

Cultural Rebels in Modern America HIST 314G

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This course is intended to examine the history of cultural rebellion (or radicalism) in 20th Century America. The course will survey rebellion from Greenwich Village at the turn of the century to the punk rock explosion of the 1970s and 80s. It will also examine larger questions like: How do people rebel in a culture that often seems to embrace rebellion? What do cultural rebels want to replace what they are rebelling against? How do cultural rebels communicate their anger to the wider society?

This course will combine lecture and discussion. It is important to take good notes during lectures and to participate during discussions.

Requirements:

Attendance Policy: The old saying goes, “Showing up counts for 80%.” So it is with this class. If you miss class (without legitimate excuses), you are in serious threat of lowering your grade. More than three absences and you can fail the course. Since this course relies upon discussion of texts, your participation in classroom discussion is crucial. Participation in classroom discussion will count towards your grade. Since there is no “textbook” for historical background, taking close notes during lecture is crucial for doing well on exams.

Hand-Ins: Every day a reading is due, you will hand in, *at the beginning of the class*, a one-page summation of the reading and be prepared to discuss the reading with fellow students. Hand-ins will not be graded per se, though they will be reviewed and a record kept. Your record of hand-ins will help determine your final grade. They will also help you in preparing for essays and examinations.

Essays and Exams: You will turn in, on the day of the mid-term, an answer to a question assigned to you prior to that date. That will count for fifty points (or close to that). The in-class mid term will count for fifty points (or close to that). Add the essay and the exam, and you get 100 points. The same goes for the final. Your answers to essay questions should be word-processed. If you’re caught plagiarizing, you fail. If anything is handed in late, your grade will automatically be lowered. All of your writing in this class will be graded for both its content and style – that is, for the power of your argument and the way you convey it. Advanced undergraduate students (seniors especially) are allowed to bypass the two written essays (though not the exams) by doing a fifteen page essay about some topic that is agreed upon by the professor and student.

That agreement has to be made prior to the first essay's due date. If the professor doesn't hear from you otherwise, he is expecting you to do two essays and two exams.

Your final grade for the class will consist of your performance on the essays, exams, one-page summations, and class participation.

Required Books:

Randolph Bourne, *The Radical Will*
 Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*
 Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*
 Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture*

All of these books are available at Little Professor. Every other reading you are responsible for is on Electronic Reserve.

Course Schedule:

March 26: Introductions to the Course: What's Meant by Cultural Rebellion?

**When Rebellion was Young and New: The Glory Days of Greenwich Village
and the Philosophy of Randolph Bourne**

March 27: Lecture: The Background of Victorian Culture and "Genteel" America

March 28: Lecture: Realists and Others Revolt!

March 29: Discussion of William Dean Howells, "Pernicious Fiction" and H.L. Mencken, "Puritanism as a Literary Force" (Electronic Reserve)

April 2: Lecture: Greenwich Village Explodes

April 3: Discuss Randolph Bourne, "The Experimental Life," "The Older Generation," "The Life of Irony," "The Dodging of Pressures"

April 4: Lecture: Modernism Arrives!: Epater le Bourgeois

April 5: Discuss Selections from *Theories of Modern Art*: Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism," Tristan Tzara, "Lecture on Dada," Marcel Duchamp, "Painting at the Service of the Mind," Andre Breton, "Surrealism and Painting," Theodore Roosevelt, "A Layman's View of an Art Exhibition": Electronic Reserve

April 9: Lecture: Radicalism Merges with Experimentalism: *The Masses*, 1913, and More

April 10: Discuss Bourne, “The History of a Literary Radical,” “The Undergraduate,” “The Price of Radicalism,” “The Puritan’s Will to Power”

April 11: Lecture: World War I and Rebellion

April 12: January 24: Discuss Bourne, “The War and the Intellectuals,” “Twilight of the Idols,” “The State”

1920s: Expatriation as Cultural Rebellion

April 16: Graduate Students Only: Christine Stansell, *American Moderns*

April 17: World War, Disillusionment, the 1920s, and Expatriation

April 18: Discuss Harold Stearns, *America and the Young Intellectual* (Selections):
Electronic Reserve

April 19: Lecture: The Rise of Youth Culture in the 1920s

April 23: Discuss Samuel Hopkins Adams, “A Flapper’s Mentality”; Beatrice Hinkle, “Against the Double Standard”; Randolph Bourne, “Karen: A Portrait” (The first two readings are on electronic reserve)

The 1930s-1940s: The Brief End of Cultural Radicalism

April 24: Lecture: Why the Depression Killed Cultural Radicalism

April 25: Discuss Malcolm Cowley, *Exile’s Return* (Selections): Electronic Reserve

April 26: Lecture: The War and Radicalism: *Politics* Magazine and others

*****April 30: In-Class Exam and First Essay Due*****

The 1950s: Bohemianism Begins Again: The Rise of the Beats and More

May 1: Lecture: Bohemianism Arises Again – The Arts, Music, and Literature;
Read Clement Greenberg, “Avant Garde and Kitsch”

May 2: Lecture: The Rise of the Beats

May 3: Discuss Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (I)

May 7: Discuss Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (II)

May 8: Lecture: The Rise of Youth Culture and the J.D.: The Popularization of Rebellion in the 1950s; Read (no discussion): Norman Mailer, “The White Negro” (Electronic Reserve)

May 9: “Rebel Without a Cause” (Showing: I)

May 10: “Rebel without a Cause”: Showing of Film during class

May 14: The Shortcoming of Rebellion and the Possibilities of a New Left: Discuss Paul Goodman, Review of *On the Road* and Jimmy Weschler, “The Age of Unthink”; Norman Podhoretz, “Know Nothing Bohemians”: All on Electronic Reserve

The 1960s: The Golden Days Again?

May 15: Lecture: The New Left, the 1960s, and the Counterculture

May 16: Discuss Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture* (I)

May 17: Discuss Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture* (II)

May 21: Lecture: The End of the Counterculture? Reading: Joan Didion, “Slouching Towards Bethlehem”

May 22: Discuss Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool* (I)

May 23: Discuss Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool* (II)

The 1970s: The Establishment of the Counterculture and the Rise of Punk

May 24: Lecture: The Dispersion of the Counterculture – Lifestyles in the 1970s and the Rise of Punk: Read Tom Wolfe, “The Me Decade and the Third Great Awakening”

May 28: No Class (Memorial Day)

May 29: Lecture: The Spirit Behind Punk – From England to the United States
Discussion of Kevin Mattson, “Did Punk Matter?”: Electronic Reserve – and review

May 30: Graduate Student Only Discussion: Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, *Nation of Rebels*

May 31: Review, etc.

*****Review Essay of Frank versus Roszak due at time of Final Exam: