

Post-war Culture and Society in the United States - A Cinematic Exploration

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Lecturer: James ANDERSON

E-Mail:

james.anderson@iepg.fr

Overview and requirements:

Post World War II America has been marked by profound transformations in society, politics and culture as well as in the country's standing and position in world affairs. We will begin by examining attitudes and values during the deceptively conformist 1950's with the goal of contrasting mainstream culture with the increasingly diverse country which grew out of WWII. Our discussion of these subcultures will intensify with the close examination of the more turbulent society of the 1960's and 1970's, followed by the conservative backlash that began in the 1980's. We will then begin the difficult and sometimes confusing examination of the 1990's and early 21st century, characterized by an increasingly polarized and fragmented political and cultural landscape as well as by a country deeply traumatized by the 9/11 attacks. Students will thus gain an understanding of the profound transformations which have occurred in American culture over this period. For each period discussed, we will watch a movie.

You need to have a good working knowledge of English, (C1 or high B2). You will be expected to be at ease in both reading and listening comprehension – numerous documents in English need to be studied to understand and take part in class debates.

Movies

Some Like It Hot

Dr. Strangelove

The Graduate

Jaws

Taxi Driver

Wall Street

Boyz in the Hood

Thelma and Louise

Social Network

ATTENTION - Some of these movies address sensitive issues and/or contain scenes which may trouble some (violence including rape, sexism, racism, offensive language, etc.). It is therefore advised that students consult synopses of the films before choosing the class.

EVALUATION

40% of FINAL GRADE

FINAL EXAM

-Oral or written exam based on the movies we have watched.

60% of FINAL GRADE

CLASS WORK

- In groups, students will complete one oral presentation of 10 minutes maximum on a topic assigned in class (25%).

-In groups, students will complete one oral movie review (20%).

-Active class participation. (15%).