In this course we will learn about the history of the automotive industry and U.S. public policy toward the industry, examine some of the many environmental issues surrounding cars, and study car design and customizing as vernacular art traditions.

Car Cultures thus takes a multi-disciplinary approach to one of the most pressing social issues of our time: how can the world’s people meet their transportation needs without depleting energy supplies, polluting the air and water, or ending up hopelessly jammed in traffic? These questions have no easy answers, not least because Americans’ habits and desires, and the infrastructure of our society, have made us resistant to change, and are spreading to other parts of the world. Like many social issues in the U.S. automobiles arouse zealous critics and stubborn defenders. Our course cannot promise breakthrough solutions, but it begins from the premise that motorists’ creativity and love of their cars can be part of a solution.

The major assignment for the course will be an interdisciplinary term project involving folklore or ethnographic fieldwork. Each student, or team of students, will select and research some aspect of car enthusiasm or automotive behavior, whether monster trucks or tuners or rat rods, muscle cars or microbuses, advertisements or repairmen, parking lots or critical masses of cyclists. There is so much about our automotive behavior that is curious, mysterious, or revealing.

Requirements:
Students are required to read all assignments (and view two films), to participate in daily class discussions, and to complete the following assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>2 short papers of 4 pages each, due Oct. 12 and Nov. 7</td>
<td>20 points each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework assignments</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal for Final project, due Oct. 19</td>
<td>5 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class presentation of final project</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project due Dec. 9</td>
<td>30 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam Dec. 7</td>
<td>5 points</td>
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The final project need not take the form of a written paper, it may be a photo essay, a website, or a series of audio or video interviews. Still, the project should involve both textual research and fieldwork in the community. We will brainstorm in class to help you develop topics, and, based on the topics that interest us most, may select additional readings for our meetings during the final week when students will present their work. I will schedule meetings with each of you during the first part of the course to discuss your ideas for a research and fieldwork project in automotive behavior, automotive sub-cultures, or the auto industry. Be creative and make a case for your project. The presentation of the project during the final two weeks of class will be 15-25 minutes in length, depending upon whether you are collaborating with a classmate.

Books available at the University Bookstore:
Tom McCarthy, *Auto Mania: Cars, Consumers and the Environment* (Yale UP, 2009)
Daniel Miller, ed. *Car Cultures* (Berg, 2001)
Daniel Sperling and Deborah Gordon: *Two Billion Cars: Driving Toward Sustainability* (Oxford UP, 2009)
Andy Singer, *Car Toons* (Car Busters Press, Prague, 2001)
Other Readings:
Articles and book chapters are posted on the blackboard coursesite, and listed in the schedule below. In addition, I recommend that each student follow an auto-related blog or enthusiast site. I recommend as a starter curbsideclassics.com, based in Eugene, or one of the most-read automotive news blogs, thetruthaboutcars.com. You may of course pick your own if you wish.

Film Screenings:
The Fast and the Furious Nov. 10 at 7 pm in Proctor 42, Knight Library
Who Killed the Electric Car? Nov. 17 at 7 pm in Proctor 42, Knight Library

Schedule of Assignments and Class Meetings:

Part One: the first two weeks of the course will introduce the concepts of “automobility,” of “the humanity of the car,” and suggest how to use social theory as well as historical, empirical and folkloristic approaches to develop a research project for the course.

Week One: Introduction

9/26 Discussion: What does my car say about me? What do I know about other people based upon the cars they drive? As we get to know one another, we will also learn which students are car lovers, which car loathers, and discuss the degree to which it is possible for those of us who loath cars to live without them, and if it is possible for any of us to imagine how to redesign our society and landscape so that we could live without cars. Ladd’s use of “autophobia” describes this paradox. Brian Ladd, Autophobia: Love and Hate in the Automotive Age Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008; 1-12

9/28 “The car and its discontents” or “What is the future of the automobile?”
Two Billion Cars, 1-8
Daniel Miller, “Driven Societies,” introduction to Car Cultures, read 1-17
Andy Singer, Cartoons, text chapters titled InCARcerated 19-21, CARmegeddon 44-47, and CARpe Diem, 69-72.
Homework for monday: observation of some aspect of automotive behavior having to do with traffic, parking, car enthusiasms, etc. This could be as simple as going to a parking lot and counting the number of domestic and foreign cars, of passenger cars and SUVs. We will brainstorm for ideas.


10/3 Automobility and the ‘post-car’ era: The Urry article uses important concepts like “lock-in” “path-dependence” “tipping-point” “taskscape” and we will add “externalities” from Miller. Urry in this article doesn’t use the phrase “civil society of automobility” but that is also important. Combining this with the chapter from Two Billion Cars let’s consider these questions: What is more effective at solving the car crisis? incremental changes to incentives and policy such as CAFE standards, higher fuel taxes, and bicycle commuting? or transformative technological solutions such as hydrogen fuel cells?
Two Billion Cars chapter 2 “Beyond the Gas Guzzler Monoculture,” 13-45

10/5 Driving around the World: or “CARbolization” as Singer might put it.
The forces that reshaped the U.S. around the automobile in the 20th century; urbanization, hypermobility, expressways, traffic, pollution, and sprawl, are quickly spreading to other parts of the world in the 21st century, particularly to cities in China and India, as well as Lagos, Moscow etc. It is happening at a much faster pace than it did in the U.S., and these places have fewer resources to deal with the problems. We include articles about Africa and Australia to show how peoples in remote and undeveloped regions have incorporate cars into their lives.

Daniel Miller, “Driven Societies,” introduction to Car Cultures, 17-33
Gertrude Stotz, “The Colonizing Vehicle” in Car Cultures, 223-244; or Diana Young, “The Life and Death of Cars: Private Vehicles on the Pitjantatjara Lands, South Australia” in Car Cultures, 35-57
Jojada Verrips and Birgit Meyer, “Kwaku’s Car: The Struggles and Stories of a Ghanaian Long-Distance Taxi-Driver” in Car Cultures, 153-184

10/10 Automobile in China: China has recently surpassed the U.S. as the biggest car market in the world. Is China trying to emulate U.S. automobile, or is the phenomenon transnational? Can Chinese government policy learn from U.S. mistakes and successfully address the looming problems of pollution and congestion, or does the government see automobility as an essential part of modern consumer affluence? How does the concept of global commons and carbon economy change this? I’ve moved Two Billion Cars chapter 4 into this spot so that we can consider the problem of Chinese emissions with a well-informed survey of CO2 and fuels (biodiesel, ethanol, batteries).

Ted Conover, The Routes of Man from the chapter “Capitalist Roaders” pp223-235
Two Billion Cars chap. 4, “In Search of Low-Carbon Fuels” and chapter 8, “Stimulating Chinese Innovation” pp205-234

10/12 The Automobile as Art and as Commodity: Key terms for today will be “the humanity of the car,” “mass vs. popular culture,” “art object vs. industrial commodity.” I want to try to look past the technological determinism that dominates Two Billion Cars, and is very strong in Urry as well. Let’s stop thinking strictly in terms of markets, incentives, subsidies, and CO2 to see the relationships, desires, and myths that make cars more than just appliances.


10/12 first paper due: “Is the Automobile a work of art or an industrial commodity?” or another topic TBA on “CARbolization.”

Part Two: The middle of the course is devoted to a history of the U.S. automobile industry and automobile design. 2008-09 was the most tumultuous year ever for the global car industry; the bankruptcy of Chrysler and General Motors was catastrophic for hundreds of thousands of U.S. workers and investors and a major challenge for the Obama administration’s economic policies. Yet these events can be seen as an echo of those fifty years earlier in 1957-59, when sales of the Big Three automakers dropped 46%, consumer tastes turned against their flamboyant designs, and imports such as Volkswagen gained a share in the U.S. market, which has grown steadily ever since. The Insolent Chariots was a best-selling book of satire and cultural criticism, illustrated with marvellous cartoons by Robert Osborn, which lampooned the excesses of Detroit’s tailfin era, as well as the shady practices of auto dealers. It is still timely today.

10/17 The “Horseless Carriage” era & the Model T
Auto Mania, chapters 1-2 and part of 3 (pp. 1-45; stop when topic shifts to Tetra Ethyl Lead in gasoline)
Julian Pettner and Nigel Turner, *Automania* (one word) chapter 2 “The Acceptance of the Car”
E. B. White’s essay on the Model T from the *New Yorker* at [http://www.wesjones.com/white1.htm](http://www.wesjones.com/white1.htm)
model T videos on YouTube

10/19 The “classic” Era of the 1920s and 30s: class, craft, Fordism and Sloanism
Emma Rothschild, *Paradise Lost*, chapter on “Fordism vs. Sloanism” 26-53
*Auto Mania* pp87-91 and 99-109

prospectus for final project due

10/24 1950s styling: “The tale of the tailfin, and the edda of the Edsel”
*Making and Selling Cars* chapter 7 “From a Class-based Market…”183-210
*Auto Mania*, pp99-109
Thomas Hine, *Populuxe*, chapter 5, “The New Shape of Motion”
Edsel TV ads on YouTube

10/26 Rise and Fall of the Detroit Three
*Auto Mania*, chapter 7, “Disenchanted with Detroit”
Keats, *The Insolent Chariots* chap. 3 “The Ad and the Id” and chap. 4, “Sounds like ‘Dead Cell”

10/31 Pollution, Safety, and Regulation
Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed* ch. 1 “The Sporty Corvair, the ‘One-Car Accident’”
*Auto Mania*, ch. 6, pp. 110-129 and chap. 8 164-175
*Two Billion Cars*, chap. 3 “Toward a Greener Detroit” 47-77
documentary from BBC entitled “Carnage” if only I can find it on YouTube

11/2 Oil Shocks, CAFE standards, and Alternative Fuels
*Two Billion Cars* chapter 5 “Aligning Big Oil with the Public Interest” 113-150
*Auto Mania*, chapter 11, “Small was Beautiful” 207-230

11/7 The Sport Utility Vehicle
*Auto Mania*, chapter 12, “The Riddle of the Sport Utility Vehicle” 231-252
Excerpts from Keith Bradsher, *High and Mighty.*

11/7 second paper due: environmental issues and automobility

**Part Three:** For the final four weeks we will study an array of automotive sub-cultures in Oregon and the U.S., or abroad. I’ve prepared reading assignments on some styles of car collecting and rodding, but the schedule of topics and reading assignments for the last two weeks will be determined by the students’ choice of research topics. Each student (or teams of two or three who may be collaborating on a project) will do a brief presentation, and we will select class readings that further educate us on that particular topic.

11/9 Hot Rods and Kustom Kulture
DeWitt, *Cool Cars, High Art* chapter 1 “The Invention of Kustom Kulture”
Tom Wolfe, “The Kandy Kolored, Tangerine-flaked Streamline Baby” from book of same title

11/10 *The Fast and the Furious*: screening at 7 pm

11/14 Car enthusiasms and United States class and ethnicity; The Fast and the Furious
Visit from Prof. Loren Kajikawa, UO School of Music Hip-hop music and lowrider car culture
Paul Gilroy “Driving While Black” in Car Cultures, 80-104
DeWitt Cool Cars, High Art, chapter 4, “The Golden Age of Customs”

11/16 Lowriders
Cool Cars, High Art chapter 3, “Blue Collar Modernism”

11/17 Who Killed the Electric Car? screening at 7 pm

11/21 discussion of “Who Killed the Electric Car”
Two Billion Cars chap. 6 “The motivated Consumer” pp. 150-178 and chapter 9 “Driving Toward Sustainability” 235-260
Visit from David Hazen, designer/builder of the XP-Humm-E electric neighborhood vehicle

11/23 Student Presentations

11/28 Student Presentations

11/30 Student Presentations

12/7 at 3:15 pm Final Exam period, Student Presentations

12/9 by 5:00 pm Final Projects due