1968

Thomas Miller (tpm@email.arizona.edu)
1-4:00 Thursdays and Fridays throughout February

Our seminar will examine how activists mobilized social movements to end the war, defend basic rights, and resist oppression. We will also examine broader historical developments, particularly the impact of the media on how we think and relate to each other, including electronic media such as television as well as the essayistic modes of writing identified with the "New Journalism." We will reflect upon how the developments that were set in motion in 1968 have shaped how we understand our lives, our country, and each other.

Week 1: THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

Antiwar activism spiked following the Tet Offensive because it seemed to demonstrate that the government was lying about the prospects for victory. While supporters of the war viewed the defeat of the offensive as a victory, the images on the news seemed to tell a different story—a story that turned much darker with the reports of massacres at My Lai. Rather than sending the 200,000 additional troops that were requested, President Johnson announced he would not run for reelection, and the Paris Peace talks began—all within the first six months of 1968.

While Viet Nam is commonly viewed as our first television war, we will approach the antiwar movement through the rise of the "New Journalism," which rejected presumptions of objectivity in favor of graphic realism and an edgy cynicism that captured the spirit of 1968. Following the election of Richard Nixon, antigovernment animosities rose to levels that remained unsurpassed until our own time. In our first class, we will examine how such oppositions were framed by antiwar activists and journalists to consider the diverging histories of the "silent majority" and the "counterculture."

Readings:

- 1968 Timeline
- A Vietnam War Timeline
- Bill Zimmerman, "The Four Stages of the Antiwar Movement," *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 2017.
- Michael Herr, "Hell Sucks," *Esquire*, August, 1968.
- Matthew Dallek, "The Conservative 1960s," *The Atlantic*, 1995

Week 2: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The civil rights movement provides a clear-cut example of a traditional social movement concerned with persuading people to act collectively to achieve shared objectives such as the Civil Rights Act of 1968. When the leading spokesman for nonviolent collective action was gunned down, riots burned across the country, and when the Democrat who had the best hope of bringing the country together was also murdered, the electoral process became overwhelmed by mobs seeking to shut down the Democratic Convention. Our point of departure for assessing the radicalization of 1968 will be Martin Luther King's turn against the Vietnam War. As King came to criticize American imperialism, it became hard for him to offer unifying homages to American exceptionalism. In this class, we will consider 1968 as the sharpest turn to the left in American history and reflect upon how the radicalism of youth fades with time.

Readings:

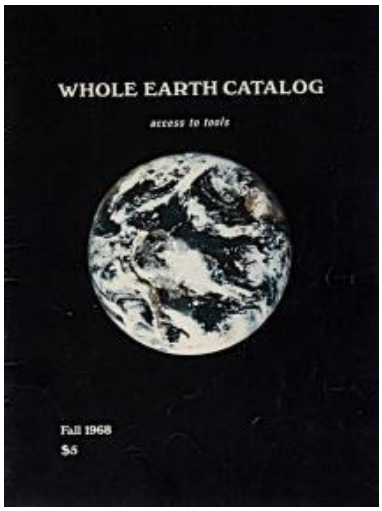
- Aldon Morris, "A Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1999
- Anne Moody, Excerpts from *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, 1968
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Beyond Vietnam—A Time to Break Silence," 1967
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have Been to the Mountaintop," 1968
- Eldridge Cleaver, Excerpts from *Soul on Ice*, 1968

Week 3: WOMEN'S LIB

We will examine the protest against the Miss America Pageant in 1968 as a generational moment in the history of the women's movement. Younger radical activists staged the demonstration to create a media event, while older feminists were concerned that sensationalist bra burnings would detract from efforts to advance women's rights. What became known as the "second wave" in feminism viewed patriarchy as the source of oppression, materialism, and imperialism. In addition to considering feminist efforts to "raise consciousness," we will also reflect upon how the "sexual revolution" shifted our sense of the distinctions between the personal and political and between public and private.

Readings:

- Martha Weinman Lear, "The Second Feminist Wave," *New York Times*, March 10, 1968.
- Carol Hanisch, "A Critique of the Miss America Protest," 1968
- Kathie Sarachild, "A Program for Feminist 'Consciousness Raising,"1968
- Kate Millett, "Sexual Politics," 1968
- Eric Schaefer, "Sex Seen: 1968 and the Rise of 'Public' Sex," *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution*, 2014.



Week 4: MAKING AND MARKETING THE COUNTERCULTURE

In our last class, we will conclude our discussions of the counterculture by considering how psychoactive drugs factored into efforts to raise people's consciousness and mobilize collective action. We will also consider how transformations in media and broader developments such as globalization shaped the social movements of the time, including the environmental movement and the presidential campaign of 1968. We will conclude by considering how the election of Richard Nixon promised to restore the rule of law. We will use the theories of Marshall McLuhan as our theoretical frame for assessing the impact of electronic media, and we will use *The Whole Earth Catalogue* as a case in point for considering how the 60s lifestyle was marketed.

Readings:

- Theordore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 1969
- McLuhanisms
- Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage*, 1967
- *Whole Earth Catalogue*, 1968
- Joe McGinniss, "The Selling of the President 1968," *Harper's Magazine*, 1968
- Richard Nixon, RNC Acceptance Speech, August, 1968