

Spring 2017

HIST 585-003: Special Topics in History:

Topic: American Culture History

Instructor	Day(s)	Time(s)	Maximum Enrollment
Goldstein	M	12:00 – 3:00 pm	12

Semester Description:

This course will explore the major themes in the field of U.S. cultural history, including both foundational texts and more recent works of influence. In surveying the field, it will introduce students to various interpretive theories-many of which originate outside the discipline of history-that are now regularly employed in the analysis of historical texts and discourses. Emphasis will be placed on using cultural approaches to understand how social relations in the United States from the colonial era to the present have been informed by racial, ethnic, gender, and class identities. Among the cultural arenas we will explore and interpret in depth are print culture, mass or “popular” culture, consumer culture, religious culture, cultural hierarchy, landscapes, and the built environment. Although the course focuses on U.S. history, students interested in other parts of the world will find many of its theoretical and methodological insights applicable to their own fields of study.

Possible Required Textbooks, Articles, and Resources:

1. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*;
2. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*;
3. Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*;
4. Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*;
5. George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*;
6. Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street Faith and Community in Italian Harlem*;
7. Cathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*;
8. David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White*;
9. Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America*; and
10. Some articles on electronic reserve.

Spring 2017

Grading:

The course will require weekly reading and meaningful participation in class discussions. In addition, students will be required to help set the agenda and facilitate the discussion for one class session, as well as complete two written assignments, one 5-7 page essay analyzing a set of weekly readings, and a longer 15-20 page research paper on a topic of the student's choice.