



# American Popular Culture: Historical and Pedagogical Perspectives

*Seymour Leventman*

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American pop culture is no longer merely popular. It has penetrated to such deep-lying cultural and social structures that persons dream and fantasize in pop cultural terms. It is the new reality which increasingly measures all else in the social world. The present volume consists of original essays written expressly for the 2005 Conference of the American Pop Culture Association. They fall under three headings of the Association's lead: History of Pop Culture contains papers of a distinct historical dimension pointing out that although pop culture may become an autonomous force, it exists in a context of space and time. The Teaching of Pop Culture is critical because American pop culture has become so ubiquitous, classroom educators use it to present other unrelated materials, e.g., from history, economics, politics and sociology. Not even high culture such as Classic Literature is immune to pop culture treatment. Utilizing classic literature performs a double function of popularizing high culture while also paying homage to it. The authors of these papers are research scholars and academic teachers who have spent their careers communicating to students with great skill and dedication, the great ideas and concepts of popular as well as unpopular culture. The book contains important insights into that complex, maddening phenomenon, American popular culture. Scholars, educators and general non-fiction readers will find much enlightening material. Most people associate pop culture with movies, music and TV shows. Yet this volume suggests that in modern society pop culture ultimately absorbs almost every facet of the collective life as to become generic and ever-present. Literature, for example, whether American, Japanese or Italian may lose their cultural distinctiveness and writers may forget their bibliographic ties. A literary agent, defending her client on charges of alleged plagiarism, commented, 'As a former teenager myself, I recall that spongelike ability to take popular culture and incorporate it into your own lexicon.' As this volume implies, pop culture has both uplifting and downgrading possibilities. 'Leventman has assembled a varied and fascinating collection of original and imaginative investigations into the pop culture every American knows and loves (or hates). It's exciting reading and covers all the bases.' Howard Becker, Author of *Art Worlds* and *Outsiders*

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