This long decade profoundly influences contemporary America life and culture, but our grasp of its historical significance is clouded by myth, distortion, and ideology. This course seeks to strip away some of those misconceptions so that we can better understand the defining political and cultural developments of the turbulent 1960s. It also seeks to examine “the sixties” in its historical context. We aim to explain the economic and demographic forces that made this era possible, and to understand how this tumultuous period fit into the longer saga of American democracy, social reform, the struggle for individual liberties, and foreign intervention. The rise of student protests, the emergence of the New Left, the development and impact of the black freedom struggle, the coalescence of the counterculture, and the descent into the quagmire of Vietnam form the key historical landmarks of our investigation. Just as important, however, is the “other 1960s”—the rise of a conservative movement that would dominate American life in the late twentieth century. There was more than one “1960s,” and this course will explore those distinctions. It will examine cultural developments, but it is not simply an excursion into popular culture. Most importantly, it will investigate the social and political upheavals that defined the era. Our ultimate objective is to understand the legacy of the 1960s and why it continues to be so divisive in contemporary America.

A few important caveats are in order. First, considering that this course relies extensively on lectures, it is vital that you take detailed notes. I cannot emphasize this enough. Relying exclusively on the brief notes made available to you on the powerpoint slides will yield disappointing results and a shallow education. You should quickly get into the habit of taking 2 and ½ to 3 single-spaced pages of notes in each class. These will be indispensable to you on assignments and the final exam. Second, please be advised that the use of the laptop for any other reason than note-taking is strictly prohibited. The illicit use of the laptop—or cellphone or tablet or text-messaging device—in class invites distraction, irritates the professor, and detracts from the atmosphere of intellectual inquiry that should prevail in each class. Please respect this guideline.

Finally, while lectures are important, they are necessarily interactive. That requires your participation, and your participation is only made possible by reading the assigned material. Class discussions provide an exceptional opportunity for active learning. In order to benefit fully, you must read for class and arrive prepared to discuss the ideas you encounter. Class interaction is also the key route to earning class participation marks. The professor reserves the right to make minor adjustments to the reading schedule. Finally, requests for a re-write will be considered on a case-by-case basis and only during a live visit to office hours.

**Required Books**
Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and the Dawn of the 1960s*

Joseph Palermo, *Robert Kennedy and the Death of American Idealism*

Jeff Kisseloff, *Generation on Fire: Voices of Protest From the 1960s*

**Assignments**

Midterm Test, 15% (October 4th).

**Analytical essay** on Coontz, *A Strange Stirring* 5-6 pages, double-spaced, 15% (Due: October 15th). Analyze the key arguments, intellectual contribution, and historical significance of the subject matter examined in *A Strange Stirring*. Use at least one additional scholarly source that provides contrasting interpretations or that further illuminates the issues explored in the book. Also, your commentary should incorporate the perspective or experience of at least one person featured in *Generation on Fire*.

**Analytical essay** on Palermo, *Robert F. Kennedy*, 6-8 pages, double-spaced, 20% (Due: Tuesday, November 19th, in class.) Analyze the key arguments, intellectual significance, and historical importance of the subject matter examined in *Robert F. Kennedy and the Death of American Idealism*. Use at least three additional scholarly sources that provide contrasting interpretations or that further illuminate the issues explored in the book. In addition, your analysis should include at least two figures featured in *Generation on Fire*.

**Film commentary**: 5%. This brief 2-3 page commentary will be based on a film shown in class. Due: November 29th during office hours.

**Final exam** 30%.

**Class participation**: 15%. This will include class discussions, class activities, debates, presentations, and reading responses.

Please note: all assignments should be double-spaced using normal margins.

**Reading and assignment schedule**

**Week of September 2nd**: Welcome to the class and an introduction to the pre-history of the 1960s.

**Week of September 9th**: The promise and discontent of the postwar era; intellectual dissent in the age of conformity; the Freedom Rides and Kennedy. Alan Brinkley, “The Illusion of Unity in Cold War Culture,” in *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, on reserve.


**Week of September 23rd**: Lyndon Johnson, the Great Society, and the little-known achievements of 1960s liberalism; student protest and free speech at Berkeley. Wini Breines, “Of This Generation: The

Week of September 30th  The origins and significance of the counterculture; a sexual revolution for some. Coontz, A Strange Stirring, introduction, chapters one-four; Tuesday; Coontz, A Strange Stirring, chapters 5-9, Thursday.


Week of October 14th  The other 1960s: the origins of a modern conservative movement, popular culture and the 1960s, social mores a-changing. James Hijiya, “The Conservative 1960s”; Karen Dunak, “'Heed Your Creed, Fall in Love and Get Married': New Left Ideology and Romantic Relationships,” (Thursday.) Note: essay commentary due on Tuesday, October 15th, in class.

Week of October 21st  The Fire This Time: The Summer of Love, the Long Hot Summer of 1967, and the Kerner Commission; the challenge of black power and the white response. Palermo, Robert F. Kennedy and the Death of American Idealism, introduction, chapters one-five.

Week of October 28th  Year of Decision, Year of Disaster: 1968; Martin Luther King and the social democratic critique of contemporary America. Palermo, Robert Kennedy, chapters six-ten.

Week of November 4th  The New Left in crisis, the anti-war movement crests, the counterculture in decline (?) Kisseloff, Generation on Fire, 81-151 (Thursday.)

Week of November 11th  Women and the dream of equality; Latinos and the effort to organize; the rise of Richard Nixon; the counterattack on American dissent on university campuses. Kisseloff, Generation on Fire, 152-166, 183-265. Sarah Evans, “Sons, Daughters, and Patriarchy: Gender and the 1968 Generation.”

Week of November 18th  The international 1960s; environmental awakenings, the rise and repression of black power, Yohuru Williams, “Some Abstract Thing Called Freedom’: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Legacy of the Black Panther Party”; Ryan Kirby, “'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised': Community Activism and the Black Panther Party, 1966-1971”(Thursday.) Note: 2nd essay commentary due in class, Tuesday, November 19th.

Week of November 25th  the economic crisis of the 1970s, Descent into Watergate, retreat from Vietnam, the persistence of reform and social change in the 1970s. Film commentary due, November 29th during office hours.

Week of December 2nd  the last hope of democratic reform in 1972; the American 1960s in historical memory.
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 jill.davies@acadiau.ca 585-1127 or disability.access@acadiau.ca 585-1823