



A PROJECT OF PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY FOUNDATION

A History of American Student Activism Syllabus

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DATES: March 21 – April 29, 2005

Throughout modern history, students have been a potent force for social change. In many countries, student uprisings threatened repressive régimes, sometimes causing full social revolutions. **Around the globe and across highly diverse cultures, students have risked their lives to demand democracy, justice, and human rights, and oppose oppression.** The course will cover the history of student activism in the U.S. from the early 20th century to the present. We'll cover the student pacifist movement of the 1930s, student civil rights activism of the 1950s and 60s, and the myriad of movements and issues which mobilized students in the 1970s, 80s, 90s and today. We'll discuss student anti-war and anti-apartheid activism as well as students' ongoing efforts to change the structure and direction of colleges and universities themselves.

In the 21st century United States, student activism is a widespread phenomenon. Student activists use their experiences as students as a springboard into a variety of ongoing political and service activities. This class will examine the phenomenon of political student activism. The material will focus mostly on the United States, with additional reading material detailing student activism around the world. The course begins March 21 and is six weeks long. Tuition is free, however there is space for only 15 participants.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Your Activist History

Do you consider yourself an activist? Why or why not? Have you participated in political activities and organizations? What is your personal activist history and what do you hope to get from this course? **Due Monday, March 28**

Online Participation

<http://academy.youngpeoplefor.org>

Each week you should log into the course website at least twice to get the weekly readings and engage in an online discussion about them. I will send an email on Monday with the readings for the week (either links or an attachment). You should read them, and then post a 2-3 paragraph response in the "Weekly Discussion Forum" for that week. Take a look at the other student's comments and post a reply to at least one. Each week we'll also hold an informal class chat at a time TBD on Wednesdays which you should use to ask questions or make general comments. We'll reconvene after reading the articles and talking about them online on Thursdays for our class conference call at 6 p.m.

Final Project

See below. **Due April 28.**

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Designing an all-online course is difficult, so I'll be taking full advantage of a variety of technologies available to us to make sure the course is as informative, useful, and enjoyable as possible. The course will be administered on a website running the award-winning software Moodle.

Your college or university may offer a similar online tool – take some time to explore the system. If you have any questions or problems using the course website, please let me know!

Here's how our weekly schedule will look:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
- Weekly email with a reminder of the week's readings and topic	<i>Do readings, think</i>	Chat on course website (Time TBA)	Conference call @ 6 p.m.	Rob's office hours (All day)		
<i>All Week: Post 2 comments to the forum on the course website.</i>						

FINAL PROJECT

Below are several options for your final project. The goals of the final project are to encourage you to critically review and reflect on the content of the course, and also to pursue a specific interest related to the course in greater detail. You will be signing up for a time slot on April 8 to talk to me individually about your ideas for a final project. If you have questions or ideas, please contact me.

Local or State Research Paper Project

For this assignment, you will pick a specific local topic to research in detail and write a short research paper about that topic. Have you heard of a local organization that did good work on your campus? You could delve into old newspapers or find documents in a local archive. This project would be more difficult for very obscure and recent subjects – consult with me if you'd like help finding sources or choosing a topic.

Oral History or Interview

Is there an interesting political organization or leader in the region you think deserves closer study? Conduct some preliminary historical research and then conduct an oral history.

Artistic Project

If you are a playwright, dancer, visual artist, or creator of any other type and you think you can incorporate the course into your medium, this option is for you. Please contact me before choosing this option to get your idea approved.

RESOURCES

Optional Text

[Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject](#)
by Mark Edelman Boren

If you're interested in reading more about this subject, Mark Boren's book gives a good overview of student activism – starting with the middle ages!

Articles

A variety of articles and links to websites will be posted on the course website and also distributed via email.

WEEKLY TOPICAL OUTLINE

1. Origins of Student Activism & Theory

This week we'll be introducing ourselves and our backgrounds. We'll also talk a little about student activism in general – what causes it? Why have been students agents of social change? How are students connected to the history of education and the role of education in society more generally?

Readings:

- Raghavan, Sudarsan. "GU Activists Go Hungry To Help Janitors." *Washington Post*. March 21, 2005.

- Sen-lun, Yo. "Mapping the History of Taiwan's Student movements." *Taipei Times*. March 13, 2005.

2. **Black and Womens' Colleges, The Student Pacifist Movement**

Shut out of early American colleges, African Americans and Women create their own institutions of higher learning - we'll discuss their history as protest institutions. In the 1930s, with the memory of "The War to End All Wars" fresh on their mind, American students organize the first powerful, national student movement.

Readings:

- Cohen, Robert. "Student Activism in the 1930s" New Deal Network Project Website.
- Suggs, Ernie. "Fighting to Survive: HBCUs in America" (8-part series). North Carolina Herald Sun. February 9-16, 1997.
- Rossman, Michael. "Looking Back at the Free Speech Movement." Free Speech Movement Archives Project. 1974.
- "SNCC: 1960-1966. Six years of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee." Online Exhibit.

3. **The 1950s and early 1960s: Origins of civil rights movement**

We'll discuss the grassroots origins of the civil rights revolution, and how community and student activists build and achieve a revolutionary transformation of American society.

4. **1967-1972: "The Sixties"**

You've heard about the marches and sit-ins. What really happened? Who were the unsung heroes? Why was America rocked by massive urban and student rebellions?

Readings:

- "Stonewall Riots." Wikipedia Article.
- Halsall, Paul. "People With a Story: An Online Guide to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans History." Primary Source Document Website. 1997-1998.
- CWLU Herstory website. "Jane: An Abortion Service."
- Excerpts, The President's Commission on Campus Unrest. September 1970.
- "The May 1970 Tragedy at Jackson State University." Jackson State University Online Exhibit.

5. **The 1970s and 1980s**

You may have heard that during these decades the activism of the 60s ended. To the contrary, activists institutionalized many of the gains they made during the 1960s at institutions of higher learning and the nuclear freeze and anti-apartheid movements kept the nation's eyes on issues of justice at home and abroad.

- "Legacy of the U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement." The Tavis Smiley Show, NPR. April 28, 2004.
- Brookes, Marissa and Josalee Thrift. "Highlights and Flashbacks: A Brief Sampling of '70s Student Activism at BU" The Student Underground. November 2002, Issue 40.
- Huggins, Nathan I. [Afro-American Studies](#). The Ford Foundation, 1985.

6. **The 1990s To Today**

Students respond to the devastating effect of U.S.-led neoliberal economic policies on poor countries around the world in the anti-corporate and "anti-globalization" movements. The Right continues their attacks on American's civil rights and civil liberties, and students aren't about to let it go unnoticed.

- United Students Against Sweatshops, History Webpage.
- Brownstein, Andrew. "Student Activists Are Making Noise, but Is Anybody Listening?" The Chronicle of Higher Education. August 3, 2001.