



# TEENAGE WASTELAND Spring 2010



Deborah Appleman  
Willis 106, x4010  
Email: [dapplema@carleton.edu](mailto:dapplema@carleton.edu)

Educational Studies 344  
Willis 114  
T,Th 10:10 – 11:55

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3-5; Wednesdays, 1-3 and by appointment:  
Use the following Doodle link to sign up on line:  
<http://www.doodle.com/rvb7uk774yvaei97>

## Course Description

This course will explore the social, cultural and structural aspects of adolescence in contemporary American society. We will approach the study of adolescence from a variety of perspectives: historical, psychological, anthropological, sociological, educational, and literary. We will consider whether adolescence is “real” or invented. In addition to considering adolescence as a cultural construct as well as a developmental stage, we will also examine the considerable impact of youth culture on American society in general and the nature of high schools in particular. Similarly, we will consider how American high schools shape American adolescence. We will compare current cultural ideals of adolescence with the realities of teenage lives. We will, throughout our explorations, try to uncover some answers as to why the relationship between adolescents and their high schools is too frequently negative, and even, as we have seen in recent years, potentially deadly. We will conclude with a discussion of current issues in schooling as they relate to the nature of adolescence and how educational reform movements may affect what schools and adolescents of this new millennium might look like.

## Course Format

The class meetings will include lecture, whole class discussion, small group discussions, videos, group presentations, guest speakers, and two field trips. There will be occasional out-of-class viewings of films and television programs as well.

## Course texts

All required texts are available in the bookstore and on reserve in the Curriculum Library; some texts are on reserve in the main library as well.

Hine, Thomas, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*  
Milner, Murray, *Freaks, Geeks and Cool Kids*  
Mitchell, Greg, *Holler If You Hear Me*  
Orenstein, *School Girls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap*  
Sadowski, *Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)  
Sizer, Ted, *Horace's Hope*  
Tatum, Beverly, *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*

\*Additional readings will be available on e-reserve. Our e-reserve password is: EDUC

## MOODLE site

Our MOODLE site is located at: <https://moodle.carleton.edu/course/view.php?id=12246>  
We will use the site to post course material, including reading lists, course agendas, and handouts, to exchange written assignments, to share work, and to conserve as much paper as possible. You are responsible for checking our MOODLE site.

<b>Course Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🍏 Participation in class discussion, evidence of attentive reading through assigned and regular reading questions and overall participation <span style="float: right;">10%</span></li> <li>🍏 Three (3) three- to four-page thought papers which link our readings to a specific topic <span style="float: right;">15% each</span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper 1 - general reflections on adolescence and schooling</li> <li>Paper 2 - a personal experience paper, reflecting on your own adolescence</li> <li>Paper 3 - a cultural analysis of an artifact of popular culture</li> </ul> </li> <li>(In fairness to all, late papers will be penalized)</li> <li>🍏 Class visits to two high schools and a comparative ethnographic report (5-6 pages) <span style="float: right;">15%</span></li> <li>🍏 A group report on an alternative high school –a list of possible sites will be provided. Your report can take the form of an I-movie, a Powerpoint or a Keynote presentation. <span style="float: right;">15%</span></li> <li>🍏 Final paper: the final paper will provide an opportunity for a creative synthesis of class material <span style="float: right;">15%</span></li> </ul>
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Attendance policy

\* Attendance at every class is an expectation. We cannot become a community of learners without regular attendance from everyone. After two absences from class, each subsequent absence will result in the lowering of your course grade by a third, e.g. from a B to a B-. If you miss more than 4 meetings, (20% of the class sessions), you will not be able to pass the class.

**Dates to Remember**

Fri, Apr 16	Thought Paper 1 due
Fri, Apr 30	Thought Paper 2 due
**May 4 or May 5	School field trip (to be finalized)
**May 6	Central High School Touring Theatre -3PM
Mon, May 10	Ethnographic Partner Paper due
Fri, May 21	Thought Paper 3 due
Tue, June 1	Group Ethnography Report due
Mon, June 7, 3:30-6 pm	Final paper due (details given during last class; pizza provided)

## OVERVIEW OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

### **Thought Paper 1**

The purpose of the thought papers is to provide you with an opportunity to further explore one of the many questions that are raised in the course by the readings, lectures, and whole class or small group discussions. Select a topic or question that interests you and pursue it in approximately three pages of crisp, clearly written and well-organized prose. Please make certain to quote from or allude to at least one of the readings; however, do not rely on additional secondary sources. I'm interested in your thoughts and ideas, not someone else's. The paper should be written as an essay. While substance is of primary consideration, remember that style and form are critical aspects of a good paper.

Select a topic that piques your intellectual appetite, one that encourages you to sustain a lively and interesting argument. This first paper should focus on general reflections on adolescence and schooling. Here are some suggested topics, but the possibilities are endless:

- Has your adolescence ended? What is your evidence?
- Speculate on some of the factors of post-industrial society that "create" adolescence. (See Hines.)
- If adolescence was invented, should we "un-invent" it?
- Ruminates over rites of passage or the lack of them in our culture.
- What is youth culture? How much of youth culture is determined by or situated in schools?
- Consider your own high school experience in light of Hines Chapter 8 and our discussions thus far. Was your high school experience one that facilitated or impeded your own psychosocial development?
- What can we learn from the history of adolescence that can inform our understanding of it today?
- Consider Chapter 5 of Hines, "Declarations of Independence." In what ways do adolescents today declare their independence? In what ways did (or do) you?

**Your paper is due by 5:00 PM on Friday, Apr 16.**

### **Thought Paper 2**

This paper is identical in purpose and format to the first thought paper. This time, however, I want you to focus on a personal experience or adolescent memory. Use a personal narrative to illustrate a general understanding about youth, youth culture, adolescence or high school.

Think about the kinds of issues that we've been discussing in class, especially issues that have arisen out of our last two topics— personal identity, friendship, family relationships, cliques, intergroup relationships, race and identity, race and friendship, appearance and body image issues, sexual identity, cultural dissonance between school and family, immigration, assimilation, etc, etc, etc.

It is up to you to decide how "personal" you would like your essay to be. This is an opportunity to reflect on an important personal experience or issue that is related to adolescence and/or high school. On the other hand, I do respect your right to privacy and it is certainly possible to write an effective essay that does not reveal anything about yourself that you don't want to. **Your paper is due by 5 pm on Friday, April 30.**

### **Thought Paper 3**

For your third and final thought paper, you should create a cultural critique of some aspect of the media that either represents or claims to be a part of youth culture. This requires description, synthesis and analysis. Do not merely describe the cultural artifact; explain its significance in terms of youth and youth culture. Discuss how it either perpetuates, extends, creates, or troubles some aspect of American adolescence.

Choose one from the following categories:

**film, television shows, music videos, music, magazines, print ads, television or radio commercials, web sites, video games, personal web pages, 'zines**

Frame your analysis with the theoretical and conceptual knowledge about adolescence that you have gained from this course. Again, use direct quotations from our reading somewhere in your essay.

This paper should be a bit longer than the first two, perhaps 3-4 pages. **Your paper is due on Friday, May 21.**

### **Ethnographic Partner Paper: A Tale of Two Schools**

During the weeks of May 1-12, you will visit two schools, one urban and one suburban. At the time of your visit you will be given field report note sheets that will guide you through a variety of ethnographic exercises. The purpose of this paper is to synthesize your observations and our readings into a comparative essay. While you may organize your paper any way you'd like please include the following elements:

- Your general impressions of each school
- Direct quotations from someone you met in each school
- Four points of direct comparison between the schools
- A speculation on how adolescence might play out differently in each high school
- A brief discussion of how your own reactions to each high school might have affected the subjectivity of your report
- A conclusion that synthesizes your findings and raises questions about adolescence and schooling

This paper will probably be between 5-6 pages in length. It is due by **5:00 PM on Friday, May 10**. If you like you may write this as a partner paper with one other person.

### **Group visit and report on an alternative or high school**

In groups of 4-5, you will visit an alternative or charter high school from a list provided. In addition to providing a detailed portrait of the high school, you will also compare this school site to the two that we have already visited. Additional guidance will be provided on a separate sheet.

## Teenage Wasteland – Spring 2010

(Topics and primary texts listed below; additional readings will be distributed in class or placed on e-reserve. Specific readings will be assigned by topic and added to the Moodle site to ensure maximum flexibility.)

### **Topic 1: Course introduction, definitional problems**

Tue, Mar 30  
Thu, Apr 1

*Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, Intro, Chapters 1, 2,  
*Adolescent Behavior*, selected chapter  
Video: *The Class of 2000*, *American High*, *High School*

### **Topic 2 Socio-historical perspectives on youth and adolescence from pre-industrial Europe to post-industrial America The invention of the adolescent**

Tue, Apr 6  
Thu, Apr 8  
Tue, Apr 13  
Thu, Apr 15  
Fri, Apr 16 **Thought Paper 1 Due**

*Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, Chapters 3-8  
*Adolescent Behavior*, selected chapters  
Video: *Blackboard Jungle*

### **Topic 3 The Psychosocial contexts of adolescence—gender, ethnicity, peer groups and development**

Tue, Apr 20  
Thu, Apr 22  
Tue, Apr 27  
Thu, Apr 29 Guests: Students from Roosevelt High School, Minneapolis  
Fri, April 30 **Thought Paper 2 due**

*Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*  
*Adolescents at School*  
*Schoolgirls*

Possible videos: *America's Sorting Machine: The College Track*, *Off Track*, *The Education of Shelby Knox*, *People like Us*, *Country Boys*, *Prom Night in Mississippi*, *Crips and Bloods*

### **Topic 4 The ethnography of youth**

Research methodology; interdisciplinary approaches to adolescence, creating portraits of adolescence, adolescent voices

\*\*Tue, May 4 or Wednesday, May 5 Class field trip to two high schools—8 to 1 p.m.  
\*\*Thu, May 6 Central High School Touring Theatre 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. (no morning class)  
Mon, May 10 **Ethnographic Partner Paper due**

*Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, Chapters 9-13  
*Adolescents At School*  
Videos: *School Colors*, *In the Mix: Cliques*

\*\*These events will be scheduled, with the consensus of the class to respect everyone's schedule as much as possible

**Topic 5**

**Teachers in the Wasteland: Teaching Adolescents**

Tue, May 11 Guest through Skype: Greg Michie (tentative)\*

Thu, May 13 Guests: panel of middle and high school teachers\*

*Holler if You Hear Me, all*

**Topic 6**

**Reflections of Adolescence in Popular Culture, or the Mythmaking of Youth Culture**

Tue, May 18

Wed, May 19 Film festival (self-scheduled)

Thu, May 20

Fri, May 21 **Thought Paper 3 due**

*Freaks, Geeks, Cool Kids*

Video: *The Merchants of Cool, Hoop Dreams, Assorted commercial features*

**Topic 7**

**Rethinking Adolescence, Rethinking Schools**

Tue, May 25 Guest: Micheal Thompson, Director of Secondary Curriculum St. Paul Public Schools\*

Thu, May 27

Tue, Jun 1 **Group Ethnography Presentations due**

*Horace's Hope*, all

*Rise and Fall*, Chapter 15

Final: Monday, June 7, 3:30 to 6 p.m.

\* Guest visits are subject to change based on availability.