POP 400 – Popular Entertainment: The Beatles and Popular Culture

Instructor:
Zach Wells, M.A.
wellsz@nku.edu
859-448-8945

Course Description

This course explores the impact of the music of the Beatles on Western popular culture. Few musical acts leave an impact on society like the one left by the "Fab Four" over the few short years they existed as a recording band. Their songwriting, musical aesthetics, and fashion reflected and influenced the culture of the tumultuous 1960s. Throughout this course, students will explore the role the Beatles played in influencing popular culture beginning in the 1960s and continuing up until the present day. Other topics include: Beatlemania and its relation to modern day examples of extreme fandom and how the music of the Beatles played a role in the counterculture movement and social change of the 1960s. Ultimately, we will investigate how and why the Beatles became a legendary group and why their relevance is still significant in the 21st century.

In addition to regular readings, students will be responsible for weekly listening assignments and the viewing of online sources. Through weekly discussion board posts and a number of creative projects, students will explore the powerful influence that the Beatles and their legacy have left on popular culture.

Student Learning Outcomes (Goals of class)

Students will be able to:

SLO 1. Analyze how popular culture reflects, impacts, and influences society
SLO 2. Understand how the music of The Beatles influenced popular culture of the 1960s and beyond
SLO 3. Develop critical thinking and research skills through the creation of formal writing assignments and creative projects
SLO 4. Work with primary sources (music, videos, lyrics) and develop unique interpretations and conclusions from these materials

Course Assessment

These outcomes will be assessed through the following methods:

- Discussion Board Posts [Two (2) Per Week]
- Paper/Project [Four (4) Throughout Semester]
Required Texts:

Additional Reading:
There will be additional online reading assignments and videos with links supplied through Blackboard.

Course Schedule
The instructor reserves the right to modify this schedule at any point during the semester

I. The Early Years

Week 1: Introduction
Readings: Gould
Assignment: Discussion Board

Week 2: Formation of The Beatles, Beatlemania in the UK
Readings: Gould
Assignment: Discussion Board

Week 3: Arrival in America, British Invasion
Readings: Gould, Online Sources
Assignment: Discussion Board

Week 4: Beatlemania in the USA, Fashion
Readings: Gould, Online Sources
Assignment: Discussion Board
Project #1 Due

II. Movies, Songwriting and Protest

Week 5: The First Music Video Band
Readings: Gould
Assignment: Discussion Board

Week 6: Songwriting
Readings: Gould
Assignment: Discussion Board
Week 7: End of Touring, Christianity and Protest
Readings: Gould
Assignment: Discussion Board

Week 8: Studio-only band, The “concept album” in popular music
Readings: Gould
Assignment: Discussion Board

Project #2 Due

III. The Psychedelic Era

Week 9: The Album Cover in Popular Music
Readings: Gould
Assignment: Discussion Board

Week 10: The Beatles and Counterculture
Readings: Gould
Assignment: Discussion Board

Week 11: 1968 in America, The Fractured White Album
Readings: Gould, Online Sources
Assignment: Discussion Board

Week 12: Conflict and Conspiracy: The Yoko Factor and Paul is Dead?
Readings: Online Sources
Assignment: Discussion Board

Project #3 Due

IV. Break-Up and Legacy

Week 13: The End of an Era
Readings: Gould
Assignment: Discussion Board

Week 14: Solo Projects, 1970s
Readings: Online Sources
Assignments: Discussion Board

Week 15: Legacy
Readings: Gould, Online Sources
Assignments: Discussion Board

Week 16: The Beatles in the 21st Century
Readings: Online Sources
Assignments: Discussion Board

Project # 4 Due