

College class is SOOOO COOL

Algonquin students studying pop culture

By LAURA CZEKAJ

Each thrust of Elvis' famous hips changed music history.

In 1969, a little party in a muddy farm field in Woodstock, N.Y., snowballed into a bucolic concert for 50,000 people and became the world's biggest rock 'n' roll show.

And for some, afros and disco are trends best forgotten.

It's these and other pop culture tidbits that make up the content for a, pardon the pun, very popular course offered at Algonquin College.

Trends in Popular Culture is part of the curriculum for broadcasting students, as well as a 15-week online course for students requiring a general education elective.

It's also a heck of a lot of fun.

"One of the things is that you are talking about life," says radio broadcasting professor Iain Barrie. "You are talking about life in the context of things that relate to young people. I mean it's the stuff their parents grew up with and as

such it influences their society today."

Even non-broadcasting students are clamouring to sign up for the course, which examines pop culture from the 1950s to the 1980s.

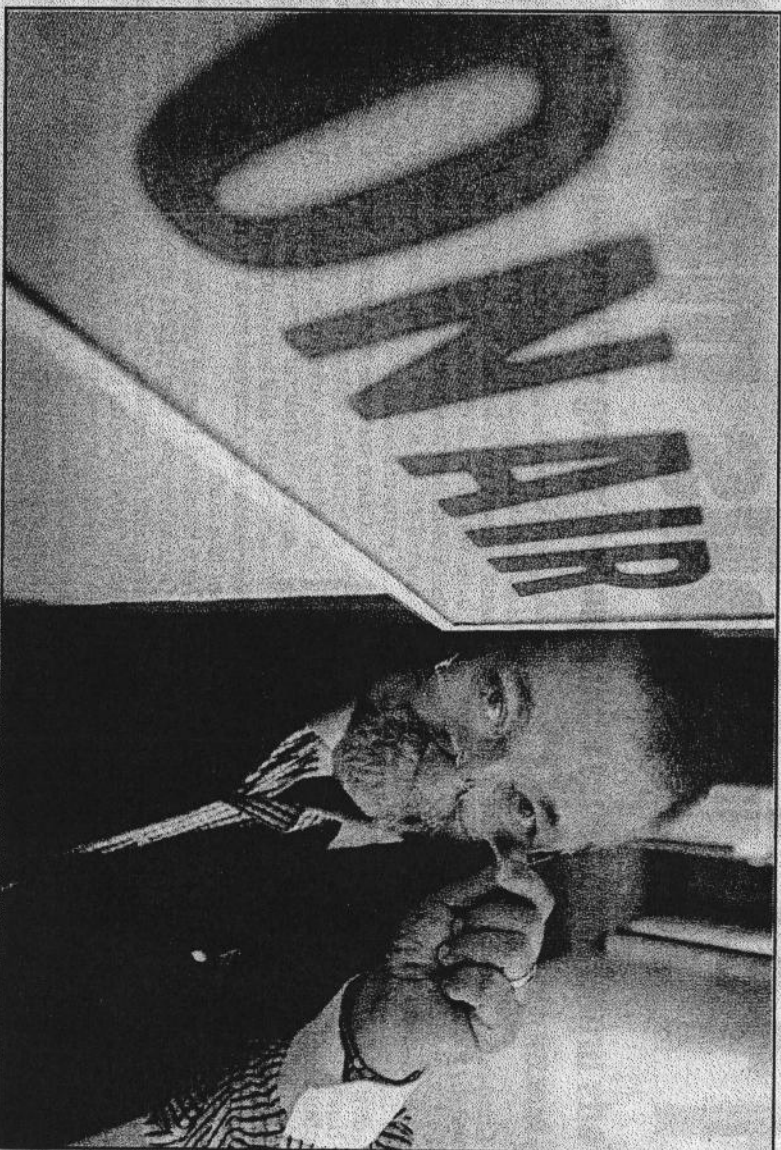
"That's a time frame that we're picking because that was the start of the baby boom generation," said Barrie.

"Everybody knows how basically studied the boomers are. How much they influence things."

Post-war trends

It was also in the wake of World War II that many societal transformations were taking place: The growing power of television, the development of the interstate highway in the U.S., which resulted in increased mobility for the general population, the emergence of fast-food giants such as McDonalds and the early history of rock and roll, to name just a few.

The course looks at how all those pivotal moments in history came together to create today's society.



Tony Caldwell SUN

ALGONQUIN radio broadcasting professor Iain Barrie says even non-broadcasting students are clamouring to sign up for a course looking at pop culture from the '50 to the '80s.

Students can explore topics of interest to them, such as music, fashion and trends. One project for broadcasting students is to write a paper on how popular culture impacts their life.

Barrie, 56, said while he tosses in the occasional reference to his

life, he keeps the reminiscing to a minimum.

"The interesting thing is that people, no matter what their age, all go through similar experiences at similar times in their life," he said.

"Just because I have been

through the passages doesn't give me any corner of knowledge. It just means that perhaps I can offer guidance about the importance of certain things from a perspective of having been there."