SOC131: Sociology of Youth

Fall 2023

Instructor: Professor Charles Thorpe
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Office: SSB 464
Office hours: Wednesdays 11am-1pm

Class schedule: Tu, Th 3.30pm – 4.50pm
Class location: CSB004

Final Exam period: December 11, 3pm – 6pm

Description of course

How is youth understood as a social category? How is youth represented in media such as film and television and what social meanings are attached to youth? How has youth developed as a distinct identity in modern society? Is there a distinct ‘youth culture’ and what are its characteristics? In what ways are plural youth identities expressed through different subcultures? How is subcultural identity established and what meanings and values are encoded in subcultural style? What new modes of identity formation and political expression are made possible by social media networking? How have young people been impacted by, and responded to, transformations of capitalism from Fordism to post-Fordism, intensifying consumerism and social inequality. How have youth subcultures sought to resist consumer culture, even as youth culture is intensely commodified. How is resistance coopted and shaped by consumerism?

Required reading

It is your responsibility to keep up with the reading for each week. If you do not do the reading for the week specified, you will quickly fall behind and it will be very difficult to catch up and prepare for coursework and the exam.

Readings listed under the class schedule are available via Canvas

Canvas

I have set up a Canvas site for the course – I will post a copy of this syllabus on Canvas. I may also post additional readings, any further course policies or instructions, and relevant internet links.

Note: the Canvas site contains an extensive archive of weblinks relevant to the course material that can help deepen your understanding and expand your knowledge.
**Participation:**

While I will be giving some lectures (see schedule below), many class sessions will be focused on discussion. For this reason, it is very important that you do the reading and/or view any assigned films prior to the session for which they are listed in the schedule.

**Assessment Percentages**

Annotations: 20%

Attendance: 10%

Midterm: 35%

Final exam: 35%

**Annotations**

These must take up a minimum of 2 double-spaced pages per session for which they are set and they may be bullet-points. You can do longer annotations if you wish. Annotations will be due on each day for which readings are set for class discussion. You should do the reading before the discussion and upload your annotation to canvas before midnight on that day.

This term, you will complete a reading and screening outline most weeks--due at key points throughout the term. These annotations are graded on a P/NP basis. They are meant to provide early preparation for your papers and assignments in the course. In order to pass this assignment, you will need to turn in all individual reading/screening outlines that meet the following criteria. You are welcome to use bullet points (vs. complete paragraphs).

- Two questions that came up for you in the reading and screenings.
  - Consider things you didn’t understand or that struck you. You might also think about this portion as a way to start thinking about questions to frame your papers.
- Summarize the academic readings for the week or for the topic heading from the schedule: 1 paragraph/set of bullet points.
- Summarize the documentaries or fiction films for the week, if there are any (1 paragraph/set of bullet points).
- Put the different elements of the course for that week (e.g. lecture, readings, films) in conversation with one another (1 paragraph/set of bullet points).

When you turn in your annotations for the week, be sure to include your name and the Annotation #.

Please note that these are not commented on by Professor Thorpe, unless you specifically ask for feedback by going to office hours.
Grading criteria for annotations
Meeting the requirements = P (you get an A+ for the assignment, or 100%).
Not meeting the requirements = NP (you get zero points for the assignment).

If you complete all the annotations satisfactorily, you will receive the full 30% for this portion of the course grade.

Submitting annotations. A Canvas portal will be created to turn in annotations. You should upload your annotation by midnight of the day on which the relevant discussion occurs. LATE ANNOTATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED, unless in case of illness or family emergency.

The first annotations will be due on Thursday of Week 1 on the readings set for that day and subsequently, annotations will be due each day in which there is a class session given over to discussion.

You will not receive feedback on annotations except to confirm that you have completed the annotation to the requirements (in which case you get full marks for the annotation). If you do not get this confirmation, you should assume that you have not completed the annotation or not completed it satisfactorily.

Submitting Mid-Term and Final

Submit to Turnitin via Canvas before the end of the day. Coursework is only treated as submitted if it is logged by Turnitin.

Late Penalties

The midterm grade will be reduced by half a grade point (i.e. from A to A-, from A- to B+, from B+ to B etc.) for every week that it is overdue.

All work must be turned in before the end of the final exam period.

Midterm (take-home coursework)
Prompt:
How did the rise of childhood characterize modernity and how does its decline characterize postmodernity?

Write 1000 words plus bibliography
Due – via Turnitin upload on Canvas – by midnight of Tuesday, Week 4 (October 24).

Referencing in Midterm

Your papers should include a bibliography.
You should reference any text that you quote or draw ideas from, including online sources. Use the Harvard system of referencing

In text:
(Author, date of publication: page number)
E.g. (Moore, 2010: 45)

And include in bibliography full details: Author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication.

You should only refer to the required reading set for the course.

Final Exam: In-class final: Exam questions will be posted to Canvas in Week 10. The exam will be conducted during the exam period (December 11, 3-6pm) under exam conditions with no notes or electronic devices allowed. Bring 2 blue books and 2 pens to the exam.

Class schedule

Week 0

Th: Overview: Syllabus and assignments

Week 1: Modernity and the Invention of Childhood and Youth

Tu: Lecture: Childhood and youth as historical constructions

Th: Discussion


Lauren Langman, “From Subject to Citizen to Consumer: Embodiment and the Mediation of Hegemony,” in Richard Harvey Brown ed., The Politics of Selfhood; Bodies and Identities in Global Capitalism (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 167-188.


Week 2: From Modern to Postmodern Childhood and Youth

Tu: Lecture: Youth: cultural ideal and folk devil

Th: Discussion:


**Week 3: Neoliberalism and Youth**

**Tu:** Lecture: Neoliberalism, The War on Kids, and Inequality

**Th:** Discussion:

*The War on Kids* (documentary film, 2009), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFBxEcIk9K4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFBxEcIk9K4)


**Week 4: Youth Consciousness and the Sixties Counterculture**

**Tu:** Lecture: Fordism, Social Change and the Sixties

**Th:** Discussion

*Woodstock* (documentary film, 1970), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II-wxfVl1Fg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II-wxfVl1Fg)

*Gimme Shelter* (documentary film, 1970), $3.99 to rent, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNOvgRf0_Ck](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNOvgRf0_Ck)
Herbert's Hippopotamus: Marcuse and Revolution in Paradise (documentary film, 1996), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnZ8WaiXnBY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnZ8WaiXnBY)


**Week 5: The Ambivalent Legacy of the Sixties**

**Tu:** Lecture: From the Counterculture to The New Spirit of Capitalism

**Th:** Discussion

*The Lost Boys* (film, 1987), $3.99 to rent, [https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=the+lost+boys+movie](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=the+lost+boys+movie)


**Week 6: Subcultures**

**Tu:** Lecture: Subcultures: Resistance through Rituals

**Th:** Discussion


Week 7: Subcultures cntd.

Tu: Discussion


*Merchants of Cool* (documentary film, 2001), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PI9um9s_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PI9um9s_4)

It’s Gonna Blow: San Diego’s Music Underground, 1986-1996 (film, 2015), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHr0QgJCC_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHr0QgJCC_Y)

Th: Discussion


Week 8: Commercial Appropriation of ‘Alternative’ Youth Culture and the Emergence of Post-Subculture

Tu: Lecture: The Concept of Post-Subculture and Criticisms of Subcultural Theory

Th: 

THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS

Week 9: Consumerism, Inequality, and the Fragility of the Postmodern Self

Tu: Discussion:

*Generation Like* (documentary film, 2014), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqamKb7gTWY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqamKb7gTWY)


**Th:** Discussion:

Sweet Sixteen (film, directed by Ken Loach, 2002), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5sDPu9wgjs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5sDPu9wgjs)


**Week 10: The Generational Mediation of Social Change: Youth and the Transformations of Self and Values**

**Tu:** Lecture: The Generational Mediation of Social Change

**Th:** Discussion


John Della Volpe, *Fight: How Gen Z is Channeling their Fear and Passion to Save America* (2021), Chapter 2: “Just a Student”

