

**California State University, Long Beach**  
**History 477b / 577b** (Schedule Number 3559 / 3580)  
**American Cultural History**  
**Dr. Brett Mizelle**

Spring Semester 2005  
Thursdays, 6:30 – 9:15 p.m.  
Room LA5-154

Office: Room FO2-109  
Office Hours: Wednesday and Thursday, 4:00-6:00 p.m. and by appointment  
E-Mail: dmizelle@csulb.edu  
Websites: <http://beachboard.csulb.edu/> & <http://www.csulb.edu/~dmizelle/>  
Phone: 562-985-4424 (Office); 562-985-4431 (History Department)

**Course Description:**

This interdisciplinary course explores selected cultural currents in American society from the emergence of the Wild West Show in the late nineteenth-century to the arguably short-lived demise of national purpose in the wake of the Cold War. Our readings and discussions will engage American cultural history broadly, viewing culture in all three of its major senses: as the way of life of a people or group, a process of intellectual and aesthetic development, and works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity. Throughout the semester we will also address key questions in the study of popular culture, examining how it both reflects and shapes broader social forces in American life. In doing so we will engage in key debates over the origins of popular or mass culture, the interplay between production and consumption, and the ongoing contestation over and between culture(s) in American life.

**Required Course Texts:**

The following books are required for this course and may be purchased at the University Bookstore:

Joy Kasson, Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory and Popular History (2000).  
Beth Bailey, From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth Century America (1989).  
Erika Doss, Twentieth-Century American Art (2002).  
Glenn Altschuler, All Shook Up: How Rock 'n' Roll Changed America (2004).  
Tom Engelhardt, The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation (1998).

Additional readings are included in a course packet (number 1121) available at Copy Pro (corner of Palo Verde and Atherton streets, 562-431-9974). Graduate students will also need to purchase two additional books (see below).

This course assumes a basic understanding of American history from the Civil War to the present. Those of you who feel you lack sufficient background can either drop the course or, preferably, consult one of the many U.S. history textbooks that are available. You may also wish to read through the outlines of U.S. history provided by the U.S. Information Agency from 1954 to 1994 that are available at <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/H/index.htm>. These outlines, by the way, raise interesting questions about the presentation of American history to foreign audiences during the Cold War while serving as a way to gauge the changes in historiography in the post-World War II period.

Because you will be primarily assessed through written papers, I have placed an order with our bookstore for copies of Mary Lynn Rampola, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History, 4th ed. (Bedford / St. Martin's,

2004), which provides guidance on appropriate history citation form and instruction in historical research and writing. All students should also possess both a quality dictionary and a style manual.

### **Course Assignments & Grading:**

#### Undergraduates:

1. Three papers, due dates below (20% of course grade each)
2. Reading journal (30% of course grade)
3. Attendance, participation and in-class assignments (10% of course grade)

#### Graduate Students:

1. Two of the three undergraduate papers (10% of course grade each).
2. Comparative review essay of Michael Denning, The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century (1996) and Warren Susman, Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (1984, 2003), due date to be decided (20% of course grade).
3. Historiographic essay on research in twentieth-century cultural history on a subject to be chosen in consultation with the instructor, due May 12th (20% of course grade).
4. Reading journal (30% of course grade).
5. Attendance and participation (10% of course grade).

Additional information about these assignments will be distributed electronically and discussed in class. Grades will be given in ten percentage increments, with students in the top 10% of the course receiving an A, the next 10% receiving a B, and so on. There will be opportunity for extra credit through short reaction papers on History and American Studies guest lectures and museum exhibitions related to the course.

### **Course Policies:**

*Attendance:* Because we cover a great deal of material in this course, prompt and regular attendance is a necessity. Students who miss classes run the risk of receiving a failing grade or receiving a lower grade than the student might have secured with regular attendance. Excused absences must be documented by a doctor's note, a note from the Dean, or advance notice from the Athletic Director. Absences for religious observances are excused; please let me know of dates in advance. I allow one unexcused absence during the semester; thereafter each subsequent unexcused absence will result in the subtraction of points from your participation grade.

*Classroom Environment:* Feel free to ask questions and express opinions in this course, approaching readings and ideas actively and critically. As you do so, however, please strive to be courteous to your fellow students. To create a respectful and productive environment please avoid unnecessary distractions (such as ringing cell phones, beeping pagers, and conspicuous consumption of snacks) during class meetings.

*Course Readings:* You are expected to have completed the day's readings prior to coming to class and to be prepared to participate in discussions. Always bring the texts we will be discussing to class.

*A Note for History Majors:* The History Department now requires majors to move through a series of courses that begins with History 301, is followed by 302, and culminates in a Senior Seminar (499) that matches one of the areas of concentration selected for the major. History 499 must be taken in the last semester of work, or after 18 units of upper-division work have been completed in the major. Those 18 units must include at least six units (two courses) in the concentration that is the focus of the 499.

Students in 499 are required to assemble a portfolio that reflects their work in upper-division history courses. This portfolio is designed to enable students to show development in the major, and their mastery of key analytical, mechanical, and presentation skills. As a part of this process, history majors (or prospective majors) should save all work from upper-division history courses for potential inclusion in this portfolio. For portfolio guidelines, see [www.csulb.edu/depts/history](http://www.csulb.edu/depts/history). For questions and/or advising about the portfolio, contact Professor Dennis Kortheuer at [dkortheu@csulb.edu](mailto:dkortheu@csulb.edu), or telephone 562-985-4440.

*A Note for American Studies Majors:* History 477b is one of the five core courses currently required of American Studies majors. The remaining units of your American Studies degree program will be selected in consultation with the program advisor so that they reflect your own interests in American society and culture. For more information about the American Studies Program and its flexibility, please talk to me, as I am the director of the program.

*A Note for History MA Students:* I expect the graduate students enrolled in this class to perform at a higher level than the average undergraduate student. Toward that end, there are two additional essays required of MA students that are historiographic in nature. One will involve a topic of your choice, which will be decided in consultation with me in an individual meeting. I will arrange to meet separately with graduate students to talk about these essays and other issues raised in the course. So that we can talk in depth about the issues raised by this course, we will occasionally meet separately at the end of our regularly scheduled class meetings. Please talk with me if you have any questions about my expectations of your effort and scholarly output.

*Reading Journals:* All students in History 477b and 577b will keep a weekly journal of their reactions to our course readings and their relationship to contemporary cultural debates and events. Guidelines for this assignment will be distributed and discussed in class.

*Papers:* All work written outside the classroom must be typed or word-processed in a standard 10 or 12 point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Your papers should, at a minimum, both present and critically analyze the main theoretical and historical arguments in your reading. All quotations must be cited by using parenthetical references, footnotes, or endnotes. If you are unsure about how or what to cite, please ask me. All papers should have your name, the course title and number, the due date, and an appropriate title or label for the assignment at the top. I strongly recommend that you keep copies of all your work, either on paper or on disk, for your protection.

Your papers will be evaluated for earnest effort and thoughtful, coherent content. Remember to clearly state your thesis and support your arguments with examples. Usage and grammar are not major concerns of grading, but a minimum mechanical competence to insure the "readability" of these papers is expected. I also expect that you will proofread your papers before handing them in. All assignments are due at the beginning of class, or, for non-class meeting due dates, by 5pm at my office. Electronic submission of papers is not allowed. If you know you are going to miss an assignment due date you must be proactive and request an extension in advance. Late assignments will lose points for each calendar day late and will not be accepted more than one week past their due date without a previously agreed to extension.

*Plagiarism & Academic Integrity:* Students in this class will be held to a high standard of academic integrity, which is defined as "the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception." Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. If I suspect all or part of an assignment may not be your own intellectual work I will ask to see your notes or drafts. I also may require electronic submission of the paper to facilitate running the paper through plagiarism-detecting databases. If you have any questions about academic integrity, please talk with me. I can and will fail a student for major infractions.

*Disability Accommodation:* Any student who feels that he or she may need an accommodation for any sort of disability should make an appointment to see me during my office hours so we can make arrangements for you to complete the requirements of the class.

*Student Services:* If you need help with written assignments or require guidance on note-taking and critical reading, please take advantage of the Writer's Resource Lab (LAB-312; 985-4329) or the Learning Assistance Center (Library East 12; 985-5350).

*Technology:* The CSULB Technology Help Desk is now available for students. Help is available on a wide range of computer issues including: BeachBoard, Windows and Mac OS, CSULB Internet Accounts, Remote Connectivity, Microsoft Desktop Applications, Anti-Virus, Internet and Web related topics. Visit them on the web at <http://helpdesk.csulb.edu> or contact the THD by phone at 562-985-4959 or send Email to [helpdesk@csulb.edu](mailto:helpdesk@csulb.edu). All students should make sure that their CSULB e-mail accounts forward to their preferred e-mail accounts so that you will receive course assignments and announcements.

### **Course Schedule:**

Note: This syllabus is a work in progress and may be changed during the semester as necessary and appropriate. Changes will be announced in class and through e-mail. You are responsible for knowing about any changes.

Jan 27: Introduction

Feb 03: Inventing the Wild West  
Reading: Joy Kasson, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, through chapter 2; "Literature for the Million," from Popular Culture in American History in CP

Feb 10: Buffalo Bill, Frederick Jackson Turner, and Celebrity Culture  
Reading: Kasson, chapters 3-4; Erika Doss, Twentieth-Century American Art, through chapter 1, "The Gilded Age"; Richard Slotkin, "'Buffalo Bill's Wild West' and the Mythologization of the American Empire," from Cultures of United States Imperialism in CP

Feb 17: Indians, Historical Memory and Modernism in Popular Culture  
Reading: Kasson, chapters 5-6; Doss, chapter 2, "Early American Modernism"; "Moving Images," from Popular Culture in American History; Philip J. Deloria, "Natural Indians and Identities of Modernity," in Playing Indian in CP

### **Tuesday, February 22nd: Paper 1 due**

Feb 24: Gender and Sexuality in the Early Twentieth Century  
Reading: Beth Bailey, From Front Porch to Back Seat, through chapter 3, "The Worth of a Date"; Doss, chapter 3, "Avant-Garde Art and Experimentation"; Kathy Peiss, "Charity Girls and City Pleasures," from The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader in CP; Hazel Carby, "It Jus Be's Dat Way Sometime: The Sexual Politics of Women's Blues," from The Jazz Cadence in American Culture in CP

Mar 03: Modern Courtship and Consumerism  
Reading: Bailey, chapter 4 to epilogue; Doss, chapter 4, "Modernism and the Interwar Years"; Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center," from The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader in CP

- Mar 10: Depression and New Deal Cultural Activity  
 Reading: Doss, chapter 5, "A New Deal for the Arts"; Michael Denning, "The Left and American Culture" and "Cabaret Blues" from The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century in CP
- Mar 17: Internal and External Enemies and Anxieties  
 Reading: Tom Englehardt, The End of Victory Culture, part 1 "War Story"; Stuart Cosgrove, "The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare," from The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader; Elaine Tyler May, "Explosive Issues: Sex, Women, and the Bomb," from Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era in CP
- Spring Break*
- Mar 31: *No Class Meeting* (Cesar Chavez Holiday)
- Tuesday, April 5th: Paper 2 due**
- Apr 07: The Culture of the 1950s  
 Reading: Englehardt, part 2 "Containments, 1945-1962"; Glenn Altschuler, All Shook Up: How Rock 'n' Roll Changed America, chapters 1-3
- Apr 14: Music and Society in Post-War America  
 Reading: Altschuler, chapter 4-epilogue; Lawrence W. Levine, "Jazz and American Culture," from The Jazz Cadence in American Culture in CP; "From R&B to Soul" and "The Godfather of Soul and the Beginnings of Funk," from The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader in CP
- Apr 21: Southern California Culture  
 Reading: Doss, chapter 6, "Abstract Expressionism"; Eric Avila, "Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Film Noir, Disneyland, and the Cold War (Sub)Urban Imaginary," from Journal of Urban History in CP; George Lipsitz, "The Making of Disneyland," from True Stories from the American Past in CP
- Apr 28: Vietnam-Era Arts, Culture and Memory  
 Reading: Englehardt, part 3, "The Era of Reversals, 1962-1975"; Doss, chapter 7, "Neo-Dada and Pop Art" and chapter 8, "Minimalism and Conceptual Art"; Susan Jeffords, "The Remasculinization of America," in The Remasculinization of America in CP
- May 05: Where You At?: Cultural History and the Present  
 Reading: Englehardt, The End of Victory Culture, part 4, "Afterlife (1975-1994); Doss, chapter 9, "Feminist Art and Black Art," 10, "Culture Wars" and 11, "Contemporary Art"; Michael Eric Dyson, "Be Like Mike? Michael Jordan and the Pedagogy of Desire," from The Jazz Cadence in American Culture in CP; "Hip Hop Nation," from Popular Culture in American History in CP
- May 12: **Collected Reading Journal entries and Final Papers due**

"The history of America as a country is quite different from that of America as a State."  
 Randolph Bourne, War and the Intellectuals: Collected Essays, 1915-1919

## Reading Journals

All students in History 477b and 577b will keep a weekly reading journal. For each week of the course you will need to write down your reactions to our course readings. Sometimes I will ask you to speak about specific issues or will provide you with some questions to consider about the readings, but for the most part, I would like to see you "grapple with" the issues raised by our study of American cultural history.

Each entry in your reading journal should aim to display your own independent thinking about our texts. You can assume that we already know what's in the reading. That means you don't have to reproduce the content. Instead, shape a commentary on the reading or readings, starting from your own line of questioning. This can be a particular insight or an analysis of something interesting or unusual. You may also sketch a broader, more synthetic picture that makes a connection to other readings, other course material, or other historically- or culturally-relevant knowledge. You can choose any one of a number of strategies, as long as you show your own thinking.

I would prefer that these reading journals be typed and contain two to three paragraphs of analysis and reflection per week. Unlike your formal papers, these do not need to be double-spaced. They also will not be held to the high standards I expect from formal written assignments—they are journals, after all. Please limit your weekly reflection on our readings and cultural texts to no more than one single-spaced page, including the following heading:

Your Name  
477b s05 / 577b s05 Reading Journal—Week \_\_\_\_  
Date

Please make sure that you make it clear which readings you are reflecting upon in your journal, as most weeks you'll have several to choose from. You should complete your journal entry for a given week prior to coming to class so that we can use them to help structure our discussion. You will find that they also will help you organize your thoughts and develop topics for our formal papers.

I will collect these reading journals weekly to see what you are thinking about. To provide you with a bit of flexibility, however, over the course of our shortened semester, you may use two "get-out-of-the-journal-free" passes. This will mean that, at a minimum, you should have ten journal entries to re-submit at the end of the semester. Weekly journals will be assessed on a three-tiered system:  $\sqrt{+}$  (excellent),  $\sqrt{}$  (satisfactory),  $\sqrt{-}$  (unsatisfactory). I'll provide a standard letter grade for your journal as a whole at the end of the semester.

Don't hesitate to try out new thoughts or write about something you are still thinking through in these journal entries. I hope that you will find them to be an important part of how you learn—and a useful demonstration of how you think—by the end of the semester.

"The search for market segments, the significance of market sites, the function of market practices, and the creative fusions made from market pleasures all encode commercial culture with the imperatives of commerce. They teach us to take pleasure in our own inscription as consumers. They naturalize materialism and artifice, and encourage us to aspire to the identities that fit the categories most convenient for marketers. Most important, they give us identities as consumers that cut us off from the responsibilities and opportunities of citizenship by dividing us into separate market segments, by elevating consumer time over historical time, and by colonizing our imaginations to make us more malleable as consumers. Yet the very need for novelty and the global appetites of consumer culture also make other fused identities and practices possible.

George Lipsitz, "In the Sweet Buy and Buy: Consumer Culture and American Studies"