Surfing: A Cultural History
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Abstract
From wave-riding's early beginnings on the Hawaiian Islands, when Protestant missionaries discouraged the native population from playing in the ocean, to contemporary advertisements that feature retiring Baby Boomers on longboards, the popular image of the surfer is one of freedom. Like many activities at the beach, surfing is seen as a break from work, a respite from responsibility. There are practical reasons for this perception: waves don't follow an 8-to-5, Monday-to-Friday schedule. But there are also larger cultural issues at play, positioning the surfer as a rebel, an iconoclast. What are the cultural underpinnings for this outsider status? Who are the sport's icons? What can surf history teach us about larger issues in society? This two-day seminar will explore these questions and more, using clips from surf movies to help foster discussion.

Faculty Biography
Keith Plocek has written about surfing for a variety of general-interest publications, including LA Weekly, where his 2016 cover story on the 50th anniversary of The Endless Summer looked at the seminal film's impact on surf tourism and the consequences of that travel on coastal communities. He has also contributed to surf publications, and he scored the first aerial footage of Kelly Slater's artificial wave pool in Central California by attaching a GoPro camera to a kite and dragging it behind his Jeep. His professional history includes three years as a staff writer and two years as a web editor for alternative weeklies in Houston and Los Angeles; two years as social media editor for Penske Media Group; and two years as director of web content for Voice Media Group, a chain of 17 publications that included LA Weekly, OC Weekly and The Village Voice.