

# Historicizing american



Composante  
ETUDES  
ANGLOPHONES,  
HISTOIRE,  
ETUDES  
SLAVES



Volume horaire  
CM  
2h

## Présentation

Discipline rare : Non

## Description et objectifs


### THE LONG 1980s

While historians have thoroughly explored the era of political and countercultural rebellion that transformed the political culture of the United States between the late 1950s and the mid 1970s, the project of historicizing the pivotal decades that followed has only just begun. This seminar will seek to introduce students to the critical issues and analytical possibilities of an era that we will refer to as “the long 1980s.” Since historical trends and trajectories do not fit neatly within the boundaries of pre-configured decades (i.e. 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s), neither will this class. Indeed, our investigation will range between the mid 1970s, when the country was reeling from the Watergate scandal, stagflation, a generalized state of urban crisis, and the fall of Saigon, and the mid 1990s, when Democratic President Bill Clinton signed laws that dramatically cut welfare programs and greatly increased funding for the construction of prisons and the enhancement of law enforcement capacities. But at the heart of our reflection lies the so-called “Reagan Revolution” and the neoliberal turn it managed to bring to fruition—an event that not only transformed approaches to governance, but also the ways in which Americans make sense of their world.

Public policies, political movements, and political discourse will of course concern us, but our objective will be to understand how political events and circumstances were lived and understood at the grassroots by average residents. Indeed, we will take an interdisciplinary approach that will seek to fit the political, cultural, social, and economic into the same frame in order to better understand the political cultures that have shaped the ideas, sensibilities, political activities, and passions of urban, suburban, and rural communities. Methodologically speaking, the class will seek to bring historical and sociological scholarship into dialogue with a broad range of primary sources, including extracts from movies, television shows, music videos, newscasts, popular novels, comic books, underground and mainstream newspapers and magazines, etc. We will also read a number of studies written in the 1980s and 1990s in order to explore the ways in which the political context of this moment shaped the humanities and social sciences. Entry points for our discussions will include: taxpayers’ revolts; the politics of busing and affirmative action; the rise and fall of disco; gangsta rap; the War on Drugs; law-and-order television; slasher films; grunge, goths, and neo-bohemians; the AIDS scare; the Christian right; conservative talk radio; the Central Park Jogger case; campus “culture wars”; the Los Angeles riots of 1992; the OJ Simpson trial; the Million Man March; Starbucks and coffeehouse culture; “foodie” culture, and the health food movement; the stock market “bubble”; corporate culture.

## Syllabus

COHEN Cathy J., *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*  
COWIE Jefferson, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*  
DAVIS Mike, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*  
D’SOUZA Dinesh, *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society*

 FRANK Thomas, The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counter Culture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism  
HARVEY David, A Brief History of Neoliberalism  
KELLEY Robin D.G., Yo Mama's Disfunkcional: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America  
MORET On Bethany, To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise  
PUTMAN Robert, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community  
SELF Robert O., All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s  
SIMON Bryant, Everything But the Coffee: Learning about America from Starbucks  
TROY Gil, Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s  
WILENTz Sean, The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2000

## Infos pratiques

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### Contacts

Responsable pédagogique

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