

## **Psychology/Sociology**

### **Sex, Drugs, and Rock & Roll: Music and Drug Subcultures in the US and the UK**

~ Thomas Johnson

*UD only (Upper Division 300-500)/3 credit hours*

This is envisioned as an Upper Division Integrative Elective, which at ISU is a course that deliberately requires students to bring together material from multiple disciplines in exploring some topic of interest. The overarching goal of the course is to use a variety of perspectives employed by psychologists (i.e., neurobiological, psychological, and sociocultural) to attempt to understand the development in the latter half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st Century of a series of youth oriented subcultures, each of which typically included not only particular styles of clothing and music, but also particular "drugs of choice" and often specific behaviors or attitudes regarding sexuality. In applying the different perspectives, students not only learn about the topic of youth subcultures, but also increase their understanding of the different perspectives that form our lenses for examining youth subcultures. I have taught this course twice in the London program. I begin the course by having students think about and explore some of the themes that might characterize mainstream British cultural identity and contrast this to their perspective on what characterizes U.S. culture. This exploration is assisted by readings, lecture, discussion, and visiting and reflecting on the City of London museum and partaking in that venerable British tradition, afternoon tea (at Bea's a Bloomsbury, a highly regarded, but not strictly traditional establishment within walking distance of the City of London Museum). Our discussion of British and American mainstream culture will lead us to a discussion of the emergence of youth cultures in the US and UK during the 1950s, including some of the historical, economic, and sociological factors that contributed to the emergence of youth cultures in the post- WW II era. In studying the Teddy Boys, I will introduce information on the history and pharmacology of alcohol (the Teds drug of choice), as well as the concepts of personal and social identity. We will then proceed to the Mods and Rockers, allowing me to introduce information about motivational theories of substance use in reference to the Mods preference for speed and how that drug was used functionally by the Mods as part of their lifestyle. We will also explore in-group and out-group relations in the context of the Mods notorious rivalry, as well as the concept of "moral panics" in the media's reaction to that rivalry (or the media's creation of that rivalry, according to some perspectives). For each of these subcultures, we will of course also learn about the style, values, and music associated with it. We will then focus on the psychedelic era, including 1) various political, social, and artistic developments that contributed to the development of psychedelic music and subculture; 2) the pharmacology of hallucinogens and marijuana; and 3) how some theorists (and some of those who lived through the psychedelic era) explain some aspects of the music and the movement in terms of spiritual development and some concepts from the psychology of religion. The last time I taught the course we also covered punk, Reggae, and Rave subcultures in a similar fashion. This time I hope to add some material on Hip Hop subculture. Students will be invited to evaluate the degree to

which the different theoretical perspectives we cover can adequately explain the formation of subcultures, their use of specific drugs, and their identification with particular styles of music. Students will also be invited to contrast these subcultures with what they have identified as elements of mainstream British and U.S. culture. Thus an additional theme of the course is integrating information from different disciplines to gain a broader understanding of human behavior. 1 required Book ? 1) Bennett, A. (2001). Cultures of popular music. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press. Various additional articles and chapters

Can the course be taken to fulfill major and minor requirements? YES

Can the course be taken to fulfill general elective credits? YES

Are there prerequisites for this course?

Introduction to Psychology or General Psychology or Introduction to Sociology

#### Assessment Methods:

Traditional Tests and Quizzes 20 %

I typically began each class (except for the first) with a short multiple choice quiz over the assigned readings. This seems to work well in assuring that students came to class prepared.

Journals (Daily, Weekly,...) 20 %

I give students specific journal questions related to each of our field trips and assigned readings. The questions are designed to help them reflect on and integrate material. They have on average 2-3 journal entries to prepare each week. Journals were collected on the first day of class and handed back on the second day of class each week.

Short Essays 20 %

Students write several short essays, including a comparison of British and American Culture; reflections on what it would have been like to live in London during two of the different historical periods we covered; and two other topics aimed at integrating our readings with the experiences from our field trips.

Summative Component - final exam 20 %

Other 15 %

To enhance students' attention to materials and information on some of our field trips, they will have a journal assignment or "treasure hunt" to help them identify what they might want to take away from our visits to the City of London Museum, Afternoon tea, the "Beatle's Experience" in Liverpool, the British Music Experience museum and interactive exhibit (London), and Camden Markets Some of these are completed individually, while others require them to work in teams.