

Writing 2, Sec. 36
A History of Cool: American Counterculture & the Modern Era
Merrill Academic Building: Room 132
UC-Santa Cruz – Spring 2015

Tues/Thurs: 6:00-7:45pm
Instructor: Dr. Chuck Carlise
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Office Hours: Wed 1:00-3:00pm
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Jazz and the Beat Generation. Gangsta Rap and Grunge. Riot Grrrls, Punk Rock and *Rebel Without a Cause*. In this class, we will explore the slippery and ubiquitous concept of “cool.” We will ask how mainstream pop culture reacts to outsiders and innovators; why some subcultures are admired, while others are feared, exploited, parodied, or ignored; and how counterculture impacts (and sometimes creates) generational and cultural identity. To probe these questions, we will first derive an historical context for “cool,” then survey the various cultural shifts of the last hundred years with a particular emphasis on the dialog between counterculture and the culture at large. Critical readings will include Susan Sontag, John Leland, Anatole Boyard and Donnell Alexander, among others, and essays will be both personal and analytical, exploring both history and the current moment. Importantly, we will also read, listen to, watch, and otherwise engage some of the major figures and subcultures that have animated the fringes of the modern era, to ask what we can learn from them about different generations, the future, and America in general.

Expectations

The Official Breakdown

Writing 2 fulfills the C-2 (composition) requirement.

Course Includes

- Five essays, three of full-length, two with multiple drafts
- Weekly short writing assignments
- One complete revision (as opposed to editing) of a paper I have commented on
- Attendance at all class meetings
- Arriving on time: three late arrivals are equivalent to an absence
- Participation in class discussions
- A final portfolio of writing

How It's Going to Work

The course will function as both a critical thinking practicum and a process-based workshop on translating those thoughts into words. That is, we'll spend time analyzing texts (both visual and verbal), considering rhetoric from multiple perspectives, and drafting (and re-drafting) arguments and responses to those texts and ideas.

This class is labor intensive. We will be reading from a critical text book, as well as numerous essays, poems, and other related texts, plus *seven* documentaries that you'll be expected to watch on your own. This totals of over 200 pages and eight hours (as well as your own research) over the course of the quarter. This class will be a lot of fun, but it won't be a blow-off. You **MUST** keep up with the work if you want to pass the course.

This course is also writing intensive. There are weekly writing assignments (see below) and we'll be writing in class often, along with the full papers (and various drafts of those). All of this stuff counts, and you'll have to keep up with it as well if you want to pass.

Finally, this course is going to be interactive and participation-based. That means being present in class (on time), attentive and engaged (and talking) and participating in the class digital conversation (see below).

Grading:

While there will be a comprehensive letter grade for this course, I will not be assigning grades to individual papers and assignments. I will comment on much of it (not all), but there will not be a numerical value that can be added up over the quarter. Instead, your grade will reflect your development as a writer and your consistent engagement with the texts, assignments, and discussions. Not being graded on every assignment will be strange for some of you, but this is a process-based course, and every paper you write for it will be treated as a work-in-progress.

Please note that class participation is a significant part of your grade.

Attendance Policy

This course RELIES on a conversation between people. Therefore, your presence is absolutely necessary (note: this means being on-time as well). We will be doing a number of in-class writing exercises that cannot be made-up, and most of the remaining assignments will be discussed at length in class. In addition, I will be taking attendance.

You get two absences for free. No need to excuse yourself or ask permission. No doctor's note, no coach's note. They're yours. On your third absence, your grade will begin to suffer. **On the fourth, you fail.** There are only twenty scheduled class meetings in this course; four absences is one-fifth of the entire class.

Texts and Materials:

* *Hip: The History*, John Leland. Harper Perennial 2004 (available at the bookstore)

* Various readings and recordings posted to eCommons.

*NOTE: all required readings except for Leland will be posted on eCommons. Folders there also include optional essays, poems, stories, songs, and video clips that relate to the course (you'll know this because the folder will be labeled "optional"). However, I *highly* recommend perusing eCommons from time to time. There is no way to really study this kind of subject without getting a taste of its actual matter.

* **Either a notebook with pockets, or a folder with pockets** will be necessary. This will eventually be turned in as your final portfolio with everything we do this quarter in it (including in-class work, assignments, revisions, etc.), so get one now and keep it.

The Essays:

- 1: A Narrative Essay, re-examining (with your current eyes) something you would once have called "cool." This will be personal and narrative in nature, but critical in thought.
- 2: A Comparative Essay, squaring an artist, persona, or phenomenon from the history of cool (pre-2000) to its analog (in your mind) today. This will be analytical, but I will expect research with outside sources as well.
- 3: An Argument/Synthesis Essay, engaging one of the commentators we read (i.e. not the prime movers of cool, but those who wrote *about* them). You can either build off of their opinions, updating them for the modern era, or argue with them. Some research will be necessary here as well.
- 4: A Variable Final Essay, There will be several possible options for this project. We will discuss it at length in class.
- 5: A post (one to two pages) on the class blog on eCommons that engages the class in response to one of our course readings. You will make an observation about some aspect of the reading, unpack that aspect in some analytical way, and launch us into a discussion. Your classmates will respond on the blog; each person will be required to respond to five over the course of the quarter. This will be structured, but informal.

Students with a Disability:

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, you need to get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit it to your Core course instructor in person outside of class (e.g. during office hours) within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact the DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459- 4806 (TTY), or <http://drc.ucsc.edu> for more information on the requirements and/or process.

Week One:

Tuesday 3.31: Introductory Stuff & Generations

Reading:

N/A

Discussion:

- 1 – Syllabus. You're reading it!
- 2 – What is *this moment*? You're about to find out!

Thursday 4.2: Defining Cool

Reading:

John Leland, "In the Beginning there was Rhythm: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and the Blues" (from *Hip: The History* 2004) pg. 17-38

Donnell Alexander, "Cool Like Me: Are Black People Cooler than White People?" (*Might Magazine*, 1997)

Discussion:

- 1 – Defining "Cool." Both of these essays attempt to pin down what *cool* is (and for Leland, also *hip*). They will agree about some things and disagree about others – and we will agree with them on some things and disagree about others. What does it mean to say something is *cool*? How is it different than *popular*? *Desirable*? *Fashionable*? Who gets to be called *cool*? And who gets to call them that? What is the territory this covers? What does it all mean?
- 2 – Assign Paper 1: Narrative Essay. In-Class Writing & Discussion.

****Assigned: Narrative Essay** (due Wk 3, Thurs)**

Week Two:

Tuesday 4.7: Precursors / the Blues

Watch:

Rebels – A Journey Underground: Part 1, Society's Shadow (Kevin Alexander/CTV, 1999)

Discussion:

- 1 – Development of Cool. This is the beginning of the conversation this class will undertake. What are the social contexts that make cool happen (that make it possible, but also that make it necessary)? What is the role of history? Politics? The city? Demographics (race, gender, class, sexual status)? Who are the figures that drive its formation – either with their style, fearlessness, or both – and what pressures (internal or external) compel them? In short, how did we get here?
- 2 – The Blues are a folk art (i.e. created and passed down by the musicians themselves). They are communal and wear their history on their sleeve. They are also a music of emotion, pressure, individuality (literally), and both melancholy and freedom. Langston Hughes says their mood is "despondency," but that when they're played, "people laugh." If he's right, how come? How do the Blues signal a new, and wholly American, cultural moment? What is their role in this conversation?

Optional Watch:

The Blues: Warming by the Devil's Fire (Martin Scorsese, prod., 2003)

Note: This is the fourth part of a seven-part documentary series on the Blues. Each episode is headed by a different director, and all are (I believe) available online. None were perfect for our discussion (which is why I didn't require any of them) but this episode is closest. If you're interested in the Blues, I highly recommend taking a spin through this series.

Thursday 4.9: The 50s: Conformity & Obscenity

Reading:

John Clellon Holmes, "Philosophy of the Beat Generation" (*New York Times* 1958)

Allen Ginsberg, "Howl" (*Howl and Other Poems*, City Lights: 1956)

Note: I recommend reading the poem out loud (I'd say this about any poem, but "Howl" especially).

There is also a recording of Ginsberg reading it in 1959 in the "optional" folder. (It's not the best version I've ever heard of Ginsberg reading "Howl" but it's the most complete one I could find to post. At its recording, the obscenity trial over the book wasn't over yet. In fact, *Big Table*, who hosted the reading, only existed because Irv Rosenthal founded the magazine after resigning as editor of the *Chicago Review*, when they refused to publish "obscene" Beat work.)

Discussion:

1 – 1950s Context: Economics, Safety, Conformity. The post-WWII years are a time of dramatic inconsistency – unprecedented economic prosperity but also profound insecurity (driven on by new advertising media); tremendous national unity but also the Red Scare, Jim Crow, and the madhouse; romantic optimism but also nuclear paranoia; the growth of psychological self-awareness and the memories of the holocaust... In the end, the safe thing to do was to keep your head down and try to be like everyone else. What does that do to a culture? And what kind of rebellion does that claustrophobia engender among the artists, rebels, outsiders, and bohemians of the era?

2 – Allen Ginsberg (nakedness as rebellion). "Howl" shakes the foundations of American literature, decency, culture, and speech. We'll talk about the political ramifications in class, but for now, notice the language – where it feels most shocking (if it does), where it feels most alive (if it does). Mark lines that feel especially charged to you – either because they surprise you, or because they seem particularly beautiful or ambitious (or because they repel you – that's good too). And feel free to speculate on what the poem is doing. Not every poem has a "point" but this one certainly leans toward one.

Week Three:

Tuesday 4.14: Jazz & Kerouac

Reading:

John Leland, "The Golden Age of Hip, Part 1: Bebop, Cool Jazz, and the Cold War" (from *Hip: The History* 2004) pg. 111-136

Jack Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" & "Belief & Technique for Modern Prose" (1958)

Note: After Kerouac wrote *The Subterraneans* in a three-day blitz, a stunned Ginsberg begged him to explain his process. Jack's response was the two short 'essays' above.

Discussion:

1 – Jazz is the urban cousin of the Blues, but very different too. Jazz, particularly 50s bebop, is both emotionally driven and highly technical; visceral and cerebral; exciting to watch and (at times) hostile to its audience. Jazz is one of America's greatest contributions to the history of art, and yet some of its greatest figures were horribly self-destructive, and in the case of some (Charlie Parker, for example), were terrible people. How do we make sense of Jazz?

2 – Kerouac: Reluctant Voice of a Generation. These two conversations will bleed into one another – it's impossible to talk about Kerouac without Jazz; and it's hard to talk about Bop Jazz and not think of the Beats. Kerouac is also the purest distillation of his era's need to breathe, and he suffers hard for that fact. There's a heart-beat in his work you can feel; we'll try to find it.

Thursday 4.16: The Beats & the Beatniks

Watch:

The Source (Chuck Workman 1999)

Note: Workman believes the Beats are the source of all late-20th century counterculture (hence the title of the documentary). Keep that argument on the back burner while you watch this.

Discussion:

- 1 – The Beats as a Movement.** We've looked at two of the biggest Beat writers already, but we haven't talked much about them as a movement until today. The Beats exist as a group of friends who are largely failed writers and misfits for nearly a decade before breaking through to become one of American history's most significant cultural circles. Almost every counterculture movement since them has lived in their wake, been inspired by their books, and been electrified by their story. In many ways, their best work happens when they're nobodies though. Why? What is the role of bohemianism and community here? Would another moment like this be possible today? What do we do with dark, horrific, paranoid, brilliant William Burroughs (the *other* Beat writer)? This movement also threatens nearly every sacred cow of its era. How does culture respond to threat...?
- 2 – Assign Paper 2: Comparative Essay.** In-Class Writing & Discussion.

**** Due: Narrative Essay ****

**** Assigned: Paper 2: Comparative Essay ** (due Week 6, Thursday)**

Week Four:

Tuesday 4.21: The 60s & Dylan

Listen:

Six Bob Dylan songs (in folder marked "Dylan songs for Tuesday" with lyrics). Included: "Blowin' in the Wind" (1962), "Masters of War" (1963), "With God On Our Side" (1963), "Only a Pawn in their Game" (1963), "Tombstone Blues" (1965), "It's Alright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding" (1965).

Note: Notice how the style – lyrically and musically – goes through such a dramatic shift all the sudden in 1964-65. Dylan releases four records in those two years.

Discussion:

- 1 – 1960s Context.** The 60s are the most romanticized, and probably least clearly understood, era of American pop culture. They are somehow both *less* all-encompassing than popular imagination suggests, and also *more* crowded and volatile. At times, one wonders anyone made it out alive. What 60s are we even talking about when we say "the 60s"?
- 2 – Bob Dylan** makes us ask all the important questions of this course. He is almost perfectly tuned to the key of the times. After providing the voice and language of social unrest in the early 60s, he backs away pointedly from political folk songs (and begins epitomizing the paranoia and chaos of the mid-60s). Fans turn on him brutally for it – calling him 'Judas' to his face. Why? What does he owe them? What do they owe him? Their anger comes from a place of passion – he matters to the world *that much*. And yet, most consider his late-60s work his most brilliant – and frankly, we still remember 'Dylan goes electric' as a seminal moment in rock history. Is our memory clouded by 'knowing how the story ends'? Would we have been sympathetic in 1964? Why is Dylan 'cool' in the first place?

Suggested Optional Further Reading:

Joan Didion, "Slouching Toward Bethlehem" (from *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* 1967)

Thursday 4.23: Politics & Rebellion

Watch:

The 60s: Years that Shaped a Generation (PBS 2002)

Reading:

Tom Wolfe, "The Frozen Jug Band" (from *The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test*, 1967)

Discussion:

- 1 – Politics.** If politics were ever cool or hip (or if these stances were ever political) it was in the 60s. Leland claims, "though it likes a revolutionary pose, hip is ill equipped to organize for a cause. No one will ever reform campaign finance laws under hip's banner, nor save the environment. A hipper foreign policy will not get us out of this fix." Can "cool" be political? Or does it get in the way?
- 2 – Research.** This essay has a research element; we'll do an in-class exercise/talk to get you started. If you haven't written a college research paper, don't skip this class.

Week Five:

Tuesday 4.28: Music / Rhetoric

Watch:

Born to Be Wild: The Golden Age of American Rock – 1960s: Riders on the Storm (BBC 2014)

Note: This will cover some of the same material as the documentary from last week – social context is impossible to separate from this stuff – but it really focuses on the place of music in the era. If you're interested in the history of rock, this is part one, or a three-part series (to date). They're all very good.

Discussion:

- 1 – Music as the glue & engine of this generation.** Music has been the primary way pop culture expresses itself for decades, but that begins here in the 60s. What is it that makes the 60s ripe for that transformation? What makes 60s rock more transferrable than the Blues or Jazz had been in previous eras? What's happening in 60s music that is revolutionary? Why do we love it still (assuming we do)?
- 2 – Rhetoric Discussion** – in-class writing for paper 2. Paper 2 is a comparative essay; you'll need to know what your subjects are going to be by this class.

Optional Watch:

Rebels – A Journey Underground: Part 3, Turn On the Revolution (Kevin Alexander/CTV, 1999)

Note: This is part three of the documentary series you began in week 2. It covers the stretch from the Summer of Love to Woodstock, and focuses more on characters like Abby Hoffman or Paul Krassner (the political *court jester* activists).

Thursday 4.30: The 70s & the Trickster

Watch:

Once Upon a Time in New York: the Birth of Hip Hop, Disco, & Punk (BBC 2007)

Reading:

Hunter S. Thompson, "Genius 'Round the World Stands Hand in Hand and One Shot of Recognition Runs the Whole Circle 'Round" (from *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas* 1971)

John Leland, "The Tricksters: Signifying Monkeys and Other Hip Engines of Progress" (from *Hip: The History* 2004) pg. 161-185

Discussion:

- 1 – 1970s Context: malaise, cynicism, the death of idealism.** As opposed to the two previous eras, with their strong central cords, the 70s exist in a kind of daze (perhaps best epitomized by the bicentennial president, Gerald Ford – the only POTUS in US history who had never received a single vote for President or VP). And yet, they're an incredibly rich time for film, music, and ideas. It's a wasteland littered with diamonds, but still a wasteland. What does "bohemia" look like in a 1970s world? What about "idealism" or "rebellion"? How do the 70s change the rules for *cool* moving forward? Are we more in the shadow of the 60s or the 70s today?
- 2 – The Trickster.** What is the trickster, and what is its role in a society? Why do we associate them with humor? Whose side is the trickster on? I move this conversation to the 70s because not only are two of the most important social comics of the counterculture at their best in this era (George Carlin and Richard Pryor) but humor takes a dark turn in general in this era – it starts doing more work than just getting laughs. I think it's the work of the trickster. What work is that anyway?

Week Six:

Tuesday 5.5: Gender & Sexuality

Reading:

John Leland, "Where the Ladies At?: Rebel Girls, Riot Grrrls, and the Revenge on the Mother" (from *Hip: The History*, 239-259)

Discussion:

- 1 – Women in Hip.** Leland claims that, "if hip had a gender, it would be female." What does he mean by this? In what way is hip/cool a performance? Is this the same way gender or sexuality are performance? Or is this conceit too big of a stretch? What does Leland mean when he talks about "double perspective"? Does that echo the conversation on race? Is hip the same for women as it is for men? How do we make sense of Patti Smith's obvious irritation with Women's Lib Feminists (whom she calls "hung up... tight-assed... idiot broads...")? Leland says Kim Gordon (of Sonic Youth) is a "woman playing a man playing a woman." What the hell?
- 2 – Sexuality in "Cool."** The successes of the women's movement in the early 70s do something fascinating to male sexuality too: once women no longer "need" a John Wayne/cowboy/father figure, what space is there for men to occupy in the sexual landscape? Susan Sontag suggests that the most erotic aspect of masculinity is where it leans toward the feminine, and vice versa. Is this believable? Who epitomizes that? What is the role of objectification in all this? Who's in charge here?

Thursday 5.7: Susan Sontag & Camp

Reading:

Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp" (*The Partisan Review* 1964)

Discussion:

- 1 – What is "Camp"?** Sontag writes that "the ultimate camp statement is: it's good because it's awful." We'll spend a significant part of the day unpacking that idea.
- 2 – Assign Paper 3: Argument/Synthesis Essay.**

**** Due: Paper 2 ****

**** Assign Paper 3: Argument/Synthesis Essay ** (due Week 8, Thursday)**

Week Seven:

Tuesday 5.12: Camp Revisited

Reading:

Glasgow Philips, "Shiny Adidas Track Suits & the Death of Camp" (*Might Magazine*, 1996.)

Discussion:

- 1 – Camp revisited.** How is Philips' argument different from Sontag's? Is he convincing? This essay is from the 90s, and deals in how culture has changed camp sensibility. That's 20 years ago – are we still living in that world? (Also, as a writer, how does he handle building off of Sontag? How is his essay more than just a summary of hers?)
- 2 – In-Class writing** toward Paper 3. Paper 3 will require engaging with another writer/voice. Similar to the in-class writing we did for Paper 2, you'll need to know who you'll be engaging *before* this class.

Thursday 5.14: Drugs & Punk Rock

Reading:

John Leland, "Behind the Music: The Drug Connection" (from *Hip: The History* 2004) pg. 261-81

William Burroughs, "Deposition: Testimony Concerning a Sickness" (from *Naked Lunch* 1959)

John Roderick, "Punk Rock is Bullshit" (*The Seattle Stranger* 2012)

Ally Schweitzer – "A Few Thoughts on that *Punk Rock is Bullshit* Essay" (*Washington City Paper* 2013)

Discussion:

- 1 – Drugs.** Throughout the Leland chapter (and our own observations, I suspect) drugs represent self-destruction, a reclaiming of time and agency, an expression of autonomy, a stand-in for pain, depth, and confidence, and a language of knowing. Not to be blunt, but how much of this is bullshit? Why do we romanticize self-destruction in particular? In what way are drugs a rebellion? Are they ever successful in that space? Are they ever not voyeuristic? How do they fit into the larger conversation we're already having? Do they ruin anything? Or redeem it?
- 2 – Punk Rock.** I argue that punk is less important as a music than it is as a cultural stance. It is rebellion writ-large – screaming it in your face, with no feigned subtlety or grace. And yet, there is plenty of style and substance there. Punk is the first artistic movement we've discussed that wholly resists capitalist success; does that mean that it is destined to eat itself? Is the anger and energy sustainable? Or does the inevitable burn-out contribute to its allure (the romance of the self-destructive again)? The argument between Roderick and Schweitzer will inform some of this but I also want to talk about the Clash and the Sex Pistols and Patti Smith. There will be much to say on this. What is punk's attitude and why is it important? What does it mean to say something is "so punk rock"?

Week Eight:

Tuesday 5.19: The 80s / Hip Hop

Watch:

The Hip Hop Years, Part Two: Fight the Power (BBC Channel 4, 1999)

Note: I'm only assigning *Part Two* here (which focuses on the explosion of hip hop/rap in the 80s, and the controversies that ensue), but it will be useful to consider the birth of hip hop too. You got a brief intro to that with *One Upon a Time in New York*, but *Part One* of this series tells that story in

detail. If you have the interest (and an extra 45 minutes) you might consider watching that too. It's optional. (*Part Three* will be required next week, FYI.)

Discussion:

1 – 80s: Social Context. This is the most conservative era (politically and socially) since the 1950s – in many of the same ways (overly enthusiastic patriotism, the marriage of religion and politics, anti-communist rhetoric, conspicuous consumption, and a vapid, corporate-produced pop culture). But there are also many dramatic differences (the marketing of rebellion, for example). The response from counterculture figures is complicated as well – in fact, who qualifies “counterculture” begins to blur. What do we do with the 80s?

2 – Hip Hop as a cultural phenomenon. You know a little about the birth of hip hop already, and now you have a sense for how it got big. How is it similar to and different from other subcultures we've talked about (Bop Jazz, the Beats, punk rock, Rock'n'Roll, etc.)? How does it exemplify “cool” or “hip” (if it does)? How do popularity and fame complicate all this? Does success change its legitimacy? If so, how? For everyone or just some? Why?

Suggested Optional Further Reading:

The Hip Hop Years, Part One: Close to the Edge (BBC Channel 4, 1999)

Thursday 5.21: College Radio, Underground, & How the Culture Responds

Readings:

N/A

Discussion:

1 – College Radio (How Culture Responds). This will be an opportunity to step back and talk about culture a little – how information moves around, how rebellion travels (and how it is resisted). College radio in the 80s is an eclectic circuit but it might be the last movement that can legitimately claim a significant underground. How did it happen? Why doesn't music (or any other counterculture element) work this way anymore? Can it? Is the internet a contemporary version of this circuit, or is that an illusion? What is the role of money in all this? What does the power structure in a cultural moment do about its rebels?

2 – Discuss Final Project & Final Portfolio.

****Due: Argument/Synthesis Essay (“Entering the Conversation”)**

Week Nine:

Tuesday 5.26: The 90s / Grunge

Readings:

Kathleen Hanna, “The Riot Grrrl Manifesto” (*Bikini Kill 1*, 1991)

Stephen Hyden, “What's So Civil About War Anyway?” (*AV Club* 2010)

Stephen Hyden, “Pearl Jam, the Perils of Fame, & the Trouble with Avoiding It” (*AV Club* 2010)

Note: The Hyden essays are parts 2 and 3 of an excellent ten part series on 90s music (“What Ever Happened to Alternative Nation?”). They focus, respectively, on the Axl Rose/Kurt Cobain feud from 1992 and the aversion Seattle had with fame (using Pearl Jam as exemplar). The character studies of these people are interesting, and we can talk about them, but I'm also interested in what the stories reveal about the character of the era, about grunge/alternative as a social movement that

belongs there, and how “cool” or “hip” complicate these stories – turning them from private into public spectacle.

Discussion:

- 1 – 90s social context.** The 90s respond to their preceding and succeeding eras in a more direct way than almost any other time. The resistance to play the game of the image-driven, corporate sponsored 80s leads to a couple of gritty, difficult, painful, and ultimately “literary” movements (grunge and gangsta rap), but that desire for the “real” ends in bullets and by the late 90s a retreat to the vapid millennium is on. In the meantime, the increasingly savvy effort to market *everything* strangles culture in a uniquely 90s way. What happens to those who actively resist? What space is there for direct action (like Riot Grrrl or the environmental movement)? What happens to those who don’t? The current era is very analogous to the 90s, but the eras are not the same. What’s different now?
- 2 – Grunge/Seattle.** What’s different about this scene than previous punk or rock movements? How does a movement driven by both rebellion and sincerity survive? Why is this the right time for that kind of scene? How does Seattle participate in that? What happens when the commercial world finds this scene?)

Suggested Optional Further Reading:

“Interview with Kathleen Hannah (Huffington Post 2013) – for some context on Riot Grrrl.

Thursday 5.28: Gangsta Rap / Endings

Watch:

The Hip Hop Years, Part Three (BBC Channel 4, 1999)

Discussion:

- 1 – Gangsta Rap** brings lots of the previous conversations together: it’s dangerous, it’s exploitative (of the artists, of women, of the poor), it’s self-destructive – and yet it’s powerful, cocky, magnetic, fascinating. What is it about this stuff? In the chapter on women, Leland says: “gangsta is the shutting down of a second internal voice...” Is he right? What is really driving the east coast/west coast disaster? What do we do with complicated figures, like Tupac? Was the collapse of this movement inevitable?
- 2 – How Do the 90s End?** Is the implosion of grunge and gangsta predictable? What follows these and does it make sense? Between P.C. and the Spice Girls, what happened to 3rd Wave Feminism and Identity Politics? What happened to the 90s in general? How do the 90s predict the 2000s? Did we have to arrive at boy bands and Micky Mouse Club alums? What role does money play in all of this? Who wound up pulling the strings?

Week Ten:

Tuesday 6.2: 2000s / The Hipster

Readings:

Mark Greif, “What Was the Hipster?” (*New York Magazine* 2010)

Dave Eggers, Interview “[rant on selling out]” (*Harvard Advocate* 2000)

Note: The final part of this, what Eggers calls the “rant,” is the only part I’m assigning. Feel free to read the rest, but it’s optional. For the “rant” though, Eggers has just been asked if he’s taking

steps to “keep shit real” (in the wake of the enormous success of his first book). That’s what launches this. What I’m interested in is both the substance of the rant, and what kind of cultural situation would spur someone to flare like that. He’s not blowing up in a vacuum...

Discussion:

1 – 2000s social context. What belongs in this conversation? The 2000s ostensibly ended five years ago; is *this* moment different from *that*? What belonged to that moment that doesn’t belong to this? What can we extrapolate from that? How is *your* moment shaped by the last one?

2 – Irony & the Hipster. In some ways, irony is dominant mode of the era. What is the hipster? Why is irony so powerful right now? You were born into this soup, but it should be clear by now that this wasn’t always the cultural stew. What does its current dominance tell us about this moment (considering hip, camp, creation, cool, rebellion, originality, bohemia, etc.)?

Thursday 6.4: 2010s / What’s Left?

Reading:

Carl Wilson, “Cool Story” (*Slate* 2013)

Discussion:

1 – Close down. What’s left? How do we bring all this together? What is *this* time?

Exam Week : 6.9 – 6.11

**** Due: Final Portfolio ****

**** Due: Final Project/Essay ****