-to-face in the classroom. The third test will be online via Canvas.** Test questions will be based on the lecture material or taken directly from the assigned readings.

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>

**Covid-19 Procedures:** All students must comply with university policies and posted signs regarding COVID-19 mitigation measures, including wearing face coverings and maintaining social distancing during in-person classes. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from class, referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development, and possible removal from campus. Additional details are available on the University's Core Syllabus Policy Statements page: <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:**

Gilbreth and Carey, *Cheaper by the Dozen* (ISBN 0-06-008460-x)  
Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (ISBN 0-440-31488-7)  
John Steinbeck, *The Moon is Down* (ISBN 0-14-018746-4)

**We are also watching two films** that you may rent streaming: *Modern Times* and *Avatar*.

**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:**

\* **Three tests: 15% each**

\* **5-page paper (#GEA1): 15%** Students will be required to submit electronic versions of their papers to Turnitin.

\* **Discussion Participation: 15%**

\* **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**

Lecture 0: Introduction

Lecture 1: The Industrial City, Realism, and Social Science

**discussion January 14:** Introduction (no assigned reading)

Lecture 2: Human Engineering and Fitness

**discussion January 21:** \* Jack London, “The Story of Jeess Uck”

Lecture 3: The “New Woman”

Lecture 4: Efficiency and Uplift

**discussion January 28:** *Cheaper by the Dozen*, chapters 1, 5-6, 10-11, 13, 15, and 17

Lecture 5: Modernisms

Lecture 6: Surrealism and Magic Realism

**discussion February 4:** \* Sherwood Anderson, “Like A Queen”

Lecture 7: Consumer Capitalism and Modern Advertising

Lecture 8: The Birth of Mass Culture

**discussion February 11:** Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times*

Lecture 9: Jazz

Lecture 10: The Folk Revival

**Feb 18: first test (in class)**

Lecture 11: “Cultural Lag”: Vice or Virtue?

Lecture 12: the Great Depression and Radicalism

**discussion February 25:** \* Meridel Le Sueur, “Women on the Breadlines”

**M Feb 28 due: 5- page paper (#GEA1)** Use this paper as an opportunity to **demonstrate your ability to comprehend, express, and adapt to ideas based on others' perspectives** – namely, the perspective of the author of your chosen work and of the group he or she represents.

Lecture 13: New Deal Culture

Lecture 14: Feedback and Diversity

**discussion March 4:** John Steinbeck, *The Moon is Down*

Lecture 15: The Total State as Dream and Nightmare

Lecture 16: Postwar Interdependence Anxiety

**W Mar 9: due: 1-page identification and justification of your group's civic-engagement issue (#GEA2)**

**discussion March 11:** \*John Cheever, "The Swimmer"

Lecture 17: the Space Age

Lecture 18: the Psychology of Interdependence

**March 25: second test (in class)**

Lecture 19: Race, Civil Rights, and the politics of rock and roll

Lecture 20: Sixties countercultures

**W Mar 30: due: 3-5-page group paper summarizing the history of your group's civic-engagement issue as a pattern of cultural practice and analyzing the best point of intervention in that pattern. (#GEA2) 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.**

**discussion April 1:** Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, ch. 3, 10-11, and 21-22

Lecture 21: Vietnam War stories

Lecture 22: the crisis of liberalism

**discussion April 8:** \* Tim O'Brien, "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong"

Lecture 23: beyond the "melting pot": ethnic identities

**M Apr 11: due: 1-page description of your group's planned civic-engagement activity (#GEA2)**

Lecture 24: gender struggles

**discussion April 15:** \* Maxine Hong Kingston, "No Name Woman"

Lecture 25: identity and cults

Lecture 26: punk and protective barriers

**discussion April 22:** music videos posted to Canvas

Lecture 27: media simulacrum and “Generation X”

Lecture 28: post-humanism and augmented reality

**W Mar 27: due: photo essay documenting your civic-engagement activity and describing its potential impact (#GEA2) Use this as an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to apply ethical perspectives and concepts and to consider the full implications of this application.**

**discussion April 29: *Avatar***

**Third test: online via Canvas, Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup> (anytime between 8 am and 6 pm)**

**due along with 3<sup>rd</sup> test: 2-3 pp. individual critical reflections on the collaborative learning experience (#GEA2)**