

## Social Movements in U.S. History

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### Course summary

This course investigates the history of movements for social change in American history. Students will explore efforts to alter the structure of society, from abolition through the present day. How do the background conditions of a historical moment give rise to a self-conscious effort to change history's course? What is the relationship between structural factors and willful choices? Do tactics and strategy matter, and why have different movements dealt with tactical and strategic questions? What is victory for a movement? What is defeat?

By the end of the class, students will have a historical understanding of many of the major movements in U.S. history, including abolition, the workers' movement of the turn of the century, communism and anticommunism in the 1930s and 1940s, black freedom in the 1950s and 1960s, the New Left and New Right of the 1960s, feminism, gay liberation, and the movements of the post-2008 period.

### Assignments

Students are expected to complete the reading for each session, and to write brief responses by the end of Monday each week.

In the sixth session of class, the midterm paper is due. This is a six-page assignment, for which the student should conduct an interview with someone who has been involved in a social movement. (If you do not know someone yourself, the instructor will offer a range of choices of people he can introduce you to.) Your paper should offer your assessment of the movement as seen through the eyes of your subject: its origins, its tactics and strategies, its organization, its goals, its successes and failures.

In the tenth session of class, the final paper is due. This is an eight-page assignment, for which the student should select a social movement in history (one we have studied or not) and read academic scholarship on the subject. You will then assess the movement as it appears to historians, asking the same questions as in the midterm paper, but drawing on academic material instead of a personal interview.

### **Grading**

- Reading, responses, and class participation: 40%
- Midterm paper: 25%
- Final paper: 35%

### **Academic integrity**

While I encourage you to talk to your peers about your ideas, your work must be entirely your own. Plagiarism degrades the value of all of our effort. I expect you to be familiar with appropriate academic conduct and to cite your sources appropriately. (I will hand out a separate document on the specifics of proper citation practices.) If you have any questions or uncertainty, please reach out to me. I also encourage you to visit the Writing Center and to consult its website at <http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students/using-sources>.

### **Lateness policy**

Unless you have a Dean's Excuse or have not otherwise made an arrangement with me, a late assignment will lose a full letter grade for each 24 hours that it is delayed. If you are having trouble completing an assignment on time, please be in touch with me as soon as possible.

### **Required texts**

Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement*

Steve Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of American Resistance to Wealth and Power*

Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*

### **Reading schedule**

Class 1: Introduction

- Astra Taylor, "Against Activism"

Class 2: Abolitionists

- Sinha, Chapters 11-15
- Du Bois, "The General Strike" and "The Coming of the Lord"

Class 3: Populists, workers, and progressives

- Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence*, chapters 1-5
- Watch, PBS, "The West Virginia Mine Wars"

Class 4: Communists and anticommunists

- Dean, *Crowds and Party*, Chapter 5
- Schrecker ed., documents from *The Age of McCarthyism*, 107-133

Class 5: Black freedom

- Lichtenstein and Korstad, "Opportunities Lost and Found"
- Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, Chapter 8
- Bloom and Martin, 1-45, 177-198

Class 6: New Left, New Right

- MIDTERM PAPER DUE
- Mills, "Letter to a New Left"
- Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement"
- Jennifer Frost, "Putting Participatory Democracy Into Action"
- McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 54-109

Class 7: Feminism

- Rosen, *The World Split Open* (selections)
- Baxandall and Gordon, eds., *Dear Sisters* (selections)

Class 8: Feminism (part 2)

- Rosen, *The World Split Open* (second half)
- Baxandall and Gordon, eds., *Dear Sisters* (selections)

Class 9: Gay liberation

- Faderman, 171-247
- Deborah Gould, "Life During Wartime"

Class 10: After 2008

- FINAL PAPER DUE
- Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, "The Making of the 99 Percent Movement"
- Hochschild, "Stories We Live By"
- Smucker, "Can Prefigurative Politics Replace Political Strategy?"

- *Boston Review* special issue, "Black Study, Black Struggle"
- Saval, "Canvassing"