

Course prospectus for Fall 2019: America 1968

It has been 50 years since 1968.

The year 1968 was a critical nexus of U.S. and world history, culture, political science, technology, art, sociology, music, fashion, psychology, etc., etc. Looking back, we can see many social and cultural threads that started earlier in the 20th century, passed through the tumultuous years of the late '60s, and still linger with us today. *This is a proposed special topics course to examine the meaning and impact of these threads.*

Among the potential topics are:

- Civil rights in America...
- Space exploration...
- The environmental movement...
- The American Indian experience...
- The Cold War and Vietnam...
- The American political party system...
- Pop Art...
- Psychedelic drugs and drug culture...
- The Pill...
- Studio music and electronic synthesis...
- 1968 films: 2001, Planet of the Apes, The Green Berets; (1967: The Graduate, 1969: Butch Cassidy)
- Hippies, Yippies, Woodstock...
- ...and many, many more potential ideas.

The Course Concept

The course will contain six *threads*, with each thread occupying approximately two weeks of the semester. The thread topics will be conceived deliberately so that connections and cross-linkages are made clear.

The in-class format will encourage the use of multimedia: videos, film clips, audio recordings, images, examples, artifacts, etc., to create a dynamic and compelling classroom environment.

The out-of-class work will emphasize key readings, discussion, writing, and observation.

The student products will be *journal entries, reading responses, essays*, and a *culminating activity* presented by the students. The culminating activity might include posters, discussion panels, dramatic presentations, student films/music, and other creative examples.

The proposed course format: 3 credits, two class meetings per week. Class size: aim high?

The coordinating committee (instructors) for the course will first need to choose the six particular “threads” and decide who will be responsible for preparing and presenting each portion of the course.

This will likely mean six key instructors, each having a “back room” of others who contribute ideas, instructional material, or direct participation.

Besides the intellectual challenge of deciding how best to present the thread, the key instructors will need to have a set of planning meetings in which the linkages between and within the threads are highlighted. For example, an *American politics* thread and a *music and art* thread will have ways of understanding the mutual influence of these forces upon each other, and the corresponding threads will highlight the mutuality.

Example framework

An example, using six somewhat arbitrarily chosen threads:

1. Environmental movement
2. Civil Rights in U.S.
3. Cold War and Vietnam
4. American political parties
5. Space Exploration
6. Art and culture.

Each thread will occupy three periods of class time (225 minutes). Each thread is conceived to consider (i) events and ideas that preceded 1968, (ii) explain the key events in the late 60s that reflect the zeitgeist, and then (iii) consider what has happened in the 50 years since.

In a particular thread, the instructor(s) will create a set of learning experiences for the students, including lecture, discussion, videos/movies, guest speakers, demonstrations, and so forth. Instructors will also assign appropriate out-of-class readings, supplementary material, “homework” exercises, etc.

After each pair of two threads, a week will be devoted to reflection and writing. Class time will be used for peer-reading of classmates’ essays and comments, and ideally there will be time for a relevant film or other event—probably in the evening outside of class time.

The last two weeks of the semester will have special presentations further tying together the various threads. One possibility is to have a marquee lecture looking back critically over the last 50 years and consider what has truly changed and what has largely remained unchanged, then try to extrapolate the threads into the future.

Week	Topic Tuesday	Topic Thursday
1	Course Intro	Documentary Film
2	Thread 1: Environmental Mvmt.	Thread 1 (cont.)
3	Thread 1: (cont.)	Thread 2: Civil Rights in U.S.

4	Thread 2: (cont.)	Thread 2: (cont.)
5	Film or other event	Reflection/writing
6	Thread 3: Cold War and Vietnam	Thread 3: (cont.)
7	Thread 3: (cont.)	Thread 4: American political parties
8	Thread 4: (cont.)	Thread 4: (cont.)
9	Film or other event	Reflection/writing
10	Thread 5: Space Exploration	Thread 5: (cont.)
11	Thread 5: (cont.)	Thread 6: Art and culture
12	Thread 6: (cont.)	Thread 6: (cont.)
13	Film or other event	Reflection/writing
14	1968: looking 50 years back	1968: looking 50 years ahead
15	Culminating event	Culminating event

Course Development Process

April 2018: Initial meetings with interested faculty. Identify other potential faculty collaborators.

May 2018: Consultation with academic deans and academic affairs to seek endorsement and support resources.

June 2018: Determine participants and tentative thread topics.

August 2018: Secondary meetings with interested faculty. Special Topics course proposal.

September-December 2018: Identify/finalize the individuals responsible for each thread.

Spring 2019: Key faculty team meetings. Publicity and student recruiting.

Summer 2019: Course schedule finalized and “dress rehearsals.”

Fall 2019: Showtime!