American Radicalism from Abolitionism to Bernie Sanders and Black Lives Matter
Summer Session

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Course Description

How can history motivate us to act better today?

We live in an era of massive and unprecedented disparity between the haves and the have-nots, where poverty, addiction and the systematic disenfranchisement of poor and non-white people increase, while *three* billionaires control more wealth than the bottom 50% of Americans combined.

This course will offer a survey of the American radical tradition from the early nineteenth-century to the present. Together, we will explore the continuities of that history, how movements shaped and inspired each other, and how a radical idealism runs from the earliest enslaved people campaigning against slavery through to the modern movements for socialism, equal rights and prison abolition, among many others.

Since the founding of the nation, the United States of America has been a battleground between forces of greed, hatred and delusion on the one hand, and justice, equality and liberation on the other. For the past two hundred years, various groups of Americans have imagined a world without racism, sexism and poverty, where all could live good lives and where a just republic allowed citizens to dedicate their lives to making that world a reality. Their stories can offer hope and insight. They testify that people can and have come together in massive movements to change the country for the better, and that while many battles have failed, and many are still ongoing, some have definitively succeeded.

Starting with the American revolution, we will explore many of the major battles of ideals and political visions in American history and look at their many overlaps and disagreements. We will learn about well-known movements like the antebellum abolitionists, the suffragists, the "black power" and liberation movements of the 1960s. We will also investigate important movements that have been downplayed, forgotten, or censored: the radical wing of the women's movement that advocated "free love," the massive socialist movement that won elections across the country at the turn of the twentieth century, and the first movement for reparations for African Americans, right after the Civil War.

Course Objectives

- See continuity in thought and action across 200 years of American social reform
- Be able to identify major figures and eras in the American social reform tradition

- Understand the breadth and diversity of the major causes and coalitions of the social reform tradition
- Be able to understand the various major coalitions in the history of American social reform
- Be able to identify various distinct competing visions for the future and identify the major elements of different coalitions
- Produce an article that sheds light on a current social movement, by connecting it with a part of the American radical tradition.

Readings

The readings will be available on NYU Classes. Since this is a summer course, you will be expected to read more in less time. **This means reading around 150-200 pages per week.** Try not to let this overwhelm you; during class we will discuss at length how to manage this workload. That being said, readings must be completed prior to lectures as there will frequently be in-class assignments designed to help you process and synthesize what you have read.

For more information on how to read for the humanities, see these links: How to Gut a Book, How to Read for Grad School

For students with disabilities:

If you are student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New York University's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Safe Space Policy:

This classroom is intended to be a safe zone for individuals of all ethnicities, abilities, religions, sexual orientations, and gender identities. For NYU's full diversity statement, which outlines this policy in more depth, please see http://www.nyu.edu/life/diversity-nyu.html.

Assignments:

Weekly Response Papers:
Once each week you will be expected to write a 300-500 word response that concisely conveys your understanding of **at least two** of that week's readings' **topic, argument, and significance**: What is it about? What is it trying to prove? Why does it matter? Each response should also include a discussion question that emerged for you during your reading.

On the first day of class, you will be able to choose which day of the week you'd like to write your responses.

Short Paper:

You will submit a 1000 word (not including footnotes) paper exploring the background and significance of a figure or movement from the history of U.S. political radicalism and their relationship to one stream of thought within the tradition of American social reform, **by the end of class 7**.

Final Paper:

By the end of **Week 6,** you will be expected to hand in a **10-12 page paper (2500-3000 words)**, looking at one **contemporary** radical movement (from the past 20 years) and relating it to the larger radical tradition. This may seem long, but we will start working on the paper early, with an abstract and an outline due well before the end of the term.

This paper will be written in the style of an op-ed or a longform magazine article

The final paper may take any of the following forms:

Magazine article
Grant proposal
Academic essay.

Abstract:

By the end of week 4, you will submit **one paragraph** in which you propose your final paper and begin thinking through what it will entail.

Outline: (footnoting practice)

By the end of week 5, you will submit an outline of your final paper, including a list of sources that you will be using, formatted following the **Chicago Manual of Style**. This outline may take any format that you choose to give it, but must lay out a scaffolding of ideas, and must plan to draw on at least **2 readings** from class **AND 1 book AND 3 articles** from outside of class.

Formatting:

All papers are to be in Times New Roman, size 12 font and double spaced, with a one-inch margin on either side. Footnotes follow the **Chicago** style (which we will go over in class). Papers' word lengths excludes footnotes.

Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation: 30%
Response Papers: 30%
Short Paper: 10%
Abstract: 5%
Outline: 5%
Final Project: 20%

Course Schedule

Week 1: What is Radicalism?

Class 1: Defining "Radicalism"

- Dan McKanan, "Introduction" in *Prophetic Encounters: Religion and the American Radical Tradition,* 1-17
- Daniel Pope, "The Nature and Significance of Radicalism in American History" in *American Radicalism*, 1-14
- Timothy McCarthy and John McMillian "Introduction" in *The Radical Reader: A Documentary History of the American Radical Tradition,* 1-8
- "Making Solidarity Uneasy: Cautions on a Keyword from Black Lives Matter to the Past," 223-244
- Marie-Jo Buehle, "Introduction," and "Timeline" in *The American Radical,* xv-xix, xxi-xxii
- "Introduction: The Radical Tradition of Abolition" in Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 1-8

Class 2: Early American Revolutions and Revolutionaries

Secondary Sources:

- "An Age of American Revolutions" in Caitlin Fitz, Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions, 1-16
- Manisha Sinha, "Revolutionary Antislavery in Black and White," in *The Slave's Cause,* 34-64
- Harvey J. Kaye, "Tom Paine," in *The American Radical,* 9-16

Primary Sources:

- Haitian Declaration of Independence
- Outtakes from David Walker, "Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World"
- Frances Wright speech at New Harmony Hall
- Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America"

Week 2: Abolitionism and Women's Rights (1820-1865/79)

Class 3: The Making of a Coalition

Secondary Sources:

- "Introduction" in David Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom,* 1-11
- "Cast of Characters," in *Radical Friend: Amy Kirby Post and her Activist Worlds*, xi-xii
- "The Woman Question," in Sinha, *The Slave's Cause,* 266-299,
- "Mary Moody Emerson" in Amy Kittelstrom, *The Religion of Democracy,* 57-100
- "Unbroken Communication between the Infinite and All Beings" in Anne Braude, *Radical Spirits,* 10-31
- Nell Irvin Painter, "Sojourner Truth" in Mari Jo Buhle and Paul Buhle, *The American Radical,* 25-32

Primary Sources:

- Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Declaration of Sentiments"
- Sojourner Truth, "Ar'n't I a Woman?"
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, selections from "Anti-Slavery Addresses" in Len Gougeon, *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery and Reform*

Songs:

- Hutchinson Family Singers, "Get Off the Track," "The Old Granite State"

Class 4: Radical Violence and The Civil War

Secondary Sources:

- "The Abolitionist International," in Sinha, *The Slave's Cause,* 339-381
- Chapters 10 and 11 on John Brown in Holly Jackson*, American Radicals*, 182-226
- "Introduction" in John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men,* 1-7

Primary Sources:

- William Lloyd Garrison, "No Compromise with the Evil of Slavery"
- John Brown, "John Brown's Last Speech"
- Frederick Douglass, "The Mission of the War"

Song:

- "John Brown's Body," Old Crow Medicine Show, "Marching Through Georgia"

Week 3: Socialism and Anarchism (1865-1920)

Class 5: Reconstruction and The Breaking of a Coalition

Secondary Sources:

- "Introduction" in Faye Dudden, *Fighting Chance: The Struggle Over Woman Suffrage And Black Suffrage In Reconstruction America,* 1-10
- "Chronology" and "The Principles of Social Freedom" in Amanda Frisken, *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution,* vii-ix, 24-54
- "To Write Justice in the American Heart," in Jackson, *American Radicals,* 247-270
- "On the Verge of Heaven: Religious Missions, Interracial Contact, and the Radicalism of Radical Reconstruction" in Edward J. Blume, *Reforging the White Republic*, 51-86

Primary Sources:

- Selection on labor, women's suffrage and African American rights, from *Selected Writings of Victoria Woodhull*

Songs:

- "Daughters of Freedom" and "Shivering and Shaking Out in the Cold"

Class 6: Socialism and Anarchism

Secondary Sources:

- "A Tale of Three Socialisms, 1890-1920," in Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation*, 109-155

- "Introduction" in Gary Dorrien, *Christian Socialism in America*, 1-50
- "Suffrage" in Mari Jo Buehle, *Women and American Socialism,* 214-241.
- Alice Wexler, "Emma Goldman," in Buhle, *The American Radical,* 97-105
- "Introduction," in Jacqueline Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy,* iv-xiv

Primary Sources

- Emma Goldman, "What I Believe"
- Lucy Parsons, "I Am an Anarchist"
- Edward Carpenter, "Mightier than Mammon," in *Towards Democracy,* 395-406
- W.E.B. Du Bois, "Socialism and the Negro Problem"

Song:

- "Solidarity Forever"

SHORT ESSAY DUE BY FRIDAY AT 11:59PM

Week 4: Modernism, The Old Left and the Harlem Renaissance

Class 7: Anti-Lynching, New Men and New Women

Secondary Sources:

- "Introduction" in Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreamers of a New Day,* 1-16
- "The Right to Complete Liberty of Action" in Terrence Kissek, *Free Comrades: Anarchism and Homosexuality in the United States 1895-1917,* 13-34
- "A Call to Action," Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement,* 1-24
- Darlene Clark Hine, Review of *My Face is Black Is True,* in the *Journal of African American History,* 311-317
- Paula Giddings, "Ida B. Wells" in Buhle, *The American Radical*, 151-158

Primary Sources:

- Excerpts from "To Do a Little Good: The Gay Love Letters of Edward Carpenter and George Merrill," 1 page
- Paul Laurence Dunbar, "To the South – On Its New Slavery"
- "Preface," "Introduction," in Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass, *The Reason Why The Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition*

Song:

- "Strange Fruit"

Class 8: Communism and the Harlem Renaissance

Secondary Sources:

- Beryl Satter, "Marcus Garvey, Father Divine and the Gender Politics of Race Difference and Race Neutrality," 43-76
- Thomas C. Holt, "W. E. B. Du Bois" in Buhle, *The American Radical*, 113-120
- The Romancce of American Communism, chapter 1
- "Introduction" in Nathan Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, 3-12
- "Black Communists in the Great Depression South," in Daniel Pope, *American Radicalism*, 232-250

- Rosalyn Baxandall, "Elizabeth Gurley Flynn" in Buhle, *The American Radical*, 129-134

Primary Sources:

- Countee Cullen, "Love's Way," "Uncle Jim" and "Harlem Wine"
- Langston Hughes, "To Negro Writers," "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
- Marcus A. Garvey, "Africa for the Africans" and "The Future as I see It" in Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance,* 35-41
- Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "I Love My Comrade Organizers" and "Every Day Should Be Mother's Day for Us" in Albert Fried, *Communism in America*, 233-235

Song:

- "The Commonwealth of Toil," "This Land is Your Land"

FINAL PAPER ABSTRACTS DUE

Week 5: New Left, Civil Rights

Class 9: Civil Rights, Black Power (and other powers)

Secondary Sources:

- "Introduction," in Sarah Azaransky, *This Worldwide Struggle,* 1-15
- Barbara Ransby, "Ella Josephine Baker," in Buhle, *The American Radical*, 287-296
- "Introduction" in Sylvie Laurent, *King and the Other America: The Poor People's Campaign and the Quest for Economic Equality,* 1-18.
- "Introduction" in Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America,* 1-8

Primary Sources:

- Ella Baker, 1964 "Freedom Day Rally Speech"
- Black Panther Party, "What we believe"
- "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
- Angela Davis, "Speech at the Embassy Auditorium"

Songs:

- 1964, Nina Simon, "Mississippi Goddam," 1965, Phil Ochs, "Here's to Mississippi"

Class 10: Counterculture, Women's Liberation, etc.

Secondary Sources:

- Doug Russinow, "'The Revolution is About Our Lives': The New Left's Counterculture," in in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, *Imagine Nation,* 99-124
- Debra Michaels, "From 'Consciousness Expansion' to 'Consciousness Raising,'" in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, *Imagine Nation* 41-64
- "Introduction" in Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective,* 1-14
- "Protest" in Jason Bauman, *Love and Resistance: Out of the Closet into the Stonewall Era*, 133-166

Primary Sources:
- "Port Huron statement"
- "The Combahee River Collective Statement"
- Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic"

Songs:
- Sweet Honey in the Rock, "Sojourner's Battle Hymn," Phil Ochs, "Love Me I'm a Liberal"

FINAL PAPER OUTLINES DUE

Week 6: Reagan to Trump

Class 11: 1980s to the Present: History Teaches Us to Resist

Prisons:
- "Introduction" in Michele Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* 1-19

Environmentalism:
- "Three Ecosocialist Manifestos"
- The Burning Case for a Green New Deal, Introduction
- This is not a drill, the extinction rebellion handbook
- Our History is the Future (on Standing Rock)

- Black Rights:
  - Ta Nahesi Coats, "The Case for Reparations"
  - History Teaches us to Resist, Free South Africa movement
  - Excerpts from Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*;
  - Barbara Ransby, "The Class Politics of Black Lives Matter,"
  - "Black Lives Matter: a Movement, Not a Moment" in Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, 153-191, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, God-Damn America,

Occupy and the Labor Movement:
- Selections from Sarah Van Gelder, *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement*,
- "The Fight for 'Real Democracy' at the Heart of Occupy Wallstreet,"
- "Occupy Wallstreet's Anarchist Roots"
- *Shut it Down* chapter on Seattle
- *We Are All Fast-Food Workers, Now*

- Democratic Socialism:
  - Why you should be a socialist
  - Bigger than Bernie

Feminism:
- "A Killjoy Manifesto" in Sarah Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life,* 251-268
- "Riot Grrl Manifesto,"
- "Introduction" in Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthuluscene,* 1-8

Class 12: The Present Day, continued

Music:

- Lupe Fiasco, "Obama Nation,"
- The Kominas, "If You See Something, Say Something"
- Dead Kennedys, "Kill the Poor"
- Immortal Technique "Bin Laden"
- Immortal Technique, "Rich Man's World"
- Joan Baez, "We Can't Make it Here"
- A Tribe Called Quest, "We the People"
- Aerosmith, "Eat the Rich"
- Kendrick Lamar, "Alright"
- Milck, Quiet
- Third Eye Blind, "If there Ever Was a Time"
- Brother Ali, "Uncle Sam Goddam"
- The Flaming Lips, "The Yeah Yeah Yeah Song"
- Killer Mike, "Ronald Reagan"
- Sa-Roc, "Black God Hypothesis"
- Moon Bandits, "Property Damage: A Love Song"
- Bikini Kill "Rebel Girl"
- Mona Haydar, "Dog"
- Panopticon, "Come All Ye Coal Miners"

FINAL PAPERS DUE