



**AM 360C:
American Cultural Periods:**

The 1960s

Course Description

An interdisciplinary analysis of the decade of the 1960s in America. Using a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, including fiction, film, music, biography, autobiography, poetry, sociology, drama, and social criticism, the course explores the distinctive culture of this decade. It focuses on the ways different groups of Americans experienced the period, studying conformity and consumerism, the beatniks, rock and roll, and the silent generation, as well as the roots of the protest movements and the counterculture of the 1960s.

The 1960s remains the most intriguing and controversial of American decades. In a short ten years, America experienced the dream of a New Frontier, the Cuban Missile Crisis, a presidential assassination, a devastating armed conflict in southeast Asia, a Civil Rights revolution, a transformation of sexual attitudes, a reconsideration of gender relations, a countercultural movement, an alteration in family structure, a man on the moon, and much more. Some of these events appealed to American sensibilities and gave renewed hope for national eminence and world dominance--hopes borne of the nationalism of the post-World War II period. Others created severe psychological doubts and awakened Americans to the need to redefine national and international priorities. The goals of this course are three: 1) to chronicle and examine what happened during those climactic years, 2) to document how such events affected subsequent American development from the 1970s to the present, and 3) to suggest from an historiographic perspective how *perceptions* and *historical memory* about the 1960s have changed over time in accordance with these subsequent developments.

Research on the 1960s is still "recent" in the historical sense of the word. Hence, this seminar is subject to all the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary historical endeavors. On the one hand, events are still fresh, participants are still alive, and documents are still available. On the other hand, critical distance has not been achieved, participants are too attached to events to be objective, and materials are too numerous and scattered to evaluate completely. In order to deal with these methodological conditions, students in American Studies 360C will be exposed to a wide variety of sources--magazines, television programs, oral histories, records, videotapes, newspapers, photographs, movies, government documents, etc.--and will be asked to consider these sources as both would-be participants and detached critics. The course is structured as a seminar to facilitate this process, and students will be responsible for determining the direction of much of their own learning. Each Monday, students will complete selected readings and a short written assignment that we will spend time discussing as a way of introducing the important thematic and methodological issues of the week. Each Wednesday, students will then take part in participatory activities related to the topic for the week, ranging from mock trials to conducting surveys to producing a live radio program.

Unlike courses covering other historical decades, we are fortunate enough to have a visual record of the events we will be describing, so American Studies 360C will also make heavy use of visual evidence, including videotapes and films, and we will be doing some taping of our own as well.

In addition to the short Monday assignments, students are required to write three papers: 1) a civil rights paper (5-7 pages); 2) a critique of Howard Brick's *Age of Contradiction* (5-7 pages); and 3) an oral history in conjunction with Tom Brokaw's *BOOM!*--questions, interview and analysis, (20 pages). There is also a required oral final exam. There will be no midterm exam. Class participation is a crucial component of the seminar and will constitute an important part of the final grade.

Grades will be apportioned as follows: Weekly assignments (15%); Civil Rights Paper (15%), *Age of Contradiction* Paper (15%); Oral History (20%); Final Exam (20%); Class Participation (15%).

Students should purchase the following books:

Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s*
Bloom/Wini Breines, ed., *"Takin' it to the Streets": A Sixties Reader*
Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait*
Wallace Terry, *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History*
James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *My Lai: A Brief History with Documents*
Hunter Davies, *The Beatles*
Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*
Tom Brokaw, *BOOM! Talking About the Sixties*

There is no assigned textbook for the course, but for those students who desire a more comprehensive background to events, a copy of Brinkley and Freidel, *America in the Twentieth Century* has been placed on reserve in Scribner Library.

Part I: A More Congenial Spot? (1950s-1963)

Week 1: The Age of Complacency

Monday

January 25 -- Introduction: The Enduring Decade

Wednesday

January 27 -- Seeds of the Sixties: 1950's America

Reading: Alexander Bloom, "'Past as Prologue': The 1950s as an Introduction to the 1960s," in *"Takin' it to the streets,"* pp. 1-11; Mark Lytle, "The Cultural Cold War," *America's Uncivil Wars*, 26-43.

Exercise: Constructing a Portrait of the 50s by Deconstructing "Father Knows Best"

Week 2: The New Era

Monday

February 1 -- Kennedy and the New Frontier

Reading: John F. Kennedy, Selections from *Profiles in Courage* and "Inaugural Address" (xerox)

Assignment #1: Before Martyrdom--Newspaper Reviews of the Kennedy Administration

Wednesday

February 3 -- Camelot Destroyed: The Assassination

Reading: Excerpts from *The Warren Commission Report* on the assassination of the President; Theodore H. White, "Camelot," (xeroxes)

Exercise: "Who Killed JFK?: The Case for Conspiracy": A Hearing

Week 3: The Early Civil Rights Movement

Monday

February 8 -- SCLC and the Emergence of Dr. King

Reading: Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait*, Introduction, Chaps. 1-5

Assignment #2: The "Real King?" FBI reports on the Life and Times of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Wednesday

February 10 -- Sit-ins, Freedom Rides, and the March on Washington

Reading: "Keep on Walkin', Keep on Talkin'": Civil Rights, 1965, Bloom, *Takin' it to the streets*, pp. 13-38.

Exercise: Freedom Summer Workshop on Strategies of Protest

*** * * Civil Rights paper due (Friday, February 12)**

Part II: The Unraveling of America (1963-1967)

Week 4: The Johnson Era

Monday

February 15 -- Conspicuous Consumption and the War on Poverty

Reading: Michael Harrington, *The Other America*; Lyndon Johnson, "The War on Poverty" (xeroxes).

Wednesday

February 17 -- Lyndon Johnson's Great Society

Reading: Lyndon Johnson, "The Great Society"; Fiscal Budget for the Year 1966 (xerox).

Exercise: Funding Social Programs--A Budget and Management Meeting of the Government Accounting Office, 1965-1966

Week 5: The Vietnam War

Monday

February 22-- Vietnam: Why We Were There

Reading: David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, Chapters 4, 13-15, 19-20, 25-27 (on reserve).

Assignment #3: Military Advisory Reports on Entry into War (1945-1963)

Wednesday

February 24 -- Armageddon: Johnson's Momentous Decision

Reading: "Hey, Hey, LBJ!," in Bloom, *"Takin' it to the streets"*, pp. 155-173;
Larry Berman, *Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam*, appendix (xerox).

Exercise: Role Play: Advising the President on the Escalation of the War, July 1965)

Week 6: The Vietnam War

Monday

March 1 -- A Foot Soldier's Vantage Point

Reading: Wallace Terry, *Bloods*, pp. 1-78, 186-200.

Assignment #4: Oral History: Designing the Oral Interview—Questions Due

Wednesday

March 3 -- My Lai: The Case of William Calley

Reading: Olson and Roberts, *My Lai: A Brief History with Documents*, Chapter 1 and selections from Chapters 2-8; Paul Meadlo, "My Lai," in Bloom, *"Takin' it to the streets"*, pp. 209-213.

Exercise: The People's Verdict: A Mock Trial of William Calley

Week 7: The War at Home

Monday

March 8 -- Student Unrest: Anti-War Protest

Reading: Tom Hayden, "The Port Huron Statement"; Casey Hayden, "Raising the Question of Who Decides," in Bloom, *"Takin' it to the streets,"* pp. 50-102.

Assignment #5: Documenting Unrest at Skidmore: *The Skidmore News*.

Wednesday

March 10 -- Blowin' in the Wind:

Reading: James Simon Kunen, *The Strawberry Statement: Notes of a College Revolutionary* (xerox); "The Anti-War Movement," in Bloom, *"Takin' it to the streets"*, pp. 174-203.

Exercise: Starting the Revolution: The Mark Rudd Strategy Session at Columbia

*** * * Review Essay: Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (due Friday, March 12)**

Part III: Sex, Drugs and Rock n' Roll (1967-69)

Week 8: Spring Break (March 13-21); conduct interviews

Week 9: The Gender and Sexual Revolutions

Monday

March 22 -- The Feminist Movement

Reading: "Liberal Feminism" in Bloom, *"Takin' it to the streets"*, pp. 38-48; 388-421.

Assignment #6: Surveying the Sixties: The Virginia Slims Women's Survey

Wednesday

March 24 -- The Sexual Sixties

Reading: *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book By and For Women*, excerpts; "Our Bodies, Our Sexuality," in Bloom, *"Takin' it to the streets"*, pp. 264-268; 422-463.

Exercise: Changing Sexual Mores: Compatibility Testing in the Sixties

Week 10: The Counterculture

Monday

March 29 -- Dropping Out: The Hippies and the Haight

Reading: "Hippies, Yippies and Communes" in Bloom, *Takin' it to the streets*, pp. 246-254; 268-286. "The Environmental Movement," pp. 520-529. Selections from Barry Miles, *Hippie*.

Assignment #7: Utopia U.S.A: The Commune Movement

Wednesday

March 31 -- The Psychedelic Vision: Drug Culture

Reading: Timothy Leary, Selections from *The Politics of Ecstasy* (xerox); Bloom, *Takin' it to the streets*, 254-264.

Exercise: Revisiting Leary's Laboratory on Psychedelic Perception

Week 11: The Sights and Sounds of the Countercultural Revolution

Monday

April 5 -- On the Bus with the Hippi Movement

Reading: Tom Wolfe: *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Chaps, 1-6, 13-16.

Assignment #8: Where Are They Now?: The Merry Pranksters at Mid-Life

Wednesday

April 7 -- The Rock n' Roll Revolution

Reading: "The Arts," *Takin' it to the streets*, pp. 229-246; Tom Wicker, "Great Songs of the Sixties," (xerox).

Exercise: Managing Motown: A Rock n' Roll Marketing Seminar

Week 12: "There's Something Happenin' Here"

Monday

April 12 -- The Beatles and the British Invasion

Reading: Hunter Davies, *The Beatles*, Chapters 22-30, pp. 179-284.

Assignment #9: Programming for Sixties Revival Radio Show

Wednesday

April 14 -- The Media is the Message: Music of the Late 1960s

Reading: Mikal Gilmore, "A Long, Unforgettable Season," *Rolling Stones*; "Woodstock and Altamont," in Bloom, *Takin' it to the streets*", pp. 508-520.

Exercise: Live Radio Program--WSPN: "The Sixties Revival Show"

***** Oral History Transcripts Due (Friday, April 15)**

Part IV: Toward the "Me Decade" (1969-1974)

Week 13: In Struggle: Challenging the Establishment

Monday

April 19 -- 1968: The Year of Reckoning

Reading: "The Whole World Is Watching," in Bloom, *Takin' it to the streets*", pp. 333-352; "The Chicago Democratic Convention," etc., 366-379; Lance Morrow, "1968" *Time*

Wednesday

April 21 -- Clenched Fists: Radical Politics and Power Movements

Reading: "Black Nationalism and Ethnic Consciousness," in Bloom, *"Takin' it to the streets"*, pp. 105-152; Gay Liberation, pp. 493-508; Radical Women 404-421; "The Weather Underground," 379-386.

Exercise: A Question of Tactics: Revolutionary Strategies and the Counter-Culture

Week 14: The "Center Held?"

Monday

April 26 – Cambodia, Kent State and Collapse

Reading: Nixon and Kissinger in Marcus & Bruner, *America Since 1945*, xerox; "The Conservative Impulse in a Radical Age, pp. 290-317; "Kent State, The President's Commission on Campus Unrest," in Bloom, *"Takin' it to the streets"*, pp. 476-493.

Assignment #10: "It Wasn't Me": The Blame Game and the Kent State Affair

Wednesday

April 28 -- Watergate and the Loss of Confidence

Reading: selections from Woodward and Bernstein, *The Final Days* and Richard Nixon, *RN* (xerox).

Exercise: Deep Throat: The Identity of an Informant

*** * * Final Oral History Paper Due (Friday, April 30)**

Part V: Remembering the Sixties: Memory and History (1974-Present)

Week 15: The Legacy of the 1960s

Monday

May 3 -- From Yippie to Yuppie: Remembering the Sixties—The Oral History Roundtable

Reading: Julius Lester, "The End of the Decade," pp. 529-533.

Wednesday

May 5 — Human Be-in at the Pfizers

Exercise: "Where Are They Now?": A Sixties Revival

*** * * Oral Final Exam**

To Be Scheduled