

Unsettled Decade: The Sixties

HIS 362

Satisfies: SBS+ [DEC: K]

Professor Robert Chase

Tu/Th 1:15PM - 2:35PM

Few decades in American history have been as contested, unsettled, and revolutionary as the 1960s. By using the term “the Sixties,” this course will analyze the decade of the 1960s as both a watershed in modern U.S. history and as a contested public memory and history that continues to preoccupy scholars, political pundits, and the general public. In addition to offering a narrative of this “long decade” that stretches from the late 1950s through the early 1970s, this course will also analyze how recent scholarship and political and social dialogues have challenged the history of the 1960s. A study of the 1960's, emphasizing conflict within American liberalism between cold warriors and antiwar activists, advocates of the bureaucratic welfare state versus those favoring small-scale community control, and idealized liberalism versus a rising tide of street and student radicalism. Course topics include: 1) Cold War politics and culture; 2) the U.S.-Vietnam War; 3) consumerism and the American economy; 4) the “War on Poverty” and struggles over ideas of social welfare; 5) the political and ideological struggles between liberalism and conservatism; 6) the struggle for civil rights and black freedom; 7) ethnic and racial movements for political power; 8) counterculture, radicalism, and youth movements; and, 9) feminist movements, gender, and the “sexual revolution.” Special attention is given to the paradigmatic qualities of the civil rights movement, the domestic side of the Vietnam War, and the relationship of liberalism to radicalism. This is a lecture-based course where regular attendance is necessary to prepare for mid-term and final exams. Course work will include a midterm, a final, and two critical review essays of secondary sources and primary documents. By drawing upon primary documents, course readings, political speeches, music, pictures and videos of the era this course will reflect on what made this decade so “unsettled.”