

American Subcultures
Wednesday 14:45 – 16:15

Andrée Lafontaine (alafo@vega.aichi-u.ac.jp)

Office: L322

Office hour (no appointment necessary): Monday 16:30 – 18:00

Course webpage:

<http://www.andreelafontaine.com/american-subcultures>

A subculture is a group that shares beliefs and behaviors that are different from those of mainstream culture to which it belongs. Subcultures can be closely linked to specific ethnic, geographic, age, economic or social groups, but they can also be transversal and encompass a wide demographic range. Through a chronological study, and using objects of popular culture, we will come to differentiate and identify various subcultures and countercultures that make up the American society.

Evaluations:

1. Attendance and class participation: 10%
 2. Reading reports (10% each): 30%
 3. Mid-term: 20%
 4. Final paper (8-10 pages): 40%
1. **Attendance** to all classes is mandatory. In order to participate fully, you will have to do the required readings before class.
 2. Three short “**reading reports**” will be required to prepare you for longer writing assignments.
 3. Your **Mid-term**, a short thesis-governed paper, will ask you to defend a position using arguments.
 4. Your **final assignment** is a response paper (8-10 pages). You will be asked to defend a position in response to a critical contemporary issue regarding a specific subculture. In your answer, you have to use concepts seen in class and in your readings.

Guidelines for each assignment will be distributed in class.

Required Readings:

-  Haenfler, Ross. *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls: Deviance and Youth Subcultures*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010.

CALENDAR

April 6

Week 1: Introduction—Subcultures and Countercultures

📖 Chapter 1 “Introduction”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 3-15.

Optional:

- 🎞 *Frontline: Merchants of Cool* (Barak Goodman, 2001, 58 min). Available online here: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/view/>

SECTION I: The 20th Century

April 13

Week 2: Youth Culture & Flappers (1920s)

Key concepts: youth, style, resistance and consumerism

- 🌐 “Dear Parents: An Open Letter from a Flapper” by Ellen Welles Page, *Outlook Magazine*, Dec. 6, 1922. Available here: http://lancefuhrer.com/dear_parents.htm
- 🎞 *Our Dancing Daughters* (Harry Beaumont, 1928, excerpts)

Optional:

- 🎞 *It* (Clarence Badger, 1927, 72 min)
- 🎞 *The Flapper* (Alan Crosland, 1920, 88 min)
- 🎞 *Dancing Mothers* (Herbert Brenon, 1926, 66 min)

April 20

Week 3: Organized Crime & Gangsters (1930s)

Key concepts: The Chicago School, Social Ecology, Functionalism and Strain Theory

- 🌐 Robert Warshow “The Gangster as Tragic Hero”. Available online: <http://www.srs-pr.com/ESSAYS/warshow-gangster.pdf>
- 📖 Start Chapter 2 “Skinheads—The Symbolism of Style and Ritual”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 17-28.
- 🎞 *The Public Enemy* (William Wellman, 1931, excerpts)

Optional:

- 🎞 *The Doorway to Hell* (Archie Mayo, 1930, 78 min)
- 🎞 *Smart Money* (Alfred E. Green, 1931, 81 min)
- 🎞 *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1931, 79 min)
- 🎞 *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932, 93 min)
- 🎞 *G Men* (William Keighley, 1935, 85 min)
- 🎞 *Angels with Dirty Faces* (Michael Curtiz, 1938, 97 min)
- 🎞 *The Roaring Twenties* (Raoul Walsh, 1939, 106 min)

April 27

Week 4: Bohemians and Beats (1950s)

First reading report due in class today

Key concepts: Symbolic Interaction

- 📖 Finish Chapter 2 “Skinheads—The Symbolism of Style and Ritual”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 17-28.

Optional:

- 📖 Ken Gelder, “Literary Subcultural Geographies: Grub Street and Bohemia”, in *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practice*. London: Routledge, 2007, 66-82.

- 🎬 *Next Stop, Greenwich Village* (Paul Mazursky, 1976, 111 min)
- 🎬 *Naked Lunch* (David Cronenberg, 1991, 115 min)
- 🎬 *Beat* (Gary Walkow, 2000, 93 min)
- 🎬 *Howl* (Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 2010, 85 min)
- 🎬 *Kill Your Darlings* (John Krokidas, 2013, 104 min)

May 11

Week 5: Civil Rights & Self Defense Groups (1960s)

Key concept: stereotypes, social constructivism

- 🌐 Explore the Civil Rights Movement timeline available online:
<http://embed.verite.co/timeline/?source=0Av8RB1CnByREdDQ4a05Fbjc0RjZ5VHdwT3UxY0pSaVE&font=Bevan-PotanoSans&maptype=toner&lang=en&height=650>

Optional:

- 🎬 *Malcolm X* (Spike Lee, 1992, 202 min)
- 🎬 *Selma* (Ava DuVernay, 2014, 128 min)
- 🎬 *Ali* (Michael Mann, 2001, 157 min)
- 🎬 *Mississippi Burning* (Alan Parker, 1988, 128 min)
- 🎬 *The Long Walk Home* (Richard Pearce, 1990, 97 min)
- 🎬 *4 Little Girls* (Spike Lee, 1997, 102 min. Doc)

May 18

Week 6: Hippies (1960s & 1970s)

Second reading report due in class today

Key concepts: marxist approach to subcultures

No readings today.

May 25

Week 7: Gay Rights and the Club Scenes (1980s)

Key concepts: stigma and stigma management, culture of fear, compulsory heterosexuality, passing

- 📖 Chapter 7 “Goth—Stigma and Stigma Management”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 83-94.

Optional:

- 📖 Ken Gelder, “Bar scenes and club cultures: sociality, excess, utopia”, in *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practice*. London: Routledge, 2007, 47-65.
- 🎬 *Milk* (Gus Van Sant, 2008, 128 min. Fiction)
- 🎬 *Vito* (Jeffrey Schwartz, 2011, 93 min. Doc)
- 🎬 *How to Survive a Plague* (David France, 2012, 110 min. Doc)

June 1

Week 8: Punks, Riot Grrrrls, Goths (1990s)

Key concepts: intersectionality

- 📖 Chapter 3 “Punk Rock, Hardcore, and Straight Edge”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 29-41.

Optional:

🎬 *The Crow* (Alex Proyas, 1994, 107 min)

SECTION II: Contemporary Subcultural Landscape

June 8

Week 9: Hip Hop

Mid-Term due in class today

Key concepts: Subcultural capital, authenticity, status, privilege

- 📖 Chapter 4 “Hip Hop—‘Doing’ Gender and Race”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 43-56.
- 🎬 Selection of music videos.

June 15

Week 10: White Supremacists and Anti-Immigration

Key concepts: Differential association, definition of the situation, deviance

- 📖 Chapter 6 “Virginity Pledgers—Religion, Sexual Identity, and Positive Deviance”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 71-82.
- 🎬 *American History X* (Tony Kaye, 1998, 119 min. Fiction)

June 22

Week 11: Geeks, Trekkies and Gamers

Reading Report 3 due today

Key concepts: subcultural geography, computer-mediated communities, masquerading and nerd masculinity.

- 📖 Chapter 8 “Gamers, Hackers, and Facebook”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 95-109.
- 🌐 Arthur Chu, “Your Princess Is in Another Castle: Misogyny, Entitlement, and Nerds”. Article available here: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/05/27/your-princess-is-in-another-castle-misogyny-entitlement-and-nerds.html> and a talk based on this article is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgixOqr-Q-U>
- 🎬 *American History X* (Tony Kaye, 1998, 119 min. Fiction)

Optional:

- 📖 Ken Gelder, “Fans, Networks, Pirates: Virtual and Media Subcultures”, in *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practice*. London: Routledge, 2007, 140-158.
- 🎬 *The King of Kong* (Seth Gordon, 2008, 83 min)

June 29

Week 12: Preppers, Militias & Survivalists

Key concepts: Definition of the situation, symbolic politics, moral entrepreneurs, rule creators and rule enforcers

- 📖 Chapter 5 “Heavy Metal—Moral Panics, Satanic Scares, and Moral Entrepreneurs”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 57-70.

July 6

Week 13: Sports Subcultures

- 📖 Chapter 9 “Riot Grrrls and Fic Writers—Girls Take on the Media”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 111-124.

Optional:

- 🎞️ *The Crash Reel* (Lucy Walker, 2013, 108 min. Doc)
- 🎞️ *Riding Giants* (Stacy Peralta, 2004, 105 min. Doc)
- 🎞️ *Whip It* (Drew Barrymore, 2009, 115 min. Fiction)

July 13

Week 14: Millenials, Juggalos & Hipsters

- 📖 Chapter 10 “Questions and Conclusions—Resistance, Commodification, and Growing Up”, *Goths, Gamers, Grrrls*, 125-136.

July 20

Week 15: Summary

Final paper due during finals weeks (date tba). Good luck!