

American Studies 460  
CSU, Fullerton  
Spring, 2008  
T, 7:00-9:45

Jesse Battan  
Office: UH-420  
Tu,1-3; TH,1-3; and by appointment  
Phone: 278-3787 or 278-2441  
E-mail: jbattan@fullerton.edu

## **BOHEMIANS AND BEATS: CULTURAL RADICALISM IN AMERICA**

In this course, we will examine the development of a specific style of rebellion that, from the 17th century to the present, has struggled with a wide spectrum of power relationships and forms of domination. While cultural radicalism can be defined in a variety of ways, one of its central characteristics has been its emphasis on subjective or personal forms of liberation. The free unfolding of the "self"--defined as either soul, sentiment, passion or desire--has for centuries been the primary preoccupation of cultural radicals. In contrast to political radicals, who sought to regenerate society through the redistribution of wealth and political power, cultural radicals have instead relied on the transformation of consciousness as their precondition for the creation of the ideal society. Their battle has not been with a specific political or economic system, but with the fundamental moral values, forms of perception, and patterns of behavior fostered and promoted by modern civilization itself.

While we will explore the origins of modern cultural radicalism in the activities of the medieval Brethren of the Free Spirit, the Ranters in the 17th century, and the pre-Romantics of the 18th century, our primary focus will be on the development and expression of this form of radicalism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Beginning with the Transcendentalists, then shifting to the emergence of an urban, Bohemian subculture in the early 20th century, and concluding with an examination of the Beat movement in the 1950s and the Counter-culture of the 1960s, we will trace the chronology of cultural radicalism as well as explore the issues that the cultural radicals have addressed.

Moreover, in order to understand the relevance of this form of radicalism to the study of the cultural history of modern America, we will examine such topics as: the social and economic context of its various manifestations; the politics of the cultural radicals; the emergence of literary and artistic modernism; generational conflict and the development of a distinctive youth culture; the interaction between Bohemians and the bourgeoisie; similarities and differences between the efforts and experiences of cultural radicals in America and those of their counterparts in Western Europe; and the impact of cultural radicalism on American life and thought.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*  
Malcom Cowley, *Exile's Return*  
Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*  
Joyce Johnson, *Minor Characters*  
Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*

These texts can be purchased at the CSUF bookstore. In addition, all readings marked with an asterisk (\*) are on two-hour reserve at the Reserve Book Room on the first floor in the campus library (south).

### **EXAMS AND GRADES**

There will be two short essay assignments (5-6 pages) and an in-class final exam. The essay questions that you will be asked to write on will be derived entirely from the material explored in the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. Each of the essay assignments will count for 20% of the course grade, while the final will stand for 50%. The remaining 10% of your final grade will be based on class participation and attendance. The first assignment will be due on **February 19**. The second assignment will be due on **March 18**. The third assignment will be due on **April 15**. The final exam is scheduled for **May 13**. I will be using a plus/minus (+/-) grading system.

These exercises have two goals. First, they are designed to enhance your critical skills by providing the opportunity to analyze primary documents for their meanings and secondary sources for their arguments and their methodology. Second, they aim to enhance your communication skills by providing the opportunity to analyze and synthesize class materials and create informed and thoughtful arguments both orally and in writing.

It is assumed that you will do your own work. Plagiarism, the appropriation of the words of others without attribution, will not be tolerated. When you use the ideas of another author, you must cite your source. When you use the words of another author, you must use quotation marks as well as cite your source. The penalty for an act of "literary theft" will range from an F on the assignment in question to an F in the course. The University's policy on "Academic Dishonesty" can be found in UPS 300.021 (<http://senate.fullerton.edu/>) as well as in the current CSUF Catalog (2005-2007) on page 558.

## **STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

If you have a disability or special need for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please inform the instructor and contact the Disabled Student Services Office, located in University Hall 101, as early as possible in the term. For more information, the Disabled Student Services Office can be reached by calling (714) 278-3117 or visit their website at <http://www.fullerton.edu/disabledservices/>.

## **LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1/22 The Tradition of Cultural Radicalism from the Middle Ages to the mid-19th century

### **II. TRANSCENDENTALISM**

1/29 Origins and Definitions: The Emergence of a Movement

Required Reading: \*Andrews Norton, "A Discourse on the Latest Form of Infidelity"; \*Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England"; Thoreau, *Walden* ("Economy," "Where I Lived....," and "Spring")

2/5 Self and Society: Self-Transformation and Cultural Renewal

Required Reading: Emerson, "Self-Reliance;" Thoreau, *Walden* ("Reading," "Solitude," "Visitors," "The Village," "Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors," "Baker Farm," and "Conclusion")

2/12 The Regeneration of Desire and the Revaluation of the Body

Required Reading: \*Margaret Fuller, *The Great Lawsuit* (excerpts); \*Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" and "Children of Adam"; Thoreau, *Walden* ("Higher Laws"); \*Jesse Battan, "'The Word Made Flesh': Language, Authority, and Sexual Desire in Late-Nineteenth-Century America"

### **III. GREENWICH VILLAGE: THE BOUNDARIES OF BOHEMIA**

2/19 The Bohemian Spirit in 19th and early 20th-century America

Required Reading: Cowley, *Exile's Return*, pp. 3-80

2/26 Expatriation

Required Reading: Cowley, *Exile's Return*, pp. 81-137

3/4 The Culture of Political Despair

Required Reading: Cowley, *Exile's Return*, pp. 138-245

3/11 The Decline of the Bohemian Ideal

Required Reading: \*Floyd Dell, "We Fall in Love," from *Intellectual Vagabondage: An Apology for the Intelligentsia*, pp. 161-175; Cowley, 246-309; \*Crystal Eastman, "Marriage Under Two Roofs," in Blanche Wiesen Cook, ed., *Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution*

#### **IV. THE BEAT MOVEMENT**

3/18 Aspirations and Fears: The Social World of the Beats

Required Reading: \*Allan Ginsberg, "Howl"; \*Norman Mailer, "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster"; \*Herb Gold, "The Beat Mystique"; Kerouac, *On the Road*, Part One

3/25 The Politics of Madness: The Search for Truth in the "Taxi-Cabs of Absolute Reality"

Required Reading: Kerouac, *On the Road*, Part Two through Part Five; \*Norman Podhoretz, "The Know Nothing Bohemians"

4/8 Dead Ends and Cul-de-Sacs

Required Reading: Johnson, *Minor Characters*

#### **V. THE COUNTER-CULTURE OF THE 1960S**

4/15 The Emergence of a Counter-Culture

Required Reading: Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, Preface and chapters 1 & 2

4/22 The Politics of the Counter-Culture

Required Reading: Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, chapters 3, 4 & 5

4/29 The Utopian Visions of the Counter-Culture

Required Reading: Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, chapters 6 & 8

5/6 The 60s and Beyond: Prospects for a Cultural Revolution; the Legacy of the Counter-Culture

Required Reading: \*Gross, "Culture, Politics, and 'Lifestyle' in the 1960s"; \*Todd Gitlin, "Straight From the Sixties: What Conservatives Owe the Decade they Hate"; \*Irving Kristol, "Countercultures"; \*Editorial, "In Praise of the Counterculture"; \*George F. Will, "About that 'Sixties Idealism'"; \*Mona Charen, "The Counterculture through Misty Eyes"; \*John M. Wilson, "In Defense of Jack Kerouac"

**FINAL EXAM—Tuesday, May 13, 2008 (7:30-9:20 p.m.)**