Bay Area Culture

Description

Ever since the Gold Rush, writers, photographers, musicians, and other artists have shaped perceptions of the Bay Area both here and abroad. In this class, we'll study the region's vast projection of itself, paying special attention to transformational periods, movements, events, and figures.

As we'll see, the Bay Area has attracted waves of migrants and immigrants in search of the American Dream. Yet the region's cultural history can’t be understood apart from conflicts over racial and ethnic identity, political and economic power, free expression, alternative communities, and environmental sustainability. We'll study Bay Area culture as a series of contested efforts—not only to acquire wealth, but also to empower workers and minority communities, to protect the environment, and to achieve various forms of political, artistic, and sexual freedom.

We’ll conclude by exploring the politically charged notion of “San Francisco values" and what sociologists have called the "Californian Ideology." We'll also reflect on what "Bay Area values" might be.

Learning Objectives

In this class, you'll learn to:

• Analyze and interpret literary and cinematic works
• Recognize the themes and values that animate these works
• Relate these themes and values to the Bay Area's social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural history
• Identify the historical, political, and cultural experiences of American racial and ethnic minority groups (AERM)
• Recognize the interconnectivity of economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental quality (ES)
• Recognize international influences on—and global significance of—Bay Area culture (GP)

Course Requirements

You'll be asked to:

• Attend weekly lectures and conversations with visiting experts
• Read and watch the course materials
• Respond to weekly assignments on iLearn
• Take two in-class exams
• Write one five-page essay.

Forum Posts

Before each class meeting, write a response to the assigned readings or film and post it on iLearn Forum. Ideally, you’ll make an arguable claim in response to the course materials and
support that claim with one piece of evidence drawn from those materials. Failing that, a good question or observation will do. Your course participation grade will reflect the quantity and quality of your posts.

Exams

Both exams will consist of 3-4 questions about the course materials (readings and films), discussions, lectures, and guest visits. You should be able to answer each question in a paragraph or so of clear, relevant sentences. Please bring a green book to class; you can buy one at the bookstore and use it for both exams.

There will be no make-up exams. If you miss the midterm, you may write a ten-page essay about any of the course materials covered by that exam. (You should otherwise follow the guidelines for the required essay.) There will be no make-up essays for the final exam.

Essay

In the essay, you’ll be expected to:

• Make a clear and arguable claim about the course materials (readings and films)
• Support your claim with evidence from those course materials
• Edit your essays for clarity, cohesiveness, spelling, and correctness
• Meet recognized standards for notes and bibliography.

Note: You’ll receive no credit for the essay if you don’t quote and analyze specific passages from the readings and films. You may, but need not, cite evidence from other sources.

I’ll provide sample topics, but I encourage you to build your essay around one of your Forum posts. Please type, print, staple, and deliver your essay to me personally, either in class or during my office hours.

Grades

Your course participation, midterm, essay, and final exam will each count for 25 percent of your course grade. Opportunities for extra credit may be announced in class and on iLearn.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of cheating or fraud; it occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgment, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as his or her own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an "F" grade. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of the College and may be reported to the University Judicial Affairs Officer for further action.

Please Note

Students who need reasonable accommodations for disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2472) or by email (dprc@sfsu.edu). http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc/facultyfaq.html#1
SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students. To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact The SAFE Place—(415) 338-2208, http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/ or the Counseling and Psychological Services Center—(415) 338-2208, http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/. For more information on your rights and available resources, visit http://titleix.sfsu.edu.

**Required Texts**

- Ben Tarnoff, *The Bohemians: Mark Twain and the San Francisco Writers Who Reinvented American Literature*
- Weekly readings, films, and video clips

Except for Tarnoff's book, all course materials will be posted on iLearn. Our class sessions will include discussions (and PowerPoint presentations) about the readings, but those are by no means a substitute for reading the material.

Some of the readings are difficult to read in their posted form. I recommend that you print them out, read and annotate them, place them in a folder, and bring the folder to class. I also recommend that you keep a printed syllabus in that folder.

**Syllabus and Attendance**

The syllabus is subject to revision; I'll announce changes in class and on iLearn. There's no need to contact me about absences, but please find a classmate you can check with about missed material or announcements. Feel free to contact me during my office hours as well as before and after class. For routine questions, please check the syllabus before contacting me.

**Week 1 (Jan. 27): Course overview**

**Week 2 (Feb. 3): Gold Rush**
- Tarnoff, *The Bohemians*, 1-75

**Week 3 (Feb. 10): Bohemians**
- Tarnoff, *The Bohemians*, 77-133

**Week 4 (Feb. 17): Railroad**
- Tarnoff, *The Bohemians*, 135-93

**Week 5 (Feb. 24): Progressive Era**
- Caleb Crain, “Four Legs Good,” http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/10/28/four-legs-good

**Week 6 (Mar. 3): Labor**
- Fred Glass, “The San Francisco General Strike”
• Robert Cherny interview/visit

Week 7 (Mar. 10): Sex and Gender
• Nan Alamilla Boyd, “Transgender and Gay Male Cultures from the 1890s Through the 1960s"
• Nan Alamilla Boyd interview/visit

Week 8 (Mar. 17): Midterm exam

March 24: No class (Spring break)

March 31: No class (Cesar Chavez Day)

Week 9 (Apr. 7): Beats
• Nancy J. Peters, “The Beat Generation and San Francisco’s Culture of Dissent”

Week 10 (Apr. 14): Journalism
• Ralph J. Gleason, “Like a Rolling Stone”
• Peter Richardson, “Between Journalism and Fiction: Hunter S. Thompson and the Birth of Gonzo”

Week 11 (Apr. 21): Counterculture
• Peter Richardson, “Jerry Garcia’s Annus Mirabilis”
• Film: Berkeley in the Sixties, https://archive.org/details/BerkeleyInTheSixties_201509

Week 12 (Apr. 28): Violence
• David Talbot, Season of the Witch, 169-203
• Film: Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydHRESPjBxg

Week 13 (May 5): Marin County
• Richard Walker, The Country in the City, 19-34, 82-98
• Richard Walker interview/visit
• Essay due

Week 14 (May 12): Silicon Valley and San Francisco Values
• Walter Isaacson, Steve Jobs, 1-41, 56-70

May 19: Final exam