

America in the Sixties: Movements for Change

**OLLI spring, 2024
Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00**

The 1960s in America contained so much dramatic activity and far-reaching change that it seems a half century of history was crammed into a mere decade. This lecture course will reflect upon that watershed decade with an emphasis on the social movements of the sixties and how they shaped—and continue to shape—the course of American history. We will ask what lessons can be learned from the sixties about strategies for social change. We will also ponder issues of historiography, the complex web of questions about how we think about a historical period with truth and wisdom.

For our purposes, the decade begins on February 4, 1960, with a lunch counter sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina, and ends with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords on January 27, 1973. Our focus will be upon the protest movements of the sixties: the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, the Student Movement, the Counter-Culture, the Anti-War Movement, and the nascent Women's Movement. We will explore the nature of these movements, their virtues and their vices, their successes and their failures, their interaction with established political institutions, and their impact on the direction of American society. Our goal will be to dispel some of the myths about the sixties and move in the direction of accuracy and understanding.

Week One

The early civil rights movement in the South: Sit-ins, Freedom Rides, SNCC, Martin Luther King and the SCLC, the Birmingham campaign; the 1963 March on Washington; the role of the Kennedy administration.

Week Two

The maturing civil rights movement: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Mississippi Freedom Summer, Montgomery and Selma, MLK in the North, Malcolm X, the nascent Black Power Movement and the transformation of SNCC. The Democratic Convention of 1964; LBJ and the Great Society Programs.

Week Three

The student protest movement, the FSM at Berkeley, the rise of the counter culture, a “new left” and the Port Huron statement.

Week Four

The development of the Black Power Movement: the Urban riots, the Black Panthers, the revolutionary ideology, police repression and COINTELPRO, the decline of the Panthers.

Week Five

The early anti-war movement, the campaigns of RFK and McCarthy, the “siege of Chicago,” the election of 1968.

Week Six

The anti-war movement 1968-1972, the emergence of the women's movement, the Yellow Power and Brown Power movements, the lessons of the sixties. A look back: the historiography of the sixties.

