

Reading Guide – Sexual Revolutions and the Emergence of Second Wave Feminism

Today we begin the fourth unit of the course, “The Flood: Breaking Barriers, c. 1960-1980.” For the next two weeks we will examine one of the most tumultuous and revolutionary eras in American history. Following a period of boundary-policing and hardening of regulations placed on sexual and gender identities between the 1920s and the 1950s, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed an explosion of political and social activism – much of which revolved around sexuality and gender. During Session 7 we will examine the beginnings of this period, focusing on what came to be called “the sexual revolution” and also the emergence of a new wave of American feminist activism.

Assigned Materials

- Beth Bailey, “Sexual Revolution(s),” in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, Farber, ed. (1994) 235-262.
- Rickie Solinger, “The Population Bomb and Sexual Revolution,” in Reiss, *American Sexual Histories*, second ed. (2012) 320-335.
- Black Unity Party, “Birth Control and Black Children, 1968,” and “Response from Black Sisters,” from *The Chicago Women’s’ Liberation Union Herstory Archive*, 1-2.
- Betty Friedan, “The Problem that has no Name,” from *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) 57-78.
- Casey Hayden and Mary King, “Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo,” in *Takin’ It to the Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Bloom and Brienes, eds. (1995) 133-136.
- Carol Hanisch, “The Personal is Political” [1969], and forward from author (2009) 1-5.
- New York Radical Women, “No More Miss America!” [1968] *Redstockings Online Archive*, 1-2.
- Anselma Dell’Olio, “The Sexual Revolution Wasn’t Our War, 1971,” in *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*, Peiss, ed. (2002) 417-419.
- [OPTIONAL] “The Pill: How it is Affecting U.S. Morals, Family Life,” *U.S. News & World Report* (July 11, 1966) 1-6.
- [OPTIONAL] Subcommittee on Foreign Aid and Expenditures, “Population Crisis Hearings, 1965,” in Reiss, *American Sexual Histories*, second ed. (2012) 341-343.

Questions to Consider

As you plan for our discussion, I suggest grouping the assigned readings for the week into two sets: materials on the “sexual revolution,” and materials on the emergence of second wave feminism. The two secondary sources assigned this week (Bailey and Solinger) address the first topic. So, too, do the primary sources from the Black Unity Party (plus the response from Black Sisters), Anselma Dell’Olio, and the two optional readings on the pill and the population crisis.

Dell’Olio can also be read alongside the primary sources that address the emergence of second wave feminism. I encourage you to focus as much energy as possible on the Hanisch piece. What does “The Personal is Political” really mean? What are the implications of this theory, and how was it arrived at? As you read Hayden and King, pay close attention to tone and style. As you read Friedan, try to think back to our last class session – in what ways did the social and cultural atmosphere of the 1950s lead to the emergence of a new feminist consciousness in the 1960s?

Compare the "No More Miss America!" piece to Hanisch and also Friedan and Hayden and King. Where did second wave feminism come from? What were some of the early goals of this nascent movement? What were its major concerns? How did feminists in the 1960s understand their project?

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WGS.110J / 21H.108J Sexual and Gender Identities
Spring 2016

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