

Radical Politics in US History (Research Seminar)
Rutgers-Newark Fall 2017
26:510:553 (History) / 26:050:521 (American Studies)
Mondays 5:30-8:10pm
Conklin 447

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Office hours: Mondays 2-4pm and by appointment (available most afternoons, just email in advance!)

This course is a research seminar dedicated to the study of radical politics and activism in US history, with the ultimate goal of producing a work of original historical research on a relevant topic of your choice. Because the meaning of radicalism will be a continuous subject of class discussion, we do not begin with a fixed definition, but as a broad compass point, let us highlight politics based on a belief in the necessity of overhauling existing parties, systems, and forms of social organization, and working outside of dominant, hegemonic, or consensus beliefs. Or as Angela Davis once put it, noting the word's etymological origins, "*radical* simply means 'grasping things at the root.'"

Our focus will be primarily on left radicalism, for the simple reason that the radical right in US history has a separate history, worthy of its own entire course. Even constricting that genealogy, we cannot possibly cover everything in the US radical tradition, but I have tried to make our readings as broadly inclusive as possible: abolitionism, free lovers, the labor movement, feminism, queer activism, Black and Chicano Power, and as much more as we can cover.

An important note: this is **NOT** a current-events course. We are not here to discuss the Trump administration, Sanders vs. Clinton, Jill Stein, Chris Christie, or the New Jersey gubernatorial election. I care deeply about all of these things, and assume you do too, but such discussions run the risk of dominating our class time. I don't ask you to hide your politics, nor am I terribly concerned about concealing my own, but as a structuring rule of this course, our discussions should stay on texts, histories, methodologies, and analytical critiques. The two formal rules will be:

1. I will shut down commentary that runs into current-events tangents after about 45 seconds; and
2. There is no political litmus test in this course whatsoever, and your grades will reflect your scholarly work, not your opinions.

Readings

There are no books assigned for this course. Instead, we will read an assortment of scholarly journal articles, with some essays from anthologies. All of the articles should be available through databases hosted on the Rutgers library website (<http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>). The easiest way to access them is to do a

search directly from the search bar on the main page, which is automatically set to “articles.”

For the essays and any articles not held in accessible databases, I will post pdfs on the course blackboard.

Note: This will be a **laptops-down** seminar. You must print the articles or bring them on a flat-surface reader, to minimize the distraction that is empirically shown to accompany open laptops.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Punctuality: You are expected to attend every class, from start to finish. Attendance is mandatory. Your overall course grade will be lowered by one letter-notation for each unexcused absence beginning with the third one. More than four absences for any reason will result in a loss of credit for the course. Only *documented* emergencies and medical occasions, or officially school-sanctioned activities, will qualify as excused absences.

Class Participation. All students are required to participate in the discussions during class. As a result, you must arrive at class having completed that day’s reading assignment and prepared to talk about it. A valuable part of discussions is the posing of questions; no one is expected to grasp perfectly the significance of all the readings. Engaged questions are just as important as comments. Your participation grade will reflect both the frequency of your participation (too *much* talking that runs the risk of dominating class time is not an asset) and the quality of your comments and questions. Note that participation also includes active *listening*; sleeping, texting, side conversations, and other forms of non-listening will be met with punitive measures on the participation front.

Grading/Assignments

Course grades will be based on four components:

1. Participation (25%)

The goal here is quality, not quantity, of comments: be thoughtful, engage in dialogue, don’t dominate but do weigh in. Conscious and attentive *listening* is also a form of participation—texting or other distracted/distracting behavior will be considered an offense against the classroom community.

Each student should bring at least one discussion question to each meeting and write it on the board when they arrive—that will help structure our conversations.

2. Short analytical essay (10%)

5-page analytical essay on one of our assigned articles, due in class **Oct. 9**. Formal assignment prompt will be given out in class in advance.

3. Bibliographical essay (15%)

Critical assessment of the relevant secondary scholarship for your research paper, due in class **Nov. 6**. Formal prompt to be distributed.

4. Research paper (50%)

This will be your major effort, an original contribution to historical scholarship, based on primary and secondary sources, on a relevant topic of your choice. Approx. 20-25 pages, due on the last day of final exams, **Friday, December 22**. Formal prompt to be distributed.

Grading Guidelines for written work

- A:** work of exceptional quality, showing profound and meaningful engagement with a rich selection of source material, thoughtful and comparative analysis, superior writing—and most importantly, containing a clear, inventive, and persuasive thesis.
- B:** work that is above average—shows knowledge and/or contains a thesis, but does not develop it as strongly as it could; sources strong but incomplete.
- C:** adequate work that fulfills the assignment—often based on summarizing rather than thesis or analysis.
- D:** subpar work that falls short of fulfilling the assignment but deserves some credit.
- F:** work that fails to earn credit for the assignment, including plagiarism.

Late assignments will not be accepted. Extensions may be negotiated under extenuating circumstances (which do *not* include computer-related issues), with some grade deductions, *before* the due date.

No incompletes will be granted unless the matter has been discussed with me in advance.

Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy, available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>. **All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge.**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any use of the ideas or words of another person without proper acknowledgment of credit will result in penalties up to and including a course grade of F and referral to the academic integrity board. I aspire to be your ally and supporter in all possible ways, but on matters of plagiarism, expect no sympathy. Cases will be handled in a draconian manner, and excuses will not be entertained.

Note that the uncited usage of uncopyrighted material such as Wikipedia entries still constitutes plagiarism.

Students with Disabilities notice:

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation

supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus' disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219, by phone at 973-353-5375 or by email at odsnewark@newark.rutgers.edu.

Policy on Classroom Courtesy

Do not bring food, active cell phones, or other communications devices into the classroom. If you mistakenly do bring an active phone and it rings, silence it immediately; answering will constitute an egregious violation of this course's basic social contract. Texting in class will also result in drastic penalties to your total course grade.

In class discussions, I expect universally respectful interactions. In examining our texts, there may be differing perspectives, disagreements, and debates. This is fine; through such dialogue comes greater understanding. When challenging someone else's perspective, though, refrain from personal attacks or blistering scorn. If someone makes what you consider an offensive or disrespectful comment, note that this does not absolve you of adhering to the iron-clad rule of respect in responding to it.

Failure to abide by these rules may result in a lowered course grade, or removal from the classroom.

Policy on Office Hours

My office hours are for you. Stop by with any questions you have about assignments, readings, classroom discussions, other pertinent topics, or just drop by to say hello. The only thing I discourage is visiting to cover material from a missed class; for that, consult fellow classmates. All else is warmly welcomed. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, we can set up an appointment at a mutually agreeable time.

Content notice

Some of the material in this course will deal with charged issues of race and sexuality, and some material will include coarse language, scenes of violence, and depictions of sexuality. I will try to alert you to anything that might be potentially upsetting in advance, but know that throughout, the course features adult content. If you are concerned about specific triggers, please speak with me early, and I will work with you.

Tentative syllabus of readings (subject to change, with advance notice)

Week 1: 9/11 **Introductions**

Get acquainted, go over syllabus

Short essays to discuss:

Ashley Farmer, "Rosa Parks, Radicalism, and Remembrance," *Black Perspectives*, Feb. 2015

<http://www.aaihs.org/rosa-parks-radicalism-and-remembrance/>

Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou, "Martin Luther King's Radical Legacy, From the Poor People's Campaign to Black Lives Matter," *Dissent*, January 2017

https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/martin-luther-kings-radical-legacy-poor-peoples-campaign-black-lives-matter-socialist

Andrew Hartman, "The Left and Liberalism: A Conversation with James Livingston," *US Intellectual History Blog*, May 2017

<https://s-usih.org/2017/05/the-left-and-liberalism-a-conversation-with-james-livingston/>

Week 2: 9/18

19th century radicalism

Manisha Sinha, "To 'Cast Just Obliquely' on Oppressors: Black Radicalism in the Age of Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 64 (January 2007): 149-160

Hasan Crockett, "The Incendiary Pamphlet: David Walker's Appeal in Georgia," *Journal of Negro History* 86.3 (2001): 305-318

David Roediger, "'Not Only the Ruling Classes to Overcome, but Also the So-Called Mob': Class, Skill and Community in the St. Louis General Strike of 1877," *Journal of Social History* 19.2 (1985): 213-239

Marsha Silberman, "The Perfect Storm: Late Nineteenth-Century Chicago Sex Radicals: Moses Harman, Ida Craddock, Alice Stockham and the Comstock Obscenity Laws," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 102.3/4 (2009): 324-367

Gregg Cantrell and D. Scott Barton, "Texas Populists and the Failure of Biracial Politics," *The Journal of Southern History* 55.4 (1989): 659-692

Jason Kaufman, "Rise and fall of a nation of joiners: The Knights of Labor revisited," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31.4 (2001): 553-579

Week 3: 9/25

Wobblies and Socialists

David Struthers, "'The Boss Has No Color Line': Race, Solidarity, and a Culture of Affinity in Los Angeles and the Borderlands, 1907–1915," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 7.2 (2013): 61-92.

Kornel Chang, "Mobilizing Revolutionary Manhood: Race, Gender, and Resistance in the Pacific Northwest Borderlands" in *The Rising Tide of Color: Race, State Violence, and Radical Movements across the Pacific* Moon-Ho Jung, ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014)

Michael Cohen, "'The Ku Klux Government': Vigilantism, Lynching, and the Repression of the IWW," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1.1 (2007): 31-56.

Daniel J. Johnson, "'No Make-Believe Class Struggle': The Socialist Municipal Campaign in Los Angeles, 1911," *Labor History* 41.1 (2000): 25-45.

David Rabban, "The IWW Free Speech Fights," chapter 2 of *Free Speech in Its Forgotten Years* (Cambridge, 1997)

Week 4: 10/2

Communism and anarchism

Mary Anne Trasciatti, "Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the Sacco–Vanzetti Case, and the Rise and Fall of the Liberal–Radical Alliance, 1920–1940," *American Communist History* 15.2 (2016): 191-216.

LaShawn Harris, "Running with the reds: African American women and the Communist Party during the Great Depression," *The Journal of African American History* 94.1 (2009): 21-43.

Kenyon Zimmer, "Positively Stateless: Marcus Graham, the Ferrero-Sallitto Case, and Anarchist Challenges to Race and Deportation," in Moon-Ho Jung, ed., *The Rising Tide of Color: Race, State Violence, and Radical Movements across the Pacific* (University of Washington Press, 2014)

Van Gosse, "'To Organize in Every Neighborhood, in Every Home': The Gender Politics of American Communists between the Wars," *Radical History Review* 50 (1991): 109-141

Clarence Taylor, "Race, Class, and Police Brutality in New York City: The Role of the Communist Party in the Early Cold War Years," *Journal of African American History* 98.2 (2013): 205-228.

Denise Lynn, "Socialist feminism and triple oppression: Claudia Jones and African American women in American Communism," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 8.2 (2014): 1-20.

Week 5: 10/9

Queer challenges to heteronormativity

Christopher Phelps, "The Closet in the Party: The Young Socialist Alliance, the Socialist Workers Party, and Homosexuality, 1962–1970," *Labor* 10.4 (2013): 11-38

Whitney Strub, "The Homophile Is a Sexual Being: Wallace de Ortega Maxey's Pulp Theology and Gay Activism," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25.2 (2016): 323-353

Terence Kissack, "Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York's Gay Liberation Front, 1969–1971," *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 105-134

Ian Lekus, "Queer harvests: homosexuality, the US New Left, and the Venceremos Brigades to Cuba," *Radical History Review* 89.1 (2004): 57-91

Susana Peña, "Gender and sexuality in Latina/o Miami: Documenting Latina transsexual activists," *Gender & History* 22.3 (2010): 755-772

Samuel Galen Ng, "Trans Power! Sylvia Lee Rivera's STAR and the Black Panther Party," *Left History* 17.1 (2013): 11-41

Week 6: 10/16

New Lefts

Timothy B. Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, "Black power," and the roots of the African American freedom struggle," *The Journal of American History* 85.2 (1998): 540-570

Robin D.G. Kelley, "House Negroes on the loose: Malcolm X and the black bourgeoisie," *Callaloo* 21.2 (1998): 419-435

Besenia Rodriguez, "'Long Live Third World Unity! Long Live Internationalism': Huey P. Newton's Revolutionary Intercommunalism," *Souls* 8.3 (2006): 119-141

Jennifer Frost, "Organizing from the Bottom Up: Lillian Craig, Dovie Thurman, and the Politics of ERAP," *The New Left Revisited*, eds. John McMillian and Paul Buhle (Temple, 2003)

Jennifer Nelson, "'Abortions under Community Control': Feminism, Nationalism, and the Politics of Reproduction among New York City's Young Lords," *Journal of Women's History* 13.1 (2001): 157-180

Justin Jackson, "Kissinger's Kidnapper: Eqbal Ahmad, the US New Left, and the Transnational Romance of Revolutionary War," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 4.1 (2010): 75-119.

Week 7: 10/30

After "The Movement"

Alan Eladio Gómez, "Resisting Living Death at Marion Federal Penitentiary, 1972," *Radical History Review* 2006.96 (2006): 58-86.

Meg Starr, "'Hit Them Harder': Leadership, Solidarity, and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement," in *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, ed. Dan Berger (Rutgers UP, 2010)

Chris Robé, "Detroit Rising: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, Newsreel, and the Making of *Finally Got the News*," *Film History: An International Journal* 28.4 (2016): 125-158

R. Joseph Parrott, "A Luta Continua: radical filmmaking, Pan-African liberation and communal empowerment," *Race & Class* 57.1 (2015): 20-38

Amy Kesselman, "Women's Liberation and the Left in New Haven, Connecticut 1968-1972," *Radical History Review* 81.1 (2001): 15-33

Laurel Clark, "Beyond the Gay/Straight Split: Socialist Feminists in Baltimore," *NWSA Journal* 19.2 (2007): 1-31

Week 8: 11/6

Against the New Right and Neoliberalism

Emily K. Hobson, "'Si Nicaragua Venció': Lesbian and gay solidarity with the revolution." *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4.2 (2012): online <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9hx356m4>

Anthony M. Petro, "Ray Navarro's Jesus Camp, AIDS Activist Video, and the 'New Anti-Catholicism,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (2017): pre-print

Maria Gutierrez de Soldatenko, "Justice for Janitors Latinizing Los Angeles: Mobilizing Latina(o) Cultural Repertoire," *Latino Los Angeles: Transformations, Communities, and Activism*, eds. Enrique Ochoa and Gilda Ochoa (Arizona, 2005)

Andy Merrifield, "The urbanization of labor: Living-wage activism in the American city," *Social Text* 18.1 (2000): 31-54

Francis Dupuis-Déri, "The Black Blocs ten years after Seattle: Anarchism, direct action, and deliberative practices," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 4.2 (2010): 45-82

Weeks 9-15: independent research, individual meetings with professor

NOTE: We will reconvene as a class at least twice in this period, but precise dates to be collectively determined. Students will share and comment upon works in progress.

FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 5pm FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22

Outtakes: articles that couldn't fit, but should be of interest:

Lori D. Ginzberg, "'The Hearts of Your Readers will Shudder': Fanny Wright, Infidelity, and American Freethought," *American Quarterly* 46.2 (1994): 195-226

Amanda Frisken, "Sex in politics: Victoria Woodhull as an American public woman, 1870-1876," *Journal of Women's History* 12.1 (2000): 89-111

Worth Robert Miller, and Stacy G. Ulbig, "Building a Populist Coalition in Texas, 1892-1896," *The Journal of Southern History* 74.2 (2008): 255-296

Matthew Hild, "Organizing Across the Color Line: The Knights of Labor and Black Recruitment Efforts in Small-Town Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 81.2 (1997): 287-310

Barbara Foley, "From Communism to Brotherhood: The Drafts of Invisible Man," in Bill V. Mullen and James A. Smethurst, eds., *Left of the Color Line: Race, Radicalism and Twentieth-Century Literature of the United States* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 163-82.

<https://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/sites/fasn/files/img/Left%20of%20the%20Color%20Line.pdf>

Erik S. McDuffie, "Esther V. Cooper's 'The Negro Woman Domestic Worker in Relation to Trade Unionism': Black Left Feminism and the Popular Front," *American Communist History* 7.2 (2008): 203-209

Robin D.G. Kelley, "'Comrades, Praise Gawd for Lenin and Them!': Ideology and Culture among Black Communists in Alabama, 1930-1935." *Science & Society* (1988): 59-82.

Erik S. McDuffie, "A 'New Freedom Movement of Negro Women': Sojourning for Truth, Justice, and Human Rights during the Early Cold War," *Radical History Review* 101 (2008): 81-106

Martin Meeker, "Behind the mask of respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and male homophile practice, 1950s and 1960s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10.1 (2001): 78-116

Betty Hillman, "'The most profoundly revolutionary act a homosexual can engage in': Drag and the Politics of Gender Presentation in the San Francisco Gay Liberation Movement, 1964-1972," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20.1 (2011): 153-181

Abram J. Lewis, "'I Am 64 and Paul McCartney Doesn't Care' The Haunting of the Transgender Archive and the Challenges of Queer History." *Radical History Review* 2014.120 (2014): 13-34

Jessi Gan, "'Still at the back of the bus': Sylvia Rivera's struggle," *Centro Journal* 19.1 (2007): 124-139

Abram J. Lewis, "'We Are Certain of Our Own Insanity': Antipsychiatry and the Gay Liberation Movement, 1968-1980." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25.1 (2016): 83-113.

Mickie Mwanzia Koster, "Malcolm X, The Mau Mau, and Kenya's New Revolutionaries: A Legacy of Transnationalism," *Journal of African American History* 100.2 (2015): 250-271

Choonib Lee, "Women's Liberation and Sixties Armed Resistance," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 11.1 (2017): 25-51

Donna Murch, "The Campus and the Street: Race, Migration, and the Origins of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, CA," *Souls* 9.4 (2007): 333-345

Judson Jeffries, "From gang-bangers to urban revolutionaries: The Young Lords of Chicago." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (2003): 288-304.

Gary Dorrien, "Michael Harrington and the 'Left Wing of the Possible,'" *CrossCurrents* 60.2 (2010): 257-282

Ashley D. Farmer, "Mothers of Pan-Africanism: Audley Moore and Dara Abubakari," *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 4.2 (2016): 274-295

Erik S. McDuffie, "'I wanted a Communist philosophy, but I wanted us to have a chance to organize our people': the diasporic radicalism of Queen Mother Audley Moore and the origins of black power," *African and black diaspora: an international journal* 3.2 (2010): 181-195

Dan Berger, "Carceral Migrations: Black Power and Slavery in 1970s California Prison Radicalism," in *The Rising Tide of Color* (2014)

Christine Lamberson, "The Zebra Murders: Race, Civil Liberties, and Radical Politics in San Francisco," *Journal of Urban History* 42.1 (2016): 201-225

David P. Stein, "'This Nation Has Never Honestly Dealt with the Question of a Peacetime Economy': Coretta Scott King and the Struggle for a Nonviolent Economy in the 1970s," *Souls* 18.1 (2016): 80-105

Cynthia Cranford, "Gendered Resistance: Organizing Justice for Janitors in Los Angeles," *Challenging the Market: The Struggle to Regulate Work and Income*, eds. Jim Stanford and Leah Vosko (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004)

In Memoriam

Hannah Frank, "Traces of the World: Cel Animation and Photography," *Animation* 11.1 (2016): 23-39

Hannah Frank, "'Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain': thinking through Eisenstein's Macbeth drawings," *Critical Quarterly* 59.1 (2017): 70-84

Hannah Frank was not an historian, but a film scholar whose work was very much informed by a sense of radical politics and history, engaging with the visible traces of labor on images in animated film, and the sketches done by one of the most radical filmmakers to ever (almost) work in Hollywood. She passed away suddenly, unexpectedly, and tragically just before this semester began, and I include these suggested readings as a tribute to her.