The United States was a nation born in rebellion, an experience that has been the wellspring of democratic revitalization ever since. Yet despite this tradition, American elites quickly developed an aversion to movements that engaged in rebellion or individuals who challenged the status quo. When rebellion threatened fundamental social and political change, when it raised questions of class division and the inequitable distribution of wealth—in short, when it questioned institutions or practices that seemed to prevent the realization of the democratic promise—its advocates often found themselves the targets of state repression or unofficial persecution. We will explore this historical dynamic and consider those moments when rebellion challenged the dominant consensus. Equally important, we will ask the question: what impact did dissent have? What social or political legacy did it leave? No less significant is how frequently repression has followed dissent. This, too, is a key theme of the course. We seek to understand the intellectual content of this tradition of resistance.

Let’s be clear about something from the beginning: the success of this class depends largely on your willingness to read thoughtfully, participate actively, and take detailed notes. If you miss class and ignore readings, you can expect disappointing results. It really is that simple. The good news is you know exactly what you need to do in order to succeed. Even better, I’m sincerely interested in seeing you succeed. Let’s work together to achieve that goal.

Please note also: computers and cellphones are prohibited during class, though opportunities will be provided for checking your messages. The idea is to create an atmosphere that promotes genuine intellectual inquiry and exchange; technology in the classroom, though indispensable in our world, generally militates against these objectives. Please respect this requirement.

**Required Readings**

Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps, *Radicals in America: The History of the US Left Since the Second World War*

Harry Fisher, *Comrades: Tales of a Brigadista in the Spanish Civil War*

**Course requirements**

Book commentary: 15%. On Steve Fraser’s *The Age of Acquiescence*. What explains the social rebellions, the “great refusal,” of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era? What forms did it take, and what social perspectives or values did it generate? Should be 750-1000 words.

Midterm test: 15%.

Class participation: 10%. This is based on class attendance, participation in class discussions that provide evidence of a thoughtful consideration of assigned texts, and involvement in class activities, including the production of a play. You need not appear onstage, but you are expected take some active part in the production.

Essay: 30%. Use *Radicals in America* as a starting point for an essay on the left and political dissent in the postwar period. Your essay should address at least one chapter in this book,
but it much extend into at least two primary sources and four-five additional secondary sources. Should be 8-10 pages.

Final exam: 30%. This will cover most of what we have learned, with a few exceptions. It will rely extensively on class lectures and discussions, and will take place during the regular exam schedule.

Assignment due dates and percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm test, 15%</td>
<td>February 6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book commentary 15%</td>
<td>February 2nd (this is a Friday—please submit to office by 4:30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay, 30%</td>
<td>March 22nd (note: proposal due on March 1st)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam 30%</td>
<td>Exam schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation, 10%</td>
<td>Throughout the term</td>
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Course reading schedule

Please note: instructor reserves the right to modify assigned readings.

Please note: the links to the electronic versions of readings will be available via Acorn. Some readings will be available only on reserve in the library. Please note: the professor reserves the right to make reasonable adjustments to the reading schedule.

January 9th, 11th: Welcome and course introduction. The tremors of the Gilded Age and its social ramifications. Fraser, The Age of Acquiescence, chapters one and two.

January 16th, 18th: popular movements and dissident intellectuals. Required reading: Fraser, The Age of Acquiescence, chapters 3-5.


February 13th, 15th: The turbulent decade—the unemployed organize; labor resurgent, communists and socialists move into the mainstream. Fraser, The Age of Acquiescence, chapter seven; Fisher, Comrades, chapters three to seven.
20th, 22nd: Reading Week. Please complete Harry Fisher’s *Comrades*.

**February 27th, March 1st:** The anticommunist deluge—repression and the drive for conformity in postwar America; was communism a threat? Required Readings: Maurice Isserman, “Open Minds and Open Archives: Traditionalists Versus Revisionists After Venona;” K.A. Cuordileone, “The Torment of Secrecy: Reckoning with Communism and Anti-Communism after Venona” (Tuesday); Brick and Phelps, *Radicals in America*, introduction and chapter one (Thursday.)


**March 13th, 15th:** Black power activism, antiwar agitation, and the rise of a new women’s movement. Readings: Brick and Phelps, *Radicals in America*, chapters four and five.

**March 20, 22nd:** The economic calamity of the 1970s and the search for full employment; deindustrialization, anti-unionism, and the working-class response; the maturing and expansion of social movements in an era of conservative reaction. Readings: Brick and Phelps, *Radicals in America*, chapters five and six.

**March 27th, 29th:** The origins of an anti-corporate critique, the revival of organized labor, and the challenges of globalizing capitalism; the revival of the women’s movement, the persistence of racial divisions, and the collapse of political alternatives. Readings: Brick and Phelps, *Radicals in America*, chapter seven and conclusion.

**April 3rd, 5th:** The renewal of a socialist alternative; the future of the working-class in America. Readings to be announced. Required Reading: Harold Meyerson, “If Labor Dies, What’s Next?” http://prospect.org/article/if-labor-dies-whats-next

*If you are a student with a documented disability who anticipates needing accommodations in this course, please inform me after you meet Jill Davies or Kathy O’Rourke in Disability Access Services, Student Resource Centre, lower floor of the Old SUB (Old Student Union Building). Their contact information is disability.access@acadiau.ca. 585-1823.*