

# American Nightlife

## AMST 454: Spring 2021

Instructor: Professor Eric Gonzaba ▪  
egonzaba@fullerton.edu

### General Course Information

Class Time: Wednesday, 2:30 – 3:45 PM  
Classroom: Zoom (pw: day)  
Office Hours: Wednesday, 10:00 AM - 12:00  
PM and by appointment  
(Appointments recommended)

### Required Texts

No books are required for this semester of the course. All readings are available online for free.

### Catalog Description

An examination of the development of nightlife in American society and culture. Topics include: the meaning of night, evening labor, Prohibition, gender roles, sexuality, race, material culture, ballroom culture, music, cinema, and urban cultures.

### Course Description

This course looks closely at the development of American nightlife from the nineteenth century to the present. The class begins with the introduction of the gas lamp and its role in helping transform sleepy American urban centers into active nocturnal cities. Students will explore how illumination of the nighttime hours fundamentally changed the nature of work, crime, and leisure. The course then explores works focused on the late to post Victorian period and examines how cabarets, dance halls, movie theaters, and brothels upended traditional boundaries of race, sex, and class. Students will explore nightlife “subcultures,” as well, particularly African American, Latinx, and queer commercial pleasure spaces. Students will come to understand the various roles of these sites as both places of escape and relaxation as well as sites of political organizing and resistance into the twenty-first century.

### Course Objectives and Student Learning Goals

In this course you will ...

- Analyze and evaluate how nightlife shaped, shapes, and is shaped by larger cultural institutions, ideals, and developments while learning how to critically analyze and interpret a spectrum of artifacts.
- Develop an understanding of the significance of social class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, age, nationality, and sexuality as analytical frameworks in interpreting nightlife specifically and American culture more broadly
- Acquire research, writing, and expressive skills needed to draw connections among complex materials and communicate an understanding of the underlying meanings.

### Course Prerequisites

Completion of Completion of G.E. Category D.2 **OR** graduate standing.



## Assignments

**Participation.** Students are expected to log on to every scheduled class session. You are encouraged to participate via your webcam (though this is not required). If you cannot or do not wish to turn on your webcam, please participate using your microphone or the chat feature. During most class sessions, students will be divided into breakout rooms, which will allow students to more fully engage with the material in a smaller, more intimate setting. Students are allowed two (two) unexcused absence this semester. Further absences will result in reduction in one's participation grade. A class bio is also due by Week 2, which will count toward your participation grade.

**Film Analysis.** Students will complete a 3-5 page film analysis of a movie that deals with themes of nightlife in America. A list of pre-approved films is available on Canvas. Students may choose a film not listed but must get pre-approval from Professor Gonzaba at least one week prior to the due date. More information regarding this assignment can be found on Canvas.

### **Flash Press Assignment.**

Following the week four introduction to the American Underworld database by Megan Graewingholt, students will complete a 3-4 page analysis on one to three (1-3) articles found in a Flash Press newspaper. More information regarding this assignment can be found on Canvas.

### **Final Project.**

Following your two short writing assignments early in the semester, student work in this course will culminate in a final project due at the very end of the semester. This project can take almost any form (a traditional research essay, a short podcast or documentary, a lesson plan, a collection of poetry etc.). The final project should somehow be centered on the themes of night and nightlife explored in this course. Creativity is highly encouraged. Students are encouraged to explore topics that relate to their own personal or professional interest, or that complement their existing skills via their own majors. More information regarding this assignment can be found on Canvas.

### **Final Project Proposal.**

Before class on March 24, students will submit a short 1-2 page proposal outlining their plans for the final project. The proposal should outline which topics will be covered in the final project, what the end result of the project will look like (a traditional research paper? Podcast? A screenplay? etc.), and a short-annotated bibliography of at least two specific sources that you'll consult. For this bibliography, list the specific sources you'll consult and briefly describe how they'll aid in your project in 4-5 sentences each. Bring this proposal to our March 24 class session, where you'll present your ideas to a small section of the class and gather feedback from your classmates. Professor Gonzaba will also provide written feedback based on the proposal.

### **Final Project Update.**

Before midnight on April 24, students should submit a short update on their final project progress. Either in a paragraph of at least 300 words or in a video update, describe the work you've accomplished to date. Feel free to submit images and/or video of partial progress. While it is not expected that the final project should be completed by April 24, students should have significant progress beyond the planning stages by the update submission date.

**Undergraduate grades** will be based on the following:

Participation	30%
Film Analysis	15%
Flash Press Assignment	15%
Final Project Proposal	10%
Final Project Update	5%
Final Project	25%

**Graduate student grades** will be based on the following:

Participation	20%
Film Analysis	15%
Flash Press Assignment	15%
Final Project Proposal	10%
Final Project Update	5%
Final Project	20%
Book Review	15%

## Graduate Students

The requirements for undergraduate and graduate students differ, and students are evaluated separately according to their undergraduate or graduate status. Graduate student work is expected to be of a higher quality and developed scope than that of undergraduates. Graduate students will also write a 5-page book review on a book that deals with nightlife themes. A list of pre-approved books is available on Canvas. Graduate students may choose a book outside the pre-approved list. However, any book not listed must be approved by the professor at least two weeks before the due date. The grad-student book review is worth 15%. The book review is due the end of Week 15.

## Grading Policies and Extra Credit

In this course the plus/minus system will be used. Grades will be calculated using a standard scale. An A+ is 98-100%, A is 93-97, A- is 90-92, B+ is 88-89, B is 83-87, B- is 80-82, C+ is 78-79, C is 73-77, C- is 70-72, D+ is 68-69, D is 63-67, D- is 60-62, and F is anything 59% or below. Late assignments may be penalized 1.5% for every unexcused day overdue. No assignments can be turned in following 14 days without permission. Extensions must be requested in advance of the assignment deadline. There are currently no extra credit assignments for this course; if I elect to add extra-credit assignments during the semester, they will be equally available to all students.

## Schedule

### Unit I: The Early Night

January 27, 2021

#### Week 1: Changing Our Timetable (Course Introduction)

Reading due:

- Murray Melbin, "The Colonization of Night" in *Night as Frontier: Colonizing the World After Dark*

February 3, 2021

#### Week 2: The Colonial Tavern

Reading due:

- Bruce C. Daniels, "Drinking and Socializing: Alcohol, Taverns, and Alehouse Culture" in *Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England*
- Vaughn Scribner, "Disorderly Houses': Rakish Revelries, Unlicensed Taverns, and Uncivil Contradictions" in *Inn Civility: Urban Taverns and Early American Civil Society*

Assignment due:

- Class bio via Canvas Discussions

February 10, 2021

#### Week 3: The Illuminated City

Reading due:

- Peter C. Baldwin, “Lighting the Heart of Darkness” in *In the Watches of the Night: Life in the Nocturnal City, 1820-1930*

Assignment due:

- Film Analysis (via Canvas Turnitin by 11:55 P.M.)

## Unit II: The Victorian Night

February 17, 2021

### Week 4: Reporting the Underworld

Guest lecturer:

- Megan Graewingholt, CSUF Libraries – “Using the American Underworld: Flash Press Collection Database”
  - Fun fact: Professor Graewingholt is a CSUF Alum

Reading due:

- Patricia Cline Cohen, Timothy J. Gilfoyle, & Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, “Beginnings: Rivalry and Satire” in *The Flash Press: Sporting Male Weeklies in 1840s New York*
- Review at least one chapter in Part II of the above text (copy of the book available online via the library website)

February 24, 2021

### Week 5: The Dance Hall

Reading due:

- Kathy Peiss, “Dance Madness” In *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*

Assignment due:

- Flash Press Assignment (via Canvas Turnitin by 11:55 P.M.)

March 3, 2021

### Week 6: The Red-Light District

Reading due:

- Cynthia M. Blair, “Leisure Culture and the Commercialization of Black Women’s Sex Work, 1900–1920” in *I’ve Got to Make My Livin’: Black Women’s Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago*
- Chad Heap, “Adventures in the Slums and Red-Light Districts” in *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940*

## Unit III: The Twentieth Century Night

March 10, 2021

### Week 7: Take Me Out to the Night Game

Reading due:

- G. Edward White, “The Coming of Night Baseball” in *Creating the National Pastime: Baseball Transforms Itself, 1903-1953*

March 17, 2021

### Week 8: The Party’s Over: Prohibition & Repeal

Reading due:

- Burton W. Peretti, “The 1920s New York Nightclub: A Modern Institution,” In *Nightclub City: Politics and Amusement in Manhattan*
- Lewis A. Erenberg, “From New York to Middletown: Repeal and the Legitimization of Nightlife in the Great Depression,” *American Quarterly*

March 24, 2021

**Week 9: Final Project Workshopping**

Reading due:

- Final Project Proposal (via Canvas Turnitin by 2:00 P.M.)



March 31, 2021

**Week 10: Spring Break – NO CLASS**

April 7, 2021

**Week 11: Our Mojo: Los Angeles Nightlife**

Reading due:

- Anthony Macías, “Bringing Music to the People: Race, Urban Culture, and Municipal Politics in Postwar Los Angeles,” *American Quarterly*, September 2004

April 14, 2021

**Week 12: Who Owns the Night?: Gentrification via Nightlife**

Reading due:

- Richard E. Ocejo, “Weaving a Nostalgia Narrative” in *Upscaling Downtown: From Bowery Saloons to Cocktail Bars in New York City*

## Unit IV: The Queer Night

April 21, 2021

**Week 13: Night Fever: Disco in America**

Reading due:

- Alice Echols, “More, More, More: One and Oneness in Gay Disco” & “The Homo Superiors: Disco and the Rise of Gay Macho” in *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture*

Assignment due:

- Final Project Update (via Canvas Turnitin by 11:55 P.M.)

April 28, 2021

**Week 14: Dollar Parties & the Club House: Activist Spaces**

Reading due:

- Anne Enke, “‘Someone or Something Made That a Women’s Bar’ Claiming the Nighttime Market Place” in *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism*
- Darius Bost, “At the Club: Locating Early Black Gay AIDS Activism in Washington, DC,” *Occasion*

May 5, 2021

**Week 15: Realness & Family: Ballroom Culture**

Reading due:

- Watch *Paris is Burning* (1990)
- Jesse Green, “Paris Has Burned,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1993
- Lucas Hilderbrand, “Love Hangover (Debates)” in *Paris Is Burning: A Queer Film Classic*

May 12, 2021

**Week 16: Exhibiting Nightlife**

Guest lecturer:

- Joseph Daniel Valencia, Curator – “Exhibiting Queer Nightlife: Notes on Curatorial Activism and Historical Erasure”
  - Fun fact: Joseph Daniel Valencia is a CSUF Alum

Reading due:

- “Liberate the Bar! Queer Nightlife, Activism, and Spacemaking,” ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, on view June 26, 2019-October 20, 2019, available online: <https://one.usc.edu/exhibition/liberate-bar-queer-nightlife-activism-and-spacemaking>
- Maura Reilly, “What is Curatorial Activism?” ARTnews, November 7, 2017, available online: <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/what-is-curatorial-activism-9271>

**Final Projects Due: Wednesday, May 19, 2021  
(via Canvas Turnitin by 11:55 P.M.)**