

American Studies 468
Culture in Turmoil: 1960s America
Fall 2009
Thursday evenings, 7:00-9:45
University Hall 250

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"I want to know what became of the changes
We waited for love to bring
Were they only the fitful dreams
Of some greater awakening?"
--Jackson Browne, "The Pretender," (1976)

Required Reading

Bill Bryson, *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid: A Memoir* (2007)
Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*
(3rd edition, 2007)
Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (2002)
Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (2009)
Gerald DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly
Decade* (2008)

Course Requirements

Welcome to American Studies 468! Though I'll lecture from time to time, most of our class sessions will be spent discussing the assigned reading and other material which I (and perhaps you) will bring to class for us to read, watch, or listen to. It is essential that you do the reading when it's assigned, that you consider it carefully before coming to class, and that you attend class consistently.

There will be **one take-home midterm**, due on October 29. The exam will cover everything through October 15, our last discussion of Isserman and Kazin. It will consist of one essay of around 2,000 words for undergraduates, 2,500 words for graduate students. I will announce the topic of this essay several weeks before it is due.

Additionally, you are to prepare **an essay of around 2,000 words** (2,500 words for graduate students) that does one of the following things:

- a. Critically reviews a book associated with the 1960s
- b. Critically reviews a film associated with the 1960s
- c. Critically reviews a record album associated with the 1960s
- d. Analyzes one issue of a magazine from the 1960s
- e. Evaluates the Nixon Presidential Library's sense of the 1960s, based on a visit you make there during the semester

We'll discuss this project from time to time in class, and I'll be happy to discuss your topic with you in my office. It's not necessary for me to approve your topic, and I won't assign a specific topic; the choice is up to you. The essay is due no later than December 3.

The **final exam** will be passed out by December 3, perhaps earlier, and will be due back by 7:30 p.m. on December 17, Thursday of Finals Week. It will cover the entire course and will consist of one or more essays, totaling around 3,000 words.

Please submit all written work in a hard copy, not as an attachment in email.

I will extend a due date only for a genuinely serious reason, for which I might require documentation.

In cooperation with the Office of Disabled Student Services, I will make the necessary accommodations for student disabilities.

Grading

The midterm and project will each constitute 30% of your course grade for written work, the final 40%. Poor class participation, especially inattention or frequent absences, will lower your course grade up to one full letter. Good participation will raise your course grade up to one full letter.

I use the university's plus-minus grading system. An A for me is a symbolic way of saying that I think your work is genuinely superior, far in excess of my minimum expectations. B is for work that is very good, definitely exceeding my minimum expectations. C is for acceptable work that meets my minimum expectations. D is for work that does not meet those expectations but that has some promise or potential for doing so. An F is for work that falls far below my minimum expectations, perhaps including (as discussed below) my expectation that work will be prepared honestly.

On both the midterm and final exam essays, my grading criteria are: understanding, originality, evidence, clarity, and organization. For the project, I'll be most interested in how you place your topic in context—that is, how you link the particular subject of your essay to broader matters brought up in the class. The originality shown in your selection of a topic (or, in the case of a project on the Nixon Library, the originality and depth of your insight) will also figure in your project's grade.

Academic dishonesty is an extremely serious matter: either the presentation of assigned written work actually done by someone else, without attribution, as if it were one's own work; or else the preparation of assigned written work for a classmate. Penalty for such deceit will range, depending on my judgment of the severity of the offense, from a failing grade on a particular assignment to failure in the course. An even more severe penalty might result should I decide to report an instance of dishonesty to the Dean of Students Office.

COURSE OUTLINE

A. WE HAVEN'T HAD THAT SPIRIT HERE SINCE 1969: REMEMBERING THE SIXTIES

8/27 **a. The Apparent Cultural Crisis of the 1960s, and the Alleged “Culture Wars” Ever Since**

9/3 **b. On the Other Side of the Cultural Canyon? American Culture in the Fifties and Early Sixties**

Read: "Critical Events During the Long 1960s," in Isserman and Kazin, pp. 315-321.

Videos in class: "Seeds of the Sixties," "Boys' Nation, 1963"

9/10 **c. Too Good To Be True? Examining the Notion of the “Innocent 1950s”**

Read: Bryson, *Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*, Chapters 1-7, pp. 1-134.

9/17 **Read:** Bryson, Chapters 8-14, pp. 135-268.

9/24 **d. Pivotal Trauma from Dallas to Chappaquiddick: The Kennedy Brothers, American Culture, and the Meaning of the Sixties**

video in class: Television coverage of the assassination of JFK

10/1 **e. The Best of Times or the Worst? Culture in Turmoil in the 1960s**

Read: Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, Introduction–Chapter 5, pp. 1–105.

10/8 **Read:** Isserman and Kazin, Chapter 6-10, pp. 107–214.

10/15 **Read:** Isserman and Kazin, Chapter 11–Conclusion, pp. 215–314.

Midterm Exam

Because of California's current budget crisis, professors, like most state employees, have been forced to take designated "furlough" days for which we will not be paid. By order of the president of the university, therefore, I am prevented from holding class on Thursday, October 22. Though there will not be a regular class meeting on that evening, marked with an asterisk below, I expect you to do the reading assigned for that day. It was left to me to select my other "furlough" days this semester, and I chose not to select any further days that would interfere with our class.

B. THE CRISIS OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY: SEX AND RACE AS ARENAS OF CULTURAL CONFLICT

*10/22 **a. The Real Revolution? Americans and Sex During and Since the Sixties**

Read: Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, Introduction–Chapter 4, pp. 1–135.

10/29 **Read:** Bailey, Chapter 5–Epilogue, pp. 136–218.

Midterm Essay Due October 29

11/5 **b. The Essential American Dilemma: The 1960s and the Ongoing Negotiation of Boundaries of Race**

Read: Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*, Introduction-Chapter 6 , pp. 1-140.

11/12 **Read:** Hogan, Chapter 7-Afterword, pp. 143-257.

C. WHAT A TIME IT WAS: SEARCHING FOR THE MEANING OF THE SIXTIES

11/19 **a. In Your Dreams: History, Cultural Amnesia, and Pretending the Sixties Never Happened**

Read: DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged*, Introduction-Chapter 5, pp. 1-139.

FALL RECESS

12/3 **Read:** DeGroot, Chapters 6-12, pp. 140-363.

Individual Projects Due December 3

12/10 **Read:** DeGroot, Chapter 13-Epitaph, pp. 364-450.

12/17 **Final Exam Essay Due by 7:30 p.m.**