

## ACS 6750/ENG 6750 The 1960s in Contemporary American Culture

Spring 2014

Jolie Sheffer

### Office Hours:

Tu, Thu 12-2 pm  
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and by appointment

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In contemporary television shows, films, novels, and theater, the Civil Rights era functions in one of two ways: as a golden age, when under-represented groups created powerful coalitions to initiate political change and usher in a new era of equality, or as the moment consensus culture in the U.S. fell apart. Using a variety of sources—fiction by authors such as Sherman Alexie, Frank Chin, Susan Choi, Sandra Cisneros, Gish Jen, Maxine Hong Kingston, Philip Roth, Dana Spiotta, Katherine Stockett, and Karen Tei Yamashita; plays by Suzan-Lori Parks and Tony Kushner; the television show *Mad Men*; films by directors such as Mary Herron, Ang Lee, Spike Lee, Kasi Lemmons, and Robert Zemeckis; and other material culture—this course will investigate contemporary fascination with the Civil Rights era as *the* foundational moment for identity politics. We will investigate how the iconography and activist methods of an earlier era are mobilized to express the desires and disappointments of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first-centuries. Such contemporary popular fictions reveal at least as much about the needs and wishes of the current moment than they provide insights about the decades in which they are set.

The final assignment for the course will include an Omeka-based Digital Curation project using archival materials from Jerome library's special collections. These primary texts will be contextualized with secondary research to capture the complexity of 1960s culture, with regard to issues such as Vietnam and anti-war movement, feminism, counterculture, civil rights and third world movements, and environmentalism. The class will create a Digital Exhibit that will be published on the Library's website, in its Digital Galleries. This course provides real-world Digital Humanities experience, which is especially useful for students of English, American Culture Studies, and Popular Culture.

### Objectives:

- To gain a sense of the two historical periods, 1960s-1970s and 1990s-2000s.
- To gain a sense of the range of literary and cultural representations of the periods.
- To learn to work with archival materials as primary texts.
- To use new digital technology tools to curate an exhibit for audiences within BGSU and to the public.
- To hone critical reading, interpretation, and writing skills.
- To demonstrate excellence in oral, written, and visual communication.

### Required Texts:

Brian Ward, *The 1960s: A Documentary Reader*  
Kathryn Stockett, *The Help*  
Tony Kushner, *Caroline, or Change*  
Charles Johnson, *Dreamer*  
Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey*  
Karen Tei Yamashita, *I Hotel*  
Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*  
Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*

**TV/Films:**

Robert Zemeckis, *Forrest Gump*

Ang Lee, *Taking Woodstock*

Matthew Weiner, *Mad Men*

Additional required readings will be available as PDFs on Canvas. These items are marked with an \*.

**ASSIGNMENTS:****1) Teaching Presentation**

Each student will **co-lead discussion** with another student once during the semester. These are teaching presentations, which means that you and your partner will be responsible for making a lesson plan and leading discussion for the class period. Be prepared to bring in outside material (research and visuals in a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation), develop discussion questions, lead the class through major themes and events in the assigned text(s), and clarify any confusing or difficult points. When you are discussion leader, you will *not* post a reading response to Canvas; instead, you will submit a copy of your lesson plan to me by SUNDAY at NOON prior to our Monday class meeting.

Presentation topics may include historical material relating to:

- Civil Rights and the Third World Movement
- Counterculture (music, drugs, hippie culture)
- Vietnam and the Anti-War Movement
- Feminism
- Environmentalism

**2) Reading and Film Responses**

Six times throughout the semester you will submit a thoughtful, critical response (approximately 500 words) to the week's readings on Canvas; you will *not* submit during a week you are giving a teaching presentation. Responses must be submitted by NOON on SUNDAY in advance of our Monday class meeting. In addition, you are expected to read your classmates' responses prior to class. These responses should exhibit strong close reading skills and should offer thoughtful, in-depth analysis of a key idea, issue, theme, event, or trope in that week's reading(s). This is an opportunity to make observations about, ask questions about, and begin to craft your own interpretations of the work(s). You may certainly post extra responses to improve your score, or to help you to articulate your observations about the week's readings.

**3) Annotated Bibliography and Essay Abstract**

Midway through the semester, you will submit an annotated bibliography and conference paper abstract for your final essay. For this assignment, you will provide analytic summaries of all primary texts on which you will base your final essay; these primary documents may be items from the BGSU special collections libraries, or a contemporary novel/film/play/television show that depicts the 1960s. You must also provide annotations for another 8-10 secondary sources (journal articles or books) relevant to your final essay topic. You may include additional, unannotated items. Each annotation should be 1-2 paragraphs long, providing a concise summary of the book/article's arguments, methods, and approaches, with a brief evaluation of the work, and an explanation of how the work informs your understanding of your topic.

The abstract should be approximately 250 words long, and it should clearly lay out your research question(s), primary text(s), methodology, theoretical approach, and potential significance. The abstract is effectively a conference paper abstract. If you are in doubt about what a conference paper abstract looks like, I recommend you review and sign up for H-AMSTDY (<https://networks.h-net.org/h-amstdy>) or another listserv to get regular announcements about calls for papers.

PLEASE FORMAT all written work in Times New Roman, 12-point, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and consistent MLA or Chicago-style in-text citations and works cited list.

#### 4) Final Essay

Every student will submit a final conference-paper-length essay. This is an authoritative essay on a focused topic, critically analyzing and interpreting EITHER the archival artifacts you curated OR a contemporary text about the 1960s, in the light of historical and theoretical research. You should include extended close readings of specific artifacts/texts, contextualized with independent research and analysis (7-10 pages). Your job is to craft an argument about your primary text(s), situating your work in relationship to existing scholarship on the topic.

PLEASE FORMAT all written work in Times New Roman, 12-point, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and consistent MLA or Chicago-style in-text citations and works cited list. You must ALSO reformat any images you include to be 100 dpi, in order to allow for a small enough file size to upload to Canvas.

**Every student must meet with me before April 4<sup>th</sup> to discuss your contributions to the Digital Exhibit.**

#### 5) Digital Exhibit

Students will work together as a class to create a digital exhibition based on visual, textual, and musical artifacts from BGSU Library's special collections, with explanatory text and curatorial essays. Once completed, this exhibit will be published on the library's Digital Galleries web page, available for all to see and use. Students will decide who is responsible for what: project management, drafting the introductory curatorial statement on the exhibit, providing infographics (such as a timeline), crafting a bibliography page, writing a page with contributor information, and editing/ proofreading (and checking all links).

Part of the project will also require students to work in small teams to create sub-sections of the exhibit. Your job will be to curate original materials from the library's archives, as well as write explanatory essays for your pages using course readings and additional research. On the last day of class, students will present on their sections of the exhibit.

This project will require individual research, analysis, and writing, as well as excellent coordination and cooperation with others in order to create a cohesive, comprehensive digital exhibition that illustrates both course content and library resources.

**The Digital Exhibit will be graded by the quality of the completed work, as well as by a short executive summary and analysis report.** By the scheduled date, each student will submit an executive summary that includes:

- **An outline** of the particular tasks and responsibilities you contributed to the Digital Exhibit, including the items you were responsible for curating (1-3 pages)

- **A personal reflection** in which you discuss how the entire project has shaped your understanding of American culture during this historical period (another 3-5 pages). For this portion, go “meta” by offering personal reflections on the process and insights you gained from: a) your work with **archival materials** and b) your **collaboration on the Digital Exhibit**.

#### 6) Participation

This is a discussion-based class that requires your ACTIVE participation. I will primarily serve as a discussion moderator, not as lecturer. It is your responsibility to come to class with questions about the texts and historical era(s), as well as interpretations (from the tentative to the well-formulated), and to engage in class discussions in an ongoing way. Thus, each class member is responsible for the direction of the conversation in class, for keeping it lively, and for coming to class prepared. You should expect to share ideas, engage with your classmates’ ideas, and disagree productively and respectfully. Our goal is to investigate these fascinating texts from a variety of angles.

You are allowed one absence without penalty. Each additional absence will drop your final grade by 10 percentage points (from a 90 to an 80, for example). Because this is a small class, every person should speak during every class period.

#### **CALCULATING GRADES**

Teaching Presentation	15%
Reading Responses	20%
Annotated Bibliography & Abstract	15%
Digital Exhibit & Report	15%
Final Essay	25%
Participation	10%

#### **COMPLETE SCHEDULE:**

- January 13**      **WHITE PRIVILEGE & MAINSTREAM NARRATIVES OF THE 1960s**  
 Robert Zemeckis, *Forrest Gump* (film)  
 Ward, “Chapter 1: Into the 1960s”  
 Ward, “Chapter 2: The Economy: Abundance, Consumerism, and Poverty”  
 Robyn Wiegman, “Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity”  
 Jennifer Fuller, “Debating the Present Through the Past”
- January 20**      **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY**  
**No class meeting.**  
 Please read:      Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream”  
                          Eric Sundquist, selection from *King’s Dream*  
                          Charles Euchner, selections from *Nobody Turn Me Around: A People’s History of the 1963 March on Washington*
- January 27**      Kathryn Stockett, *The Help*  
 Ward, “Chapter 4: The Civil Rights Movement”  
 Betty Friedan, from *The Feminine Mystique* (in Ward, Chapter 7)  
 Excerpt from Katherine Van Wormer, et al., *The Maid Narratives: Black Domestic and White Families in the Jim Crow South*

- February 3** Tony Kushner, *Caroline, or Change*  
 Excerpts from Michael Staub, ed., *The Jewish 1960s: An American Sourcebook*
- “Black-Jewish Relations”\*
  - “Going South”\*
- Claybourne Carson, “Blacks and Jews in the Civil Rights Movement: The Case of SNCC”\*
- Bruce Davidson, photos from 1961-1966, and portraits\*
- Michael Staub, Chapter 3 from *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America*\*
- Eric Sundquist, selections from *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America*\*

- February 10** **INTRODUCTION TO ARCHIVAL RESEARCH**  
 Ward, “Chapter 12: The 1960s in Myth and Memory”

Meet with Special Collections librarians in Jerome Library; bring notepaper and pencils, as well as camera for quick reference to promising items.

- Browne Popular Culture Library (Stefanie Hunker and Nancy Down)
- Center for Archival Collections (Samantha Ashby)
- Music Library and Sound Recordings Archive (Susannah Cleveland)
- Government Documents (Carol Singer)

Develop topics and groups for Digital Exhibit

Select initial artifacts for digitization

**DUE by FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14: Make appointment(s) with special collections librarian(s) for archival research on your topic.**

- February 17** **CIVIL RIGHTS**

Charles Johnson, *Dreamer*

Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (In Ward, Chapter 4)

Robert F. Kennedy, on death of MLK (in Ward, Chapter 11)

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”\*

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Final Address at Bishop Charles J. Mason Temple in Memphis”\*

Martin Luther King, Jr., excerpts from *Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson

Michael Eric Dyson, selections from *April 4, 1968*\*

**DUE by FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21: Contact relevant special collections librarians to request digitization of your artifacts.**

- February 24** **INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL CURATION**

Meet in Jerome Library; bring laptop for training. (You can check one out from library.)

- Copyright and Fair Use (Stefanie Hunker)
- Omeka Demonstration and Workshop (Dave Widmer and Stefanie Hunker)
- Exhibit Design Session (Dave Widmer and Kevin Cornett)
- Identify common metadata standards for all fields (class)
- Identify emerging themes/topics for the exhibit
- Draft Curation and Fair Use statement for exhibit

**March 3 COUNTERCULTURE**

Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey*  
 Ward, "Chapter 5: The New Left and the Counterculture"  
 Timothy Leary, "Turning on the World"\*  
 Lenny Bruce, "Pills and Shit: The Drug Scene"\*

**March 10 Spring Break**

**March 17** Ang Lee, *Taking Woodstock* (film)  
 Sherman Alexie, "Because My Father Always Said He Was the Only Indian Who Saw Jimi  
 Hendrix Play 'The Star-Spangled Banner' at Woodstock"\*  
 Joni Mitchell, "Woodstock" (in Ward, Chapter 11 and as mp3)  
 Ward, "Chapter 9: Science, Technology, and the Environment"  
 Michael Lydon, "The Rolling Stones—At Play in the Apocalypse"\*

**March 24 THIRD WORLD MOVEMENTS**

Karen Tei Yamashita, *I Hotel*  
 Ward, "Chapter 10: Racial and Ethnic Identity: Pride and Politics"  
 Glenn Omatsu, "The 'Four Prisons' and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American  
 Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s"\*

**DUE BY FRIDAY, MARCH 28<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm: Submit Annotated Bibliography and Essay  
 Abstract to Canvas.**

**March 31 VIETNAM**

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*  
 Ward, "Chapter 3: The Cold War Context"  
 Ward, "Chapter 6: Vietnam"  
 Michael Herr, selection from *Dispatches*\*  
 Susan Sontag, "What's Happening in America"\*  
 Sylvia Chong, Intro and Chapter 1 from *The Oriental Obscene*\*  
 Penny Lewis, selections from *Hippies, Hard Hats, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar  
 Movement as Myth and Memory*\*

**DUE BY FRIDAY, April 4<sup>th</sup>: Individual conferences on Digital Exhibit and Final Essay**

**April 7 RADICALISM**

Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*  
 Ward, selection from John Filo on Kent State killings (in Chapter 11)  
 Abbie Hoffman, "Che's Last Letter"\*

**April 14 PASSOVER**

**No class meeting. Work on final essay.**

**April 21**

**FEMINISMS**

Matthew Weiner, *Mad Men* (TV show)

“Ladies Room” (Season 1, Episode 2) \* [Optional, for those new to show]

“Maidenform” (Season 2, Episode 6)

“The Beautiful Girls” (Season 4, Episode 9)

“The Other Woman” (Season 5, Episode 11)

Ward, “Chapter 7: Gender and Sexuality”

Valerie Solanas, “SCUM Manifesto”\*

Gloria Steinem, “A New Egalitarian Lifestyle”\*

Hettie Jones, from “How I Became Hettie Jones”\*

**DUE BY SUNDAY, APRIL 20<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm via Canvas: FINAL ESSAY**

**April 28**

Final Digital Exhibition Workshop

**DUE BY SUNDAY, May 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm: Complete all editing of Digital Exhibit in Omeka.**

**DUE BY WEDNESDAY, May 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm via Canvas: Submit Executive Summary & Report.**