

oh I don't know, I don't know, oh, where to begin when we're north american but in the end we make the same mistakes all over again come on north americans we are north american scum we're from north america and all the kids all the kids that want to make the scene here in north america when our young kids get to read it in your magazines we don't have those so where's the love where's the love where's the love where's the love where's the love tonight? but there's no love man there's no love and the kids are uptight so throw a party till the cops come in and bust it up let's go north americans oh you were planning it i didn't mean to interrupt sorry i did it once and my parents got pretty upset i freaked out in north america but then i said the more i do it the better it gets let's rock north america we are north american scum we're from north america we are north american scum we are north american new york's the greatest if you get someone to pay the rent wahoo north america and it's the furthest you can live from the government some proud american christians might disagree here in north america but new york's the only place we're keepin them off the street now we can't have parties like in spain where they go all night shut down in north america or like berlin where they go another night, alright, you see i love this place that i have grown to know alright, north america. and yeah, I know you wouldn't touch us with a ten-foot pole 'cause we're north americans.

Reading Counterculture: 1950 to present English 391, fall 2008

Instructor: Meghan Rosatelli
Office: Hibbs 408
Office hours: Tues. 11-12 & by appt.

Box: Hibbs 309
Class time: T/TR 9:30-10:45
Room: Hibbs 329

Overview

Counterculture movements ignite just about every culture in almost every era of human history. These movements are catalysts for social change because they often end up heavily influencing the popular culture of the time. We can look at countercultures as a fiery, bouncing ball scorching various notches of our historical timeline. Where the soot remains, a new culture grows from the ashes of the old. Of course, countercultures are only as good as the dominant culture they are rebelling against. Many movements fail to live up to their initial goals, yet these movements often inspire the next generation of counterculture pioneers and the popular culture remains in check by a group of critics once again. This cycle of influential rebellion inspires a more accepting and understanding culture for women, blacks, gays, artists, poets, cyberpunks, and beyond. In short, countercultures make our society a better place and reading their colorful histories will hopefully continue a rich history of cultural diversity and tolerance.

The last fifty to sixty years of counterculture movements in America and Britain transformed quickly from generation to generation. Because this time period is both rich and relatively familiar, reading into the various intricacies of the major movements can help shed light on our own rebellious instincts today.

Course Goals

You should emerge from this course with a comprehensive working knowledge of counterculture movements over the last fifty years. This knowledge will complement your ability to synthesize these movements with your own historical (or present) interests in literature, publishing, film, fashion, music, lifestyle, etc. By merging your own interests and knowledge of culture with an understanding of thoughtful rebellion, the texts that power those rebellions, and the cyclical and timely nature of counterculture movements, you can begin to view their own generational roles and abilities critically. You can also begin to analyze and criticize cultural texts that promise a change from the dominant or popular culture. Most importantly, you should leave the class with a new respect for those individuals who broaden the scope, aesthetic, and currency of our cultural capital and (perhaps) a desire to keep the rebellious cycle moving forward.

Course Objectives

While I hope that you will all take something special from the course, the main objectives are as follows:

- o expand your reading and writing abilities through thoughtful and in-depth analysis of various texts (literature, film, music, fashion, etc.).
- o discover connections and synthesize the cause and effect cycles of cultural rebellion.

- o merge various forms of texts and media into your research and analysis.
- o develop new ways of "seeing" visual culture through various movements.
- o maintain a creative and thoughtful blog that combines events and texts discussed in class with your own research and interests.
- o develop a strong voice and point of view through consistent contributions to class and online discussions.

Texts

* Course pack: Uptown Color #13
 * *On the Road* (1957) -Jack Kerouac

* *Beautiful Losers* (1966) -Leonard Cohen
 * *House of Leaves* (2000) -Mark Danielewski

Assignments

The Blog:

- You will set up a blog on Blogger during the first (1/2) week of class (see "Setting up a Blogger account" worksheet) and add every student in the class (and me) to your "friends." For the sake of your classmates' privacy, you will keep your blog as "friends only" until the end of the semester.
- You will be expected to blog on the current course topics each week (specifically readings). I would be ecstatic if you blogged more than once a week, but once a week is the absolute minimum. These posts should be thorough and should explore linking, adding photographs, video, etc. You must contribute to your blog by noon on Friday.
- Commenting on your classmates' blogs is encouraged, but not required. Think Karma.

Mid-term examination:

- A 4-question essay style exam that covers the first half of the semester.

Final Paper and multimodal project with presentation:

- An 8-10 page paper, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, proper MLA citations. This paper will focus on a counterculture topic of your choice based on a covered theme. Either working from texts discussed in class, or something you found on your own, you must engage the reader with a thoughtful analysis and argument.
- Multimodal project to accompany the paper—should explore your topic through various media such as film, montage, painting, drawing, design, photography, sound art, website, etc.
- A 10-minute presentation to show the class your multimodal project and give us an informative grasp on your research project.
- **Your topic must be approved before Fall Break!**

Quizzes:

- I have no intention of giving quizzes on the reading **but** if I feel students are not reading weekly quizzes will be introduced and worked into your grade.

Grading

- o Final paper and multimodal project with presentation: **25%**
- o The blog: **25%**
- o Mid-term examination: **20%**
- o Surprise quiz: **10%**
- o Participation and attendance: **20%**

My Policies

Computers:

Obviously, we are in a computer classroom. This is largely so I can show you multi-media work with ease—not so you can check your e-mail.

Attendance:

- o Departmental Policy: Students who miss more than six classes in a course that meets twice a week cannot pass the course. *I strongly second the English Department's sentiments on this one.
- o My Policy: I'm a stickler for attendance. Expect to lose 1 point from your final grade for each unexcused day that you miss—until the un-lucky number seven. I **strongly** suggest that you e-mail me **in advance** if you have to miss class and/or bring a doctor's note. I also expect **extra effort** on the blogs to make up for your absence in class discussion.

Email:

- o I always welcome thoughtful questions and comments via e-mail. I will try to respond to you as quickly as possible. What I **do not** welcome via e-mail: late work, excuses, questions along the lines of "what did I miss in class?"

Office hours:

- o Try to give me a heads up if you plan on coming to office hours. If you can't make those times, contact me so we can find another time to meet. Also, come to office hours with some notes, questions, pen, paper, positive attitude—these things make any meeting more productive.

Late work/Late students:

Because much of the "work" of the course will be on your blogs and in class discussion the late work policy is a little different in this course.

- o For the blogs: if you miss a posting by Friday, I still encourage you to try and post over the weekend for reduced credit. If you miss a post entirely, I would rather you keep up with solid posts than give me effortless half posts in an effort to catch up.
- o Late students: If you show up more than 15 minutes late you will be marked absent. If you are consistently 5-10 minutes late I reserve the right to lower your grade. If you have an extenuating circumstance, please speak with me.
- o Mid-term: No make-up will be given.
- o Final Paper: Due date is the final date I will accept the paper.

University Policies

Students with Disabilities: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require that VCU provide an "academic adjustment" and/or a "reasonable accommodation" to any individual who advises us of a physical and/or mental disability. If you have a physical or mental limitation that requires an academic adjustment or accommodation, arrange a meeting with me at your earliest convenience. Additionally, if your coursework requires you to work in a lab environment, you should advise the instructor or department chairperson of any concerns you may have regarding safety issues related to your limitation(s). This statement applies not only to this course but also to every other course in this University.

Email Policy: <http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/email.htm>

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: <http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/honor.html>

Student Conduct in the Classroom: <http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/conductguide.html>

Weekly Lessons/Homework

Aug 21: Introduction to syllabus, individual introductions
Setting up a Blogger account
Read: Rimbaud poems

1950s

Aug 26: Fluidity of Time: Background of counterculture, Rimbaud
Read: *On the road* -chapters 1-7 (**through** chapter 7)
"Western Words" article
Ginsberg, O'Hara, di Prima, and Creeley poems
Due: Blog set up with class list

Aug 28: Sound as a Movement: Kerouac, Ginsberg, O'Hara, New York School, City Lights, Burroughs
Read: *On the road* -chapters 8-13

Sept 2: The Teenager: *Blackboard Jungle*, *The Wild One*, *High School Confidential*, *Rebel Without a Cause*
Read: *On the road* -chapters 14-7 (into part 2)

"Mobility as resistance" article

Sept 4: The Road and Mobility: Reading discussion
Read: *On the road* -chapters 8-6 (into part 3)

1960s

Sept 9: Rebellious Individualism: Hippies, free love, Black Panthers, BAM, Last Poets, Women's Movement
Read: *On the road* -chapters 7-2

Leary, Morgan, Stern, Hayden, Millet, Cleaver, Wittman, Hoyland

Sept 11: Multimedia Consumerism: Pop Art, Andy Warhol, proto-punk (Velvet Underground)
Read: *On the road* -chapters 3-6 (end)

http://edu.warhol.org/20c_ppt.html (if you are unfamiliar with Warhol, check out these PPTs)

Sept 16: Postmodernism and Non-linearity: (from Kerouac to ...) Vonnegut, *Blow Up*, *In Cold Blood*, Cohen
Read: *Beautiful Losers* -pgs 3-47

"Simulacra and Simulations"

Sept 18: Sex on the Margins: Kubrick, *The Graduate*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *Easy Rider*, *Portrait of Jason*
Read: *Beautiful Losers* -pgs 47-96

"Pornographic Sublime" article

1970s

Sept 23: Narcissistic Individualism: Drug use, *Fear and Loathing...*, *Zen and the Art...*, Toni Morrison, Vonnegut, *Basketball Diaries*. Reading discussion.

Read: *Beautiful Losers* -pgs 96-142

"Cross Gender/Cross Genre" article

Sept 25: Questions of Gender: Glam, gender bending, David Bowie/Ziggy Stardust, *Rocky Horror*
Read: *Beautiful Losers* -pgs 145-190

"Licensed to Ill" excerpt

Sept 30: Anarchy: Punk, John Peel, Pink Floyd, Patti Smith, Kraftwerk, Post-punk, Joy Division, metal, Vivian Westwood

Read: *Beautiful Losers* -pgs 190-243 (end)

"The art of the Kraft"

"The Great Wrong Place in which We Live" excerpt

Optional: Childish interview

Oct 2: The Streets: Hip hop, DJ Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, breakdancing, graffiti, *Style Wars* (1982)

Read: "At the Crossroads" article

1980s

- Oct 7: Layers: Reading Discussion, Kundera, Rushdie, DeLillo, Haraway, Baudrillard
Read: *House of Leaves* –introduction-chapter 4
"Art's Revenge" article
- Oct 9: The Finite: AIDS, Keith Haring, *The Wall*, Spike Lee, *Drugstore Cowboy*
Read: *House of Leaves* –chapters 5-7
"Rap as Resistance" article
- Oct 14: Sounds of the Underground: Dead Kennedy's, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Minor Threat, The Pixies,
gangster rap, NWA, Run-D.M.C.
Read: *House of Leaves* –chapters 8-9
Biafra and Rollins interviews
Due: Last day to give me your topic proposal
- Oct 16: **Reading Day—No Class**
- Oct 21: **Mid-term Examination**
- Oct 23: Communicating the Underground: Zines (meeting in library)
Read: *House of Leaves* –chapters 10-11
"There's a Riot Goin' on" excerpt

1990s

- Oct 28: Bad Girls: Riot Grrrl, Grunge (meeting in library)
Read: *House of Leaves* –chapters 12-14
- Oct 30: Cyberculture: Baudrillard, Raves/club kids ***Oct 31, Last day to withdraw**
Read: *House of Leaves* –chapters 15-17
Intro, "Birth of Counterculture," & "From Status-Seeking to Coolhunting" from *Nation of Rebels*
- Nov 4: The Anti-Ad: *No Logo*, *Adbusters*, Sheppard Fairey, Critical Art Ensemble
Read: *House of Leaves* –chapters 18-21
"Despite All the Amputations" article
"Something to Spray" article
- Nov 6: Cutouts and Outcasts: Reading discussion, *Infinite Jest*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Hedwig and the Angry
Inch*, *To Wong Foo...*
Read: *House of Leaves* –chapters 22-end
"They Made Me Do It" article

2000s

- Nov 11: The Unknown: Reading discussion, *Donnie Darko* and the intuitive teen
Read: "The Digital Topography" article
- Nov 13: Vulnerability: *Learning to Love You More*, *Post Secret*, *Found*, *We Feel Fine*, *Universe*, and the cyber
revolution(?)
Read: Look through all the websites discussed today
- Nov 18: **Presentations**
- Nov 20: **Presentations**
- Nov 25: **Presentations**
- Nov 27: **Thanksgiving—No Class**
- Dec 2: **Presentations**
- Dec 4: **Presentations**
- Dec 9: **Final Paper Due**

