

# The 1960s in the United States: A Cultural History

HIST 271; Fall 2020; MW 9:30-10:45am; Online through Canvas

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Office hours: Mondays 11:30am-1:30pm and by appointment

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Office hours: Thursdays 2-4pm and by appointment

## Course Description

When the teen drama *Splendor in the Grass* opened in 1961, reigning box-office king John Wayne, incensed by the film's realistic portrayal of young-adult sexuality, pronounced it "too disgusting for discussion." Nine years later, Hollywood awarded its top accolade to the X-rated *Midnight Cowboy*, the story of a luckless hustler, Joe Buck, turning tricks on the streets of Manhattan. Whether measured in the distance separating John Wayne from Joe Buck or Chubby Checker from Janis Joplin, the 1960s looked, felt, and sounded like a time of wholesale cultural transformation. This course examines those changes and the battles fought around them. It takes a wide-angle view of popular culture, examining everything from rock and soul to food and fashion. Throughout the semester, we'll pay close attention to the complex ways that cultural expression and social power informed one another by situating the decade's aesthetic trends and developments *within* its multifaceted struggles for racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual equality. Likewise, we'll examine how the era's cultural climate conditioned popular thinking about the war in Vietnam, the plight of the poor, and a growing awareness of the planet's fragility. All the while, we'll be mindful not to reduce the 1960s to a simplified story of liberal awakening. To this end, we'll explore how the more conservative quarters of U.S. culture also evolved over the course of the 1960s, not just by countering the era's anti-establishment voices but by adapting to them as well, in some cases appropriating many of their most compelling themes. Indeed, the ever dynamic presence of the 1960s in American life ("OK Boomer") speaks to just how contested the era's changes in thought, perspective, and sentiment remain a half century later.

## Course Objectives and Goals

By the end of this course, you will:

1. learn an overview of the cultural and social transformations that played out in the postwar United States, especially between the years 1956 and 1975 (the Long Sixties); become familiar with the leading arguments historians have made about how to understand the era;
2. gain a more sophisticated understanding of the complex roles played by cultural dynamics in historical processes of change; understand how culture serves as a field of conflict and contestation in and around social movements;
3. improve your ability to interpret, discuss, and analyze primary and secondary sources, especially the sorts of popular texts and artifacts commonly utilized by cultural historians; and

4. improve your research, writing, and analysis skills through class discussions and assignments.

### **Readings**

All course readings are available on the course Canvas page, either as PDF documents or as links to websites. If you have any issues accessing online course material, please call the campus help desk (414-229-4040) or email: [help@uwm.edu](mailto:help@uwm.edu).

### **How the Course Will Work**

On **Mondays**, you'll work through a set of recorded lectures and examples I've created and curated for the course Canvas site. On **Wednesdays**, we'll meet synchronously via Collaborate Ultra on Canvas for discussion. To facilitate discussion, the course will be divided into several groups. At the midway point of the semester, we'll reshuffle the groups.

Please note that our Wednesday class sessions will be **audio-visually recorded** for students who are unable to attend at the scheduled time. Students who participate with their camera engaged or who utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their audio/video or image recorded. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded.

### **Course Requirements**

#### *Discussion Posts*

These involve finding and analyzing an example that speaks to themes in that week's material. You'll write a 250 word post and a 100 word response to another student's post.

- 5 @ 7 points each: 35 points total
- Due dates: Sept. 16, Sept. 30, Oct. 14, Oct. 21, Nov. 11

#### *Reading Responses*

100-125 word response summarizing the author's primary argument. Over the course of the semester, you must turn in 7 response papers. There will be 13 opportunities to turn these in.

- 7 @ 3 points each: 21 points total
- Due: Wednesdays by 9am, Sept. 9 – Dec. 9

#### *Syllabus Quiz*

Short quiz testing you on your knowledge of the syllabus and course Canvas site.

- 2 points
- Must complete by Friday, Sept. 11

#### *Realtime Meeting Participation*

This portion of your grade is based on your contributions to class discussions. To receive full credit, students should plan on contributing at least 2 informed comments or questions per meeting.

- 3 points for the first half of the semester + 3 points for the second half of the semester: 6 points total

### *Scavenger Hunt*

This assignment will entail using online archives to find, analyze, and critique the types of primary sources utilized by cultural historians.

- 12 points
- Due: Nov. 4

### *Short Paper*

4-6 page work of original analysis engaging course themes and using primary and secondary sources gathered by the student.

- 14 points
- Due Dec. 2

### *Final Exam*

Take home exam in which you'll answer 2 of 4 essays. Each answer should run 3 paragraphs in length.

- 10 points
- Due: Dec. 16 (9:30am)

### **Schedule of Topics and Readings**

*Weeks 1-2: Sept. 2 & 9: Out of the "Fifties" and Into the "Sixties"*

Readings:

- Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, "Gathering of the Forces." In *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (Oxford University Press, 1999)
- Julia L. Foulkes, "Camera and Choreography." In *A Place for Us: West Side Story and New York* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
- Evidence Set #1-2

Due: Reading response; Syllabus Quiz (Sept. 9)

*Week 3: Sept. 14 & 16: The Culture of Civil Rights*

Reading:

- Tanisha Ford, "SNCC's Soul Sister: Respectability and the Style Politics of the Civil Rights Movement." In *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style and the Global Politics of Soul* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).
- Evidence Set #3

Due: Reading response; Discussion post 1

*Week 4: Sept. 21 & 23: The Cultural Cold War*

Reading:

- Peter Bacon Hales, "Two Satellites," in *Outside the Gates of Eden: The Dream of America from Hiroshima to Now* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

- Evidence Set #4

Due: Reading response

*Week 5: Sept. 28 & 30: Pop Art and the Politics of Mass Culture*

Reading:

- Lynn Spiel, "One Minute Movies: Art Cinema, Youth Culture, and TV Commercials in the 1960s," in *TV by Design: Modern, Art, and the Rise of Network TV* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
- Evidence Set #5

Due: Reading response; Discussion post 2

*Week 6: Oct. 5 & 7: Sexual Revolutions*

Readings:

- Beth Bailey, "Sexual Revolution(s)." In *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, edited by David Farber (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1994)
- Susan J. Douglas, "Why the Shirelles Mattered." In *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994).
- Evidence Set #6

Due: Reading response

*Week 7: Oct. 12 & 14: Psychedelia and the Counterculture*

Reading:

- Alice Echols, "Hope and Hype in Sixties Haight-Ashbury." In *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and Its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
- Evidence Set #7

Due: Reading response; Discussion post 3

*Week 8: Oct. 19 & 21: Vietnam and GI Culture*

Reading:

- Michael J. Kramer, "Welcome to Entertainment Vietnam!" In *The Republic of Rock: Music and Citizenship in the Sixties Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- Evidence Set #8

Due: Reading response; Discussion post 4

*Week 9: Oct. 26 & 28: Radical Liberation: Black Power, Brown Power, and the AIM*

Reading:

- Joshua Clark Davis, "Liberation Through Literacy: African American Bookstores, Black Power and the Mainstreaming of Black Books." In *From Head Shops to Whole Foods: The Rise and Fall of Activist Entrepreneurs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).
- Evidence Set #9

Due: Reading response

*Week 10: Nov. 2 & 4: The Anti-War Movement*

Reading:

- Tom Wilson, "Paper Walls: Political Posters in an Age of Mass Media." In *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977*, edited by Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
- Evidence Set #3

Due: Reading response; Scavenger Hunt

*Week 11: Nov. 9 & 11: The New Hollywood and a Changing Media Landscape*

Reading:

- Derek Nystrom, "The New Hollywood." In *American Film History: Selected Readings, 1960 to the Present*, edited by Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grundmann, and Art Simon (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, 2015).
- Evidence Set #11

Due: Reading response; Discussion post 5

*Weeks 12 & 13: Nov. 16, 18, & 23: Sexual Revolutions II: Women's Liberation & the Queer Sixties*

Readings:

- Debra Michaels, "From 'Consciousness Expansion' to 'Consciousness Raising': Feminism and the Countercultural Politics of the Self." In *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, edited by Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002).
- Stephen Vider, "'Oh Hell, May, Why Don't You People Have a Cookbook?': Camp Humor and Gay Domesticity," *American Quarterly*, 65, 4 (Dec. 2013): 877-904.
- Evidence Set #12-13

Due: Reading response (Nov. 18)

*Week 14: Nov. 30 & Dec. 2: "The Silent Majority" and the Conservative '60s*

Readings:

- Diane Pecknold, "Silent Majorities." In *The Selling Sound: The Rise of the Country Music Industry* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
- Evidence Set #14

Due: Reading response; Short Paper

*Week 15: Dec. 7 & 9: Earth Day and the New Environmentalism*

Reading:

- Adam Rome, "'Give Earth a Chance': The Environmental Movement in the Sixties," *Journal of American History*, 90, 2 (Sept. 2003): 525-554.
- Evidence Set #15

Due: Reading response

*Week 16: Dec. 14: When Did the Sixties End?*

Reading:

- Amy L. Scott, "Holding Out for a Hero: Patty Hearst and American Culture in the Seventies (Review of William Graebner's *Patty's Got a Gun*)," *Reviews in American History*, 40, 1 (March 2012): 139-144.
- Evidence Set #16

Due: Final exam (Dec. 16)

**Note: Schedule is subject to change during the semester.**

### **Tech Help**

If you're running into issues with Canvas, contact the UWM Help Desk.

<https://uwm.edu/canvas/support-request/>

If you need a quiet and wi-fi friendly place to work outside the home, the Student Union has been rearranged to create socially distanced workspaces for students. It will be open until 10pm. The Learning Commons at Golda Meir Library will also feature socially-distanced workspaces. Please check the Library's webpage for hours of operation:

<https://uwm.edu/libraries/about/hours/>

### **Course Policies**

Late papers will be penalized 10% per day after the due date. If your paper is more than one week late (7 calendar days), you will receive a zero on the assignment. *Note: students cannot turn in reading response papers or discussion posts late.*

No extra credit assignments will be given.

Acts of academic misconduct, including plagiarism and collaborating on quizzes and individual assignments, will be treated severely. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work and for the proper citation of sources. Please familiarize yourself with the university's policies and procedures regarding academic misconduct.

<https://uwm.edu/deanofstudents/conduct/academic-misconduct/>

If you need accessibility accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course, please contact your instructor as soon as possible, preferably during the first week of the semester. You must have an Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) visa to receive any accommodation. For more see: <http://uwm.edu/arc/>

### **University Policies**

Please familiarize yourself with the university's policies on accessibility, religious observances, active military duty, incompletes, discriminatory conduct, Title IX/sexual violence, academic misconduct, complaint procedures, grade appeal procedures, LGBTQ+ resources, tobacco use, and final examinations. Information on these policies can be found at:

<https://uwm.edu/secu/wp-content/uploads/sites/122/2016/12/Syllabus-Links.pdf>

### **Allocation of Student Time for the Semester**

- Time in class (Canvas lectures and meetings): 37.5 hours
- Time taking exams: 2 hours
- Time completing assignments: 62 hours
- Time for preparation and study: 42.5 hours
- Total: 144 hours

### **Grade Breakdown**

93-100 A	90-92 A-	88-89 B+
83-87 B	80-82 B-	78-79 C+
73-77 C	70-72 C-	68-69 D+
60-67 D	less than 60	F