

**American Studies 01:050:303**  
**Decade in the U.S. – The 1970s**  
**HSB 106**  
**Wed 5:35- 8:55**

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This course offers an intensive exploration of cultural, political and social movements and trends of the 1970s. Some of the issues framing the decade include the Vietnam War; ongoing and burgeoning rights struggles, the birth of new music forms (including hip hop); the energy crisis; and the deindustrialization of urban centers. Students will engage with a variety of primary sources, including film, literature, advertisements, and journalism, as well as secondary sources, to examine some of the major debates and developments of the period. Topics will include anti-war activism; demographic and economic changes in urban centers; new cultural formations in music (soul, disco, hip hop) and visual art (video/media art, graffiti); Black Power; women's movement; gay liberation; fashion trends; American independent cinema and the rise of the blockbuster. The goal of the course is provide students with methodological tools and investigative approaches to research in American Studies.

**Required Reading**

Berkowitz, Edward. Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Brown, Elaine. A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story. Anchor; 1st Anchor Books ed edition, 1993.

Chang, Jeff. Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation. New York: Picador, 2005.

Echols, Alice. Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin. First Edition. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2000.

Lasch, Christopher. Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations. New York: W. W. Norton & Company; Revised edition (May 1991).

Vonnegut, Kurt. Breakfast of Champions. Dial Press Trade Paperback, 1999 (1973).

Electronic Reserves at sakai.rutgers.edu [ER]

Online sources and handouts

**Assignments and Grading**

Participation/ In-class assignments: 15%

Film Review (2-4 pages): 15%

Analytical Paper 1(3-5 pages): 20%

Analytical Paper 2 (3-5 pages): 20%

Final Research Paper (5-7 pages): 30%

**Requirements**

Participation/In-class Activities: 15%

Attendance and participation are required throughout the semester. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade. Also, a lack of participation in class discussions and activities will weigh heavily on your final grade.

As a component of your participation grade, each student will work in small groups to help facilitate discussion during one class. Students will sign up for discussion moderation duties at the beginning of the semester. Students will be expected to have prepared, typed questions to be turned in to me.

Film Review (2-4 pages): 15%

Students will provide a close reading of a film assigned in the course. Film will be read in the context of the decade using course readings to help illuminate critical issues at stake and represented in the cultural product.

Analytical Paper (3-5 pages): 20%

Students are required to write two analytical papers that critically engage with issues raised in the course. Paper must demonstrate a depth and range that shows sufficient engagement with course materials. More details will be provided closer to due date.

Final Research Paper (5-7 pages): 30%

Students will write an original research paper dealing with an issue related to the course; topic must be approved by instructor. As components of this assignment, students will turn in a short topic proposal, a thesis statement and a preliminary bibliography (see course schedule for dates).

### Course Policies

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the class. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day late. All papers must be double-spaced, typeset with Times or Times New Roman 12pt font, and have page numbers and one-inch margins. Format of papers should adhere to the Modern Language Association Style Manual.

*Plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated.* Plagiarism includes copying classmates' answers and improper citation of any text in the course or otherwise. Ignorance of university policy is not an excuse.

### Course Schedule

#### **3 Sept: The 1970s: Providing Context**

Berkowitz. Introduction, Something Happened

Clips: The Strawberry Statement, Berkeley in the '60s

#### **10 Sept: The Death of the 1960s/Transforming Countercultures**

Echols. Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin

Film: Gimme Shelter, dir. Albert and David Maysles, 1970.

#### **17 Sept: Political Crises: Watergate and Scandal**

Berkowitz. Ch 1 and 2, Something Happened

Selection “Pentagon Papers” [ER]  
Cook. “Movies and Political Trauma” [ER]  
Film: All the President’s Men

**24 Sept: Vietnam and Alienation/ A Decade of Crisis**

Berkowitz. Ch 3 & 4, Something Happened  
Selections. O’Brien. The Things They Carried [ER]  
Film: Taxi Driver & The Weather Underground  
**Film Review Due on Friday, Sept 26**

**1 Oct: The Politics of the Personal/ Identity and Rights Discourses**

Duberman, Selections from Midlife Queer [ER]  
Ms. Magazine, Letters to the Editor [ER]  
“Black Feminist Statement” from Combahee River Collective [ER]  
Berkeley, Ch 3 & 4, Women’s Liberation Movement in America [ER]  
Film: Taking Our Bodies Back: the Women's Health Movement

**8 Oct: Black Power & Black Women’s Struggles**

Brown, Elaine. A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story

**15 Oct: Art, Politics & Aesthetics**

Baraka. “Third World Marxist Period” [ER]  
Halleck. Selections from Handheld Visions [ER]  
Selections. The Philosophy of Andy Warhol [ER]  
Sturken. “Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form” [ER]  
Withers. “Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party: A Personal Vision of Women’s History” [ER]

**22 Oct: Vonnegut, Kurt. Breakfast of Champions.**

Lasch. Culture of Narcissism parts 1 & 2  
Film: Nashville

**Analytical Paper 1 Due**

**29 Oct: Cinema of the 1970s/ New American Cinema I & Exploitation Cinema**

Berkowitz. Ch. 9, Something Happened  
Selections. American Cinema of the 1970s [ER]  
Mask. “Movies and the Exploitation of Excess” [ER]  
Williams. Selections from Hard Core [ER]  
Williams. Selections from Screening Sex [ER]

**5 Nov: Popular Music/Popular Cultures**

Echols. Selection from Shaky Ground [ER]  
Shapiro. Selections. Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco [ER]  
Hebdige. Selections. “Subculture: The Meaning of Style”

**12 Nov: Malaise**

Lasch. Selections. Culture of Narcissism

**19 Nov: Neo-Conservatism, Religion, & New Ideological Formations**

Berkowitz. Ch 6 & 8. Something Happened

Bell. "Beyond Modernism, Beyond Self" [ER]

**Analytical Paper 2 Due**

**26 Nov: NO CLASS**

**3 Dec: The Blockbuster and the Entertainment Industry**

Selected advertising of the era [ER]

Berkowitz, Ch. 10, Something Happened

Film/TV: Varied clips

**10 Dec: Hip Hop and New Cultural Formations**

Chang. Introduction- Ch 10, Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation

**LAST DAY OF CLASS**

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE WED, DEC 17 at 2PM IN AMERICAN STUDIES OFFICE (RAB 024)**