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 should be used for note taking only; extracurricular use of the computer is not permitted and will not be tolerated.

**Required Readings**

Steve Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of American Resistance*

Michael Dennis, *Blood on Steel: Chicago Steelworkers and the Strike of 1937*

**Course requirements**

Midterm test: 10%.

Book commentary: 15%. Based on part one of *The Age of Acquiescence*. Your commentary will focus on character of resistance to organized wealth and power in the Gilded Age? What language did it speak, what criticisms did it level, what shape did it assume, and what impact did it have? Should be 3-4 pgs.

Class participation: 20%. This is based on class attendance, participation in class discussions that provide evidence of a thoughtful consideration of assigned texts, and involvement in group activities.

Essay: Use *Blood on Steel*, *The Age of Acquiescence*, and three other sources to present an analysis of social dissent in the *New Deal* era. What motivated labor activism and anti-fascism in the 1930s? What were the achievements and limits of the popular front movement? Should be 7-8 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, 10%</td>
<td>September 30th (due in class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book commentary 15%</td>
<td>October 14th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay, 25%</td>
<td>November 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam 30%</td>
<td>Exam schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation, 20%</td>
<td>Throughout the term</td>
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Course reading schedule

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.

September 2: Welcome and course introduction. The tremors of the Gilded Age and its social ramifications.


September 14, 16: The Industrial Workers of the World, working-class revolt in urban America, mineworkers and companies, dissent and repression during wartime. Required readings: Fraser, chapters 5-7.

September 21, 23: Bohemian radicals, the literary left, and the significance of Greenwich Village in the 1910s. Required reading: Stephen Burwood, “Debsian Socialism through a Transnational Lens.”

September 28, 30: The progressives, the lyrical left, and the First World War; a wave of repression and the drive for conformity; the upheaval of 1919. Michael Cowen, “The Ku Klux Government: Vigilantism, Lynching, and the Repression of the IWW”; reading commentary due on September 30th in class.

October 5, 7: Prohibition and the rural campaign against urban America; women and the persistence of reform; urban nightlife, women and social non-conformity. Required readings: Thomas Pegram, “Hoodwinked: The Anti-Saloon League and the Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Prohibition Enforcement.”

October 12, 14: Reading week.


October 26, 28: the turbulent decade—the unemployed organize; labor resurgent, communists and socialists move into the mainstream. Required Readings: Dennis, Blood on Steel, chapters 3-5 and epilogue.
November 2, 4: Anti-fascism and the Spanish Civil War, the struggle for a New Deal in era of global conflict.


November 16, 18: C. Wright Mills and the renewal of dissent in the 1950s; the civil rights movement and a revisionist perspective on Martin Luther King Jr.


December 2: informal class presentations and discussion, Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence*, chapters 13, 14; Harold Meyerson, “If Labor Dies, What’s 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 <mailto:disability.access@acadiau.ca> 585-1823.