

HC 281 Culture & Politics of the 1960s – Spring 2006

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Location: Loop Campus, Thursdays, 6-9 pm, 3/30-6/8

Course description:

Everyone seems to agree that the period from the late 1950s to the early 1970s represents a turning point in what has been called “the American century.” Opinions differ, though, on the meaning of the sixties, a decade that has been described in grandiose terms, both positive and negative. Should we view the period as a cultural renaissance, the source of moral decay, a second civil war, or as something else entirely? This course attempts to assess the significance of the 1960s by looking at some key movements in culture and politics. Topics include the civil rights movement, the war in Vietnam, the hippie counterculture, the emergence of new sensibilities and the development of social critiques focusing on the corporate state, patriarchy and the mass media. We will read essays and excerpts by authors such as King, Carmichael, Wolfe, Mailer, McLuhan, Sontag, Greer, Roszak, Gitlin and Zinn. We will use a variety of learning strategies, including lectures, discussions, dialogues, and film screenings.

Faculty:

John Kimsey received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Illinois and serves as a member of the SNL resident faculty. He specializes in modern literature and cultural studies and has published articles, both scholarly and popular, on aspects of sixties culture and politics.

Competencies offered:

H-1-F: Can describe and explain the roles of individuals, groups, societies or states in history.
H-2-A: Can understand a social problem and analyze the effectiveness of social institutions in addressing it.
A-1-H: Can explain the function of popular or folk arts in the transmission of culture and values.
H-4: Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural or economic groups in the US.

The H-1-F competency addresses the course focus on important movements and individuals of the period. The H-2-A competency addresses the course focus on significant social institutions of the period as well as the period-specific critiques of such institutions. The A-1-H competency addresses the cultural aspects of the course by focusing on popular arts of the period in social context. The H-4 competency addresses the course focus on sociopolitical movements of the period which emphasize race, gender and class factors in relation to issues of activism and community-building.

Learning experience:

A variety of learning strategies will be employed, including textbook readings; film screenings; classroom lectures and discussions; journals of the readings; group dialogues; short papers; and a keyword project.

Required texts:

Unger, Irwin and Debi Unger. *The Times Were A-Changin': the Sixties Reader*. Three Rivers press, 1998.

Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*. Harper, 2003.

Additional texts include numerous readings placed on Electronic Reserve at the DePaul Library website.

In addition, some readings will be distributed in class in the form of handouts. We will also screen portions of the documentary *Making Sense of the Sixties* and the films *Dr. Strangelove* and *Medium Cool*. Nor will we neglect recordings of the rich popular music of the period.

Evidence students will submit:

Students are expected to do the appropriate readings for each class session in a timely fashion. They are also encouraged to demonstrate that they've done so by participating in class discussion. In addition, students will submit the following pieces of written work.

All students will compose journal responses (about 1 page in length) to 10 readings listed on the syllabus. A suggested format for journal entries appears at the end of this syllabus. These will be collected each week.

All students will work on a Keyword Project to be submitted by the end of the quarter. The Keyword Project will be explained through handouts and in-class presentation.

In addition:

Students registered for two competencies will submit a short paper (5-7 pages long) addressing each of the competencies for which they're signed up. They will submit one such paper (addressing one competency) at midterm time (week 6) and another such paper (addressing the other competency) at finals time (week 11). For info on topics for short papers, see below.

Students registered for one competency will submit one short paper addressing That competence at either midterm time (week 6) or finals time (week 11).

Re topics for short papers:

Students will choose topics from an array of essay questions prepared by the instructor. The instructor will also see to it that the essay questions are attuned to specific competencies. Also, it's always possible for a student to write on a topic of his/her own choosing, provided the instructor approves it.

In sum, the written requirements for the course are: journal; keyword project; one short paper; and, for students registered for two competencies, another short paper. Percentage-wise, the breakdown is as follows:

Journal	25%
Keyword project	25%
Short paper (midterm)	25%
Short paper (final)	25%

Incomplete policy:

See attachment at end of syllabus.

Plagiarism policy:

See attachment at end of syllabus.

Criteria for assessment:

In assessing work like that described above, I look for a) basic knowledge and comprehension of pertinent events, individuals and institutions; b) a scope of discussion or (where appropriate) research that goes beyond material covered in class; and c) thoughtful engagement with the material, i.e., with questions and conflicts raised or implied by the material. Evidence of one of these elements equated roughly with a C; evidence of two with a B; and evidence of three with an A. Other factors, such as class participation, can also affect final grades. I expect such papers to conform to college-level standards of mechanics and presentation. I am happy to work with students on these points, on a draft/revision sort of basis, if students so desire. In making such assessments, I strive to be clear, forthright, flexible and empathetic.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Note: (E) = Item is available on Electronic Reserve at the DePaul Library website. Go online to www.lib.depaul.edu, click on Reserves and then use the Instructor menu to find Kimsey. The password is

Week One

Introduction to course; Backgrounds to the period; Screening of *Seeds of the Sixties*

Week Two

Cold War, Anti-communism and the Bomb; Screening of *Dr. Strangelove*

Readings:

- Unger, "The New Right" (93-90)
- Hargis, "Political Planning. . ." (96-98 in Unger)
- Meyer, "Principles and Heresies" (98-101 in Unger)
- Porro, "The Policy War: Brodie vs. Kahn" (E)

Week Three

Civil Rights and American Dreams

Readings:

- Zinn, "Or Does It Explode?"
- King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
- Ehrenreich, "The Revenge of the Lower Class" (E)
- Guralnick, "Aretha Arrives" (E)

Week Four

The Kennedy administration and assassination

Readings:

- Eisenhower, "Dangers of a Military-Industrial Complex" (E)
- Unger, "The New Frontier. . ." (26-8)
 - "The Bay of Pigs Invasion" (245-7)
 - "Cuban Missile Crisis" (250-1)
- Warren Commission, "Conclusions" (31-8 in Unger)
- Epstein, "The Vulnerability of Facts" (E)

Week Five

War in Vietnam; Student activism; Protest music

Readings:

- Zinn, "The Impossible Victory"
- Unger, "The New Left" (55-8)
 - "The Antiwar Movement" (282-90)
- Mailer, "A Speech at Berkeley on Vietnam Day" (E)
- SDS, Excerpt from the Port Huron Statement (E)

Week Six

New sensibilities and media: McLuhan and the global village; Screening of *Great Books: One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*; Midterm assignments due

Readings:

- Barnard, "Novelist Ken Kesey. . ." (handout)
- Ehrenreich et al, "Beatlemania: a sexually defiant consumer subculture?" (E)

Week Seven

Counterculture and Psychedelia; Screening of *It Was Twenty Years Ago Today*

Readings:

- Stevens, "Intuition and Intellect" (E)
- Leary, "The Politics of Ecstasy" (177-84 in Unger)
- Kimsey, "How the Beatles Invented the A-Bomb" (handout)
- Wolfe, "Cloud" (E)

Week Eight

1968—Year of crisis: Assassinations of MLK & RFK; the Chicago convention and riots; Screening of *1968: the Year That Changed America*

Readings:

Gitlin, Excerpts from *The Sixties* (E)
Walker Report, "Rights in Conflict" (334-41 in Unger)
Krassner, "The Rise and Fall of the Yippie Empire" (E)
Hoffman, "The Yippies Are. . ." (323-33 in Unger)

Week Nine

Screening of *Medium Cool*; Feminism and new liberation movements

Readings:

Zinn, "Surprises"
Morgan, "Redstockings Manifesto"
Unger, "The Stonewall Riot" (171-6)

Week Ten

1969 and beyond—Conservative backlash; Armed militancy; Woodstock; Kent State; the Pentagon Papers

Readings:

Unger, "The Wallace Campaign" (341-8)
"The Black Panthers" (148-52)

Week Eleven

Conclusion of course; Watergate; Legacies; Final assignments due