

Historical Studies 449  
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University of Calgary  
2007-2008 Academic Year  
**Fall Term**

### **History of Popular Culture in Canada, 1850-Present**

Canadians have spent a great deal of time throughout history engaging in various forms of popular culture. Play, leisure pursuits, and entertainment are as important working or voting in the lives of Canadians. It is the purpose of this course to explore popular culture in Canadian society from the 1850s –the beginning of railways and the dawning of the urban-industrial revolution in Canada- to the recent past, circa 1968.

Precision about what “popular culture” means or entails is difficult, since it includes a wide variety of historical phenomena. For example, popular culture includes obvious things, such as popular literature, theatre, fairs, folk tales, music, and sports. It also includes rituals and rites of passage, such as courtship, weddings, and funerals. The celebration of holidays and commemoration of events are also integral to understanding the popular culture of any society. These aspects of popular culture are *public*. But there are also elements of popular culture that are *private*. Hobbies, what people collect or buy, and life in the home can also entail important components of popular culture. In this course, the *things of everyday life* will be considered to be part of popular culture. Ideas about the most fundamental aspects of the human condition, such as attitudes toward, God, nature, and the body can also be considered part of popular culture. Attitudes toward nature, for example, play a role in a host of leisure activities but also inform what is contained in popular literature or the lyrics of popular songs. They have meaning.

The following terminology may help in providing a general guideline for what may be included in this broad and diverse field of history. **Culture:** refers to behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and other products of human activity characteristic of a community. It is an evolving system of beliefs, attitudes, rituals, and values, transmitted from one generation to the next. Culture finds expression in numerous activities and through many techniques or media **Popular** refers to things, which are broadly dispensed and generally approved. Things that are popular express the taste and understanding of the many or the masses and are free from elitist standards of correctness and taste. **Popular Culture**, therefore, can be considered an indicator of the conduct, values, beliefs, and aspirations of various groups in society.

It is important to note that within any society there may be conflict over popular culture, and especially what is considered significant, appropriate, and meaningful. There are important differences in popular culture depending on ethnicity, age or generational

experience, class, and gender, and, in Canada, region. In other words, popular culture is contested terrain.

It is also important to distinguish between the *creators* (for example, musicians, performers, writers) and *suppliers* or the *producers* (for example, media organizations, entertainment promoters, owners of institutions) of culture and the users or *consumers* of culture. Indeed there is fierce debate about the role of the producers versus the consumer of culture. Is culture defined and shaped by those in control of culture and entertainment? Do those who own the “means of production” –the mass media- control popular culture? Conversely, what role does the audience play in popular culture? Rather than regarding popular culture as an irresistible lure that the masses or audience mindlessly consume, this course will explore the important role the *audience or consumers* play in shaping popular culture. It is assumed that the audience or consumer plays an integral role in popular culture. The producers are certainly influential and powerful; but they do not exercise absolute *hegemony*.

One thing that is central to the study of popular culture is that historians of popular culture ascribe meaning to the objects and performances of popular culture. This “meaning” is something that is negotiated between the creators, producers, and consumers of culture. The task of the historian is to discover the meaning of various forms of popular culture. To do this the historical context of the popular culture under investigation is absolutely crucial to reach an understanding of its meaning and significance.

### Texts

Daniel Francis, National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History

Peter Geller, Northern Exposures: Photographing and Filming the Canadian North, 1920-1945

The History Student Handbook: A Short Guide to Writing History Essays –available at the Department of History webpage –<http://hist.ucalgary.ca>- under Tutorials – or <http://hist.ucalgary.ca/essay/Handbook.htm>

### Assignments:

Artifact Review #1, 1850-1919	<b>Due: Thurs. Oct. 18, 2,007</b>	<b>30%</b>
Artifact Review #2, 1920- ...	<b>Due: Tues. Nov. 27, 2,007</b>	<b>30%</b>
Final Examination (to be scheduled by the Registrar)		<b>40%</b>

**N.B. All assignments MUST be completed to PASS the course.**

## ARTIFACT REVIEWS

An artifact, or example of popular culture, can be considered in the widest possible terms. It can be a thing, a person, performance or activity

**The following list contains some general categories:**

-best selling novels or popular magazines; a radio program or television show; films; popular songs; performers (a writer, musician, or actor) athletes and sporting events; Canadian heroes; recreational or leisure activities; rituals and rites of passage; celebrations and holidays; youth and adolescent culture; fashion; humour and satire; fairs and exhibitions; collectibles and hobbies; clubs and organizations; consumerism and advertisements; painting and photographs.

**N.B.** This list is by no means exhaustive.

**The following themes or questions may serve as guideline for writing the artifact reviews.**

- 1) Identify the creator or performer
- 2) Establish when it was produced (the date)
- 3) Describe the artifact, performance or activity
- 4) How popular was it; and with whom or what groups was it popular?
- 5) Why was it popular with the audience or consumers?

These themes should help you develop an analysis that concentrates on the meaning –or multiple meanings- of the artifact, performance or activity. The **date** of whatever you are analyzing is extremely important since the analysis requires that attention be paid to historical context. It is essential to analyze how the historical context, or the times, illuminates the meaning or significance of the artifact, person, or cultural performance. This requires students to research the times as well as the artifact or performance under review. The focus of the analysis should be on the relationship between the artifact or performance and its audience or the consumers.

**N.B.** The first artifact must be from the period 1850-1920

The second artifact must be from the period after 1920.

**All papers must contain notes and a bibliography. Internet sources are acceptable for artifacts and primary sources, for example the CBC Archives site has many valuable radio and television clips. But scholarly historical literature must be consulted in order to understand the times and the culture.**

Students may also want to submit a copy of the artifact, but this should not replace a good description of the artifact. You cannot assume that the reader hears or sees what you do.

## FINAL EXAMINATION

The final examination will consist of a series of questions that require essay style answers. The questions will be based on the lecture material and the readings.

## **Lecture Topics and Readings**

The following is a rough guide of themes and lecture topics.

### **Week #1:**

#### THE EMERGENCE OF POPULAR CULTURE IN CANADA

- Popular Culture in the 1850s -Folk and Oral Culture/Rural Culture (**Required Reading, Article by Wilson. See also articles by Poulter & Abbott.**)
- The Rise of Cities and Organized Leisure (**Required Reading: Article by Bouchier**)

### **Week #2:**

#### POPULAR CULTURE IN VICTORIAN CANADA

- The Tavern and the Temperance Movement (**Required Reading: Articles by Sendbeuhler & Heron**)
- Theatre: Stage for the Rough versus the Respectable

### **Week#3:**

#### THE RISE OF LITERACY

- Daily Fare in Newspapers (**Required Reading: Article by Burr**)
- Popular Novelists & Genres (**Required Reading: Article by Strange & Loo**)

### **Week#4:**

#### MIDDLE CLASS SOCIETY

- “Muscular Christianity” and The Quest for Fitness
- Spas Resorts and Tourism: “The Nature Craze” (**Required Reading: Articles by Jasen & McDonald**)
- The Department Store and The Rise of Consumer Culture
- Etiquette & Manners of the Middle Class in the Home

### **Week#5:**

#### THE ENTERTAINMENT MACHINE I

- Films and Canadian Culture “Dreamland”

### **Week#6:**

#### THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I

- The Romance of Flying and the Necessary Hero (**Required Reading: Vance “If Ye Break Faith”**)
- Victorian Values in Crisis

### **Week#7 & 8:**

#### THE NEW POSTWAR SOCIETY

- The Emergence of Adolescent Culture (**Required Reading: Articles by Walden & Commachio**)
- The Cult of the Automobile and Advertising
- The Idea of the North, (**Required Reading: Northern Exposures**)

-Painting & Canadian Nationalism (**Required Reading: Articles by Moray & Cameron**)

**Week#8:**

CULTURE OF PROTEST I

-Agitprop Theatre in the Great Depression (**Reading: Toby Maquire “Unemployment”**)

**Week#9:**

THE ENTERTAINMENT MACHINE II: THE MEDIA INVADES THE HOME

- Radio (**Required Reading: Articles by Nolan & Webb**)

- The C.B.C. and Canadian Culture

**Week#10:**

AFTER 1945

-The Royal Commission on Arts and Letters and the Struggle for Survival of Canadian Culture

-The Artist and Canadian Life

-Post World War II Suburban Culture: the Age of Domesticity (**Required Reading: Articles by Korineck & Penfold**)

**Week#11:**

CULTURE OF PROTEST II

-Montreal Hockey Riots (**Required Reading, articles by Mott & Lorenz/Osborne**)

-Expressions of Anti-Modernism (**Required Reading, article by Keeling/McDonald OR Wall**)

**Week#12 & 13:**

THE ENTERTAINMENT MACHINE III:

-Music in Canada (**Required Reading: Articles by Edwardson & Wright**)

-TV: A Cultural Revolution?

-What’s On Canadian Television (**Required reading: Article by Macfarlane**)

## **Readings**

The text **National Dreams** can be read throughout the course. There are no specific readings from this book for a particular lecture. The suggested readings for each lecture are available on the course Blackboard site. They are also available on-line from the University of Calgary Library

### **Introduction:**

Laurence Levine, "Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences" American Historical Review, Vol.97, No.5, Dec. 1992

Doug Owrarn, "The Myth of Louis Riel", Canadian Historical Review, Sept. 1982

### **Week #1**

Catherine Wilson, "Reciprocal Work Bees and the Meaning of Neighborhood" Canadian Historical Review, Vol.82, No.3, Sept, 2001

Gillian Poulter, "Montreal and Its Environs: Imagining a National Landscape", Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol.38, No.3, Fall

Frank Abbott, "Cold Cash and Ice Palaces: The Quebec Winter Carnival of 1894" Canadian Historical Review, June 1988

Nancy Bouchier, "The 24<sup>th</sup> of May is the Queen's Birthday: Civic Holidays and the Rise of Amateurs in Nineteenth Century Canadian Towns" International Journal of the History of Sport, Vol.10, No,2, Aug. 1993

### **Week #2**

M.P. Sendbeuhler, "Battling the Bane of Our Cities: Class Territory and the Prohibition Debate in Toronto, 1877", Urban History Review, Vol.22, No.1, Oct. 1993

Craig Heron, The Boys and Their Booze: Masculinities and Public Drinking in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890-1946, Canadian Historical Review, Vol.86, No.3, Sept. 2005

### **Week #3**

Christina Burr, "Gender, Sexuality and Nationalism in J.W. Bengough's Verses and Political Cartoons", Canadian Historical Review, Vol83, No.4, Dec. 2002

Carolyn Strange & Tina Loo, "From Hewers of Wood to Producers of Pulp: True Crime in Canadian Pulp Magazines of the 1940s" Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol.37, No.2, Summer 2002

### **Week #4**

Patricia Jasen, "Romanticism, Modernity and the Evolution of Tourism on the Niagara Frontier, 1790-1850", Canadian Historical Review, Sept. 1991

I.S. McLaren, "Cultured Wilderness in Jasper National Park", Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol.34, No.3, Autumn 1999

Robert A.J. McDonald, "Holy Retreat or Practical Breathing Spot: Class Perceptions of Vancouver's Stanley Park, 1910-1913" Canadian Historical Review, June 1984

**Week#6**

Jonathan Vance, "If Ye Break Faith" from Jonathan Vance, Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War

**Week #7**

Keith Walden, "Respectable Hooligans: Male Toronto College Students Celebrate Hallowe'en, 1884-1910", Canadian Historical Review, March 1987

Cynthia Commachio, "Dancing to Perdition: Adolescence and leisure in Interwar Canada", Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol.32, No. 3, Fall 1997

**Week #8**

Gerta Moray, "Wilderness Modernity and Aboriginality in the Paintings of Emily Carr", Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol.33, No.2, Summer 1998

Ross D. Cameron, "Tom Thomson, Anti-Modernism and the Ideal of Manhood", Journal of the Canadian Historical Association, New Series, Vol.10, 1999

Toby Macquire, "Unemployment"

**Week #9**

Michael Nolan, "Infant Radio Industry: Canadian Private Radio, 1919-1936", Canadian Historical Review, Dec. 1989

Jeremy Webb, "Constructing Community and Consumers: Joey Smallwood's *Barrelman* Radio Programs" Journal of the Canadian Historical Association, New Series, Vol.8, 1997

**Week #10**

Steven Penfold, "Are We Going Literally to the Hot Dogs: Parking Lots Drive-Ins and the Critique of Progress in Toronto's Suburbs, 1965-1975, Urban History Review, Fall 2004

Valerie Korineck, "Mrs. Chatelaine" versus "Mrs. Slob": Contestants, Correspondents and the Chatelaine Community in Action, Journal of the Canadian Historical Association, New Series, Vol. 7, 1996

**Week #11**

Lorenz & Osborne, "Talk About Strenuous Hockey": Violence Manhood and the 1907 Ottawa Silver Seven - Montreal Wanderers Rivalry", Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol.30, No.1, Winter 2006

Moris Mott, "An Immense Hold in the Public Imagination: The First Quarter Century of Hockey in Manitoba, 1886-1911" Manitoba History, Spring/Summer 2002

Keeling & McDonald, "The Profligate Province: Roderick Haig-Brown and the Modernizing of British Columbia", Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol.36, No.3, Autumn 2001

Sharon Wall, "Totem Poles Teepees and Token Traditions: Playing Indian at Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-1955", Canadian Historical Review, Vol.86, No.3, Sept. 2005

**Week #12**

Robert Wright, "'Dream Comfort, Memory, Despair': Canadian Popular Music and the Dilemma of Nationalism, 1968-1972", Journal of Canadian Studies

Ryan Edwardson, "Of War Machines and Ghetto Scenes: English Canadian Nationalism and the Guess Who's "American Women" American Review of Canadian Studies, Autumn 2003

**Week #13**

Heather Macfarlane, "Adventures in Rainbow Country and the Narration of Nationhood", Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol.40, No.3, Fall 2006

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