

## The Cultural and Intellectual History of Your Parents' Generation (1970s-'90s)

**Professor J. Ratner-Rosenhagen**  
Spring 2018 \* Online course \* 3 credits  
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In recent years there has been a flurry of scholarship putting American intellectual and cultural life of the 1970s through the early '90s in its historical context. Historians have focused on the dramatic transformations in American thought and culture ushered in by political realignments after the cresting of New Left enthusiasm and the surge of neo-conservatism, the rise of a politically-focused Christian fundamentalism, developments in higher education, and the emergence of de- and post-industrialism. Referred to as the “great shift,” the “great U-turn,” the “age of fracture,” and the “world turned inside out,” the 1970s and 80s—the immediate prehistory of (most of) your lives, the decades in which your parents grew up and into adulthood—will serve as the basis of this online course.

While the course aims to familiarize you with the vibrant cultural and intellectual history of 1970s & 80s-era American thought and culture, it also seeks to introduce you to the history of generations—your parents' in particular. It aims to offer you a view of your parents' early life experiences within the historical contexts that shaped them. And it hopes to give you a view of your parents as historical subjects—compelling figures in the drama of American life—in their own right.

Buyer beware! This is not a blow-off class. It's a full 3-credit History course, so we will be covering a semester's worth of material from now until early May. So plan on spending up to 2-3 hours per day working through the course material and assignments. But you can also expect to find this a fun and interesting—if also rigorous—history class.

## **Reading**

The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore and are on 3-hour Reserve at the College Library:

Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (2010)

All other readings (articles, essays, etc... are posted to our course website in each week's "module").

## **Assignments and Grading**

All reading and writing assignments listed on the syllabus are mandatory. The assignments and percentage of your final grade are listed below:

1. Quizzes on the readings and mini lectures. 50%
2. Parents' Survey. 5%
3. "Drawing Connections" 3-page essay. 10%
4. Peer Reflections on classmates' surveys. 5%
5. Midterm. 10%
6. Final Paper. 20%

**Quizzes:** You will have regular quizzes which will ensure that you understood and mastered the readings and will also help draw you to the ongoing themes of the course. The lowest grade will be dropped. There will be no make-up quizzes.

**Parents' Survey:** This is your first assignment, in which you will interview your parents with a questionnaire we provide. It is sufficient to get answers for one parent, though you are encouraged to get them for both if possible. (If you prefer, you are welcome to interview anyone who came of age anytime from the mid-sixties through the mid-eighties instead of a parent). To be submitted in "assignments" tab in canvas.

**"Drawing Connections" 3-Page Essay:** After filling out the survey, your assignment is to examine the connections between your parents' memories on the survey and one or more of this week's readings (Howe & Strauss, Jaeger, and/or Esler). Either use the ideas from the readings to frame your parents' answers and experiences, or use your parents' experiences to push back against the readings, or a combination of the two. To be submitted in "assignments" tab in canvas.

**Reflection on Classmates' Surveys.** Your assignment is to read your class cohort's surveys and then write a 250-word reflection answering the following question: "What striking differences and/or similarities do you notice between your parents' surveys and 2 to three of your classmates' surveys, and what do you make of those differences?" The aim here is simple, which is to just get you thinking about your parents in the context of other parents of their generation to see if there are noticeable common themes and concerns or not. You are welcome to reach out to classmates in your cohort to discuss or share ideas, but you are not expected to critique each others' surveys or post an online debate about it. To be submitted in "assignments" tab in canvas.

**Midterm. A combination of multiple choice, i.d.s, and short answer.**

**Final Paper.** A 6-page reflection on some aspect of your parents' lives in the context of the history we learned in the course. The goal is to see your parent(s) as a historical figure whose life was shaped by the America of the 1970s & 80s they grew up in. This will require no outside research; it will simply involve you drawing on the materials from the course and (possibly) re-interviewing your parents in light of what you learned. To be submitted in "assignments" tab in canvas.

## Course Logistics

For the next 9 weeks, the weekly schedule is more or less the same. It will look something like this:

### **WEEK #, Module #: *A Theme in 1970s-90's US History***

1. **Introduction** to the week short video
2. An occasional short **Powerpoint mini-lecture**
3. A cluster of **readings** (either chapters in the book or articles and essays posted in the module)
4. An occasional **primary source** to review (music video, song lyrics, advertisements, etc...)
5. A short timed **quiz** on the lecture/readings (available Tuesdays 7 a.m. until Wednesdays 7 a.m.)
6. Another occasional **short Powerpoint**
7. A cluster of **readings** (either chapters in the book or article and essays posted to the page)
8. An occasional **primary source** to review (music video, song lyrics, advertisements, etc...)
9. A second short timed **quiz** on the lecture/readings (available Friday 7 a.m. until Saturday 7 a.m.)

So, in effect, every week you will have readings, a supplementary mini-lecture or two, possibly some primary sources to review, and 2 quizzes. It is recommended that you read the material in the order it appears on the syllabus, and if you want to read ahead you are welcome to do so. But note: **the quizzes will only be available for a 24-hour period (Weekly quiz 1: Tuesdays 7 a.m. to Wednesdays 7 a.m.; Weekly quiz 2: Fridays 7 a.m. Saturday 7 a.m. You can take the quiz ANYTIME during this 24-hour window, but if you don't take it during this period you will receive a zero for your grade—no make ups, no exceptions).** Also, **the quizzes are timed, so once you start it, you will have 5 minutes to complete it if it is a 5-point quiz, and 12 minutes to complete it if it is a 10-point quiz.** The majority of the quizzes will be 10-point quizzes.)

### **Additional Logistics for the Next Three Weeks**

The schedule for the first three weeks will look like this schedule above, but you will also have additional work to submit: a. your parents' survey, b. your "Making Connections" essay, and c. your Reflections on Classmates' Surveys. Please note the schedule:

Week 2:

March 8: Parent Survey AND "Drawing Connections" Essay due by 9 a.m. To be submitted in "assignments" tab in canvas.

Week 3:

March 15: Reflections on Classmates Surveys due by 9 a.m. To be submitted in "assignments" tab in canvas.

### Class Cohorts

As sometimes taking an online class can feel a little isolating because there is no classroom where you can meet and dialogue with classmates, this class provides you a "class cohort." Students are broken down into groups of 5-6 classmates, in order to foster a sense a community, fellowship, and to enable you to be resources for one another. Only one assignment requires that you look at your cohorts' work (the "Reflection on Classmates' Survey" assignment, based on your reading of your cohort's parents' surveys). But the cohorts will remain in place so that you can stay in contact with one another through the duration of the course. Please use each other as resources. If you have a question about a reading or something about the class, you are encouraged to consult classmates in your cohort first (and only after that to reach out to the professor). If you want to have classmates with whom to discuss the readings or ideas, your cohort is there for that. You can even arrange web conferences to "meet" up with each other. **Just note: all of the work in the class must be your own. There are no collaborative assignments. And you are not permitted to take quizzes or the midterm together or to discuss them while you are taking them. Collaborating on the quizzes and/or the midterm is considered cheating and you will be penalized for it.**

## **Technical Difficulties**

If you have any technical difficulties with the website, please contact DoIt Help Desk. Professor Ratner-Rosenhagen is an expert of U.S. History, not canvas or technological issues.

## **Announcements**

Professor Ratner-Rosenhagen will post any additional communications or information you need in the “announcements” tab.

## **Academic Expectations**

Students in this course will be expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. With the exception of quizzes and the midterm, students are welcome to discuss their readings and ideas with classmates through the “discussion” function, and can set up “meetings” with each other through web conference rooms. However, none of the assignments are group projects, so your work must be your own. Any form of academic misconduct such as cheating or plagiarism will be prosecuted in accordance with the “Student Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures” at <http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/pdf/UWS14.pdf>.

This policy is very clear. But let me take this opportunity to doubly clear about academic honesty. *All work in this class must be your own.* Every assignment, every paragraph, and every sentence therein. If you use someone else’s words verbatim—whether from a written or online source or a classmate—you must provide quotation marks. If you paraphrase some else’s words—whether from a written or online source or a classmate—you must provide the appropriate citation. Any use of someone else’s words or ideas without proper acknowledgement is plagiarism. And any collaborating on quizzes will be considered cheating. There’s no wiggle room here.

## **Students Who Need Special Academic Accommodations**

Please notify me in the *first week of the semester* if you have a documented requirement for accommodation in this course. If you have any questions about this or require any assistance, feel free to contact me or the McBurney Disability Resource Center at 263-2741.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1, starting February 26: History of a Generation, History Through a Generation**

1. Introductory Video
2. Read: Neil Howe and William Strauss, selections from *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584-2069* (1991).
3. Take Quiz 1
4. Powerpoint: What Makes a Generation?: Rethinking Groupings and Age Cohorts in History
5. Read: Hans Jaeger, “Generations in History: Reflections on a Controversial Concept,” in: *History and Theory* 24:3 (Oct. 1985): 273-92; and Anthony Esler, “Generations in History” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2015): 857-860.
6. Take Quiz 2

### **Week 2, starting March 5: Economic and Political Transformations in the 1970s**

1. Introductory Video
2. Powerpoint: The Seventies: That “Slum” of a Decade

3. Read: Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive* (Introduction: "Something's Happening to People Like Me," "Hope in the Confusion," & "Old Fashioned Heroes of the New Working Class.")
  4. Take Quiz 3
  5. Powerpoint: Seventies' Futurology and Primary vs. Secondary Sources
  6. Read: Matthew Connelly, "Future Shock: The End of the World as They Knew It" (2010); and Alvin Toffler, selections from *Future Shock* (1970).
  7. Take Quiz 4
- \*Parents' Survey and "Drawing Connections" 3-Page Essay due by March 8 at 9 a.m. in "assignments" tab.

**Parents' Survey:** Interview your parents with the questionnaire we provide. It is sufficient to get answers for one parent, though you are encouraged to get them for both if possible. (If you prefer, you are welcome to interview anyone who came of age anytime from the mid-sixties through the mid-eighties instead of a parent).

**"Drawing Connections" 3-Page Essay:** After filling out the survey, your assignment is to examine the connections between your parents' memories on the survey and one or more of this week's readings (Howe & Strauss, Jaeger, and/or Esler). Either use the ideas from the readings to frame your parents' answers and experiences, or use your parents' experiences to push back against the readings, or a combination of the two.

### **Week 3, starting March 12: Working Class Blues, White Rage, and Political Realignments in the Age of Evaporated Optimism**

1. Introductory Video
  2. Read Cowie, "What Kind of Delegation is This?," "Nixon's Class Struggle," & "I'm Dying Here," from *Stayin' Alive*.
  3. Watch the video clip of Merle Haggard at the White House, and the 3 video clips from "All in the Family"
  4. Take Quiz 5
  5. Powerpoint: Introduction to Historiography
  6. Read Cowie, "Despair in the Order," "A Collective Sadness," & "The New Deal that Never Happened" from *Stayin' Alive*.
  7. Take Quiz 6
- \*Reflection on Classmates' Surveys due by March 15 at 9 a.m. in "assignments" tab.

**Reflection on Classmates' Surveys:** Your assignment is to read your class cohorts' surveys and then write a 250-word reflection answering the following question "What striking differences and/or similarities do you notice between your parents' surveys and 2-3 of your classmates' surveys, and what do you make of those differences?" The aim here is simple-- to get you thinking about your parents in the context of other parents of their generation to see if there are noticeable common themes and concerns or not. You are welcome to reach out to classmates in your cohort to discuss or share ideas, but you are not expected to critique each other's surveys or post an online debate about it. You are reading others' surveys primarily to better reflect on your own parents' surveys.

### **Week 4, starting March 19: Women, Feminism, the Family, and the Division of Class Lines**

1. Introductory Video
2. Read: Cowie, "The Important Sounds of Things Falling Apart," from *Stayin' Alive*; and Beth Bailey, "She Can Bring Home the Bacon: Negotiating Gender in Seventies America" from Bailey and Faber, eds., *America in the 70s* (2004), 107-28.
3. Watch: Historian Linda Gordon discussing history of birth control. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?306496-1/history-birth-control-america>
4. Powerpoint: Women and Class: Redrawing the Boundaries of "We"
5. Read: Robin Morgan and New York Radical Women, "No More Miss America" (1968); Boston Women's Health Collective, selection from *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1971); Alex Comfort, ed., selection from *The Joy of Sex* (1972); Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights'" (1972); and Anselma Dell' Olio, "The Sexual Revolution Wasn't Our War," *Ms. Magazine* (Spring 1972).

6. Watch: "Norma Rae" (1979) (length: 2 hours, 3 mins)
7. Take Midterm. (Available from Thursday, March 22 at 4 p.m. until Sunday, March 25 at 7 p.m.)

### **Week 5, starting March 26: Spring Break. No Coursework**

### **Week 6, starting April 2: Falling Apart, Coming Together, and Growing Up**

1. Introductory Video
2. Read: Cowie "Dead Man's Town" from *Stayin' Alive*; Christopher Capozzola, "It makes you want to Believe in the Country": Celebrating the Bicentennial in an Age of Limits," from Bailey and Faber, eds., *America in the 70s* (2004), 107-28.
3. Watch: "The Great American Birthday Party" (1976)
4. Take Quiz 7
5. Powerpoint: You are Never Too Young to Change the World: Remaking Childhood, Remaking Society
6. Read: Leslie Paris, "Happily Ever After: *Free to Be You and Me*, Second-Wave Feminism, and 1970's American Children's Culture" (2011); Bruno Bettelheim, from *Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976); and Shel Silverstein, poems.
7. Take Quiz 8

### **Week 7, starting April 9: Spiritual Quests and Market Dreams**

1. Introductory Video
2. Powerpoint: American Individualism in the '70s and '80s: Dawn or Twilight?
3. Read: Merlin Stone, excerpt from *When God was a Woman* (1976); Robert Bellah, et al, from *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (1985); and Robert Putnam, "Thinking about Social Change in America," *Bowling Alone* (2000). Note: the Putnam text is available online at: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/assoc/bowling.html>
5. Take Quiz 9
6. Powerpoint: The Religion of the Free Market
7. Read: Daniel T. Rodgers, Prologue and "The Rediscovery of the Market," from *Age of Fracture* (2011): 1-14, 41-76; and Fred Turner, "Where the Counterculture Met the New Economy: The Well and the Origins of Virtual Community," *Technology and Culture* 46 (July 2005): 485-512.
8. Take Quiz 10

### **Week 8, starting April 16: New Faultlines in the 1980s: Gender and Race in the "Age of Fracture"**

1. Introductory Video
2. Read: Rodgers, "Gender and Certainty" from *Age of Fracture*, 144-79; and Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" (1977) and "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1984).
3. Powerpoint: The Art and Vision of Barbara Kruger
4. Take Quiz 11
5. Powerpoint: Race Matters
6. Read: Rodgers, "Race and Social Memory," from *Age of Fracture*, 111-43; and Stanley Fish, "How the Right Hijacked the Magic Words," *New York Times* (1995). Note: the Fish text is available online at: <http://www.drugsense.org/tfy/hijacked.html>
7. Watch: Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989) (length: 2 hours, 5 mins)
8. Take Quiz 12

## **Week 9, starting April 23: The Culture Wars for the “Soul” of America**

1. Introductory Video and Discussion of the Final Assignment
2. Powerpoint: E Pluribus Unum?
3. Read: Andrew Hartman, “A Trojan Horse for Social Engineering: The Curriculum Wars in Recent American History,” *The Journal of Policy History*, 25 (2013), 114-36; Joan Wallach Scott, “Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity,” from John Rajchman, ed., *The Identity in Question* (1995): 3-14; Edward Said, selection from *Orientalism* (1973); and Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (1980).
4. Watch: Allan Bloom, “Higher Education has failed Democracy,” *Firing Line* with William F. Buckley (1987); and Patrick Buchanan’s “Culture War” speech at the Republican National Convention (1992)
5. Read: Allan Bloom, selection from *The Closing of the American Mind* Lynn Cheney, excerpt from *Telling the Truth about History*. Note: the Cheney text is online at: <http://www.historyplace.com/pointsofview/cheney.htm>
6. Take Quiz 13

## **Week 10, starting April 30: Work on Your Final Essay**

**Your Essay on “*My Parents in History, History in My Parents’ Lives*,” is due in “Assignments” by Monday, May 7 at 9 a.m.**