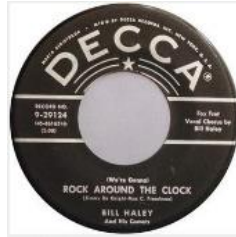


OLLI -FALL 2020

786: AMERICA IN THE FIFTIES



Many historians use the term “boom” to illustrate the 1950s in a variety of ways: The flourishing economy, the record-setting birthrate, and the fearful consequence of nuclear war. Some OLLI members will remember the era; others will not. This study group reviews that decade's significant historical events and trends, popular culture, politics, and fads. The approach in weekly sessions is thematic and augmented with lots of optional material—selected readings, and audio and video of the period.

This study group is highly participatory. Members compare different experiences and perspectives of the decade; with this in mind, we ask each member to provide his/her age and living situation on October 4, 1957—the date of the Sputnik launch.

CLASS SCHEDULE, WEEKLY TOPICS, AND OPTIONAL READINGS (subject to change)

Class 1- (September 23) Introduction to Course: “Family Life and the American Dream in the 1950’s.” Supplemental Readings- 1. Intro to Daniel Niemeyer’s *1950’s American Style Reference Guide*. 2. Roger Ebert’s review of *Pleasantville*. 3. Erin Blakemore’s “How the GI Bill’s Promise was Denied to a Million Black WWII Veterans.”

Class 2- (September 30): “The Cold War Comes to Main Street.” Supplemental Readings- 1. Ellen Schrecker’s “Communism and National Security.” 2. E.B. White’s essay, “The Case Against Senator McCarthy.”

Class 3- (October 7): “American Film in the 1950’s.” Supplemental Reading-Martin Halliwell’s essay on *The Blackboard Jungle*.

Class 4- (October 14): Theater and Musicals in the 1950's. Supplemental Readings- 1. Halliwell's essay on *A Raisin in the Sun*. 2. Wolcott Gibbs' essay, "Shaw with Music."

Class 5- (October 21): "I Like Ike:' Presidential and Foreign Politics, 1952-1960." Supplemental Readings-1. "Ike's Top Five Presidential Failures." 2. Richard Nixon's 1952 *Checkers* Speech.

Class 6- (October 28): "Civil Rights Struggles in the 1950's." Supplemental Readings- 1. Walter Dellinger's "A Southern White Recalls a Moral Revolution." 2. Excerpt from Anne Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi*. 3. "White Support of the Montgomery Boycott: An Interview with Virginia Durr."

Class 7 (November 4): "American Television in the 1950's." Supplemental Reading- Halliwell's essay on *I Love Lucy*.

Class 8 (November 11): "Science, Technology, and the Automobile." Supplemental Readings-1. "The Arrival of Videotape." (Louis P. Forster) 2. "Vaccinating Against Polio." (John McNulty)

Class 9 (November 18): "Music and a Taste of Literature, Sports, and Recreation in the 1950's" Supplemental Reading- 1. Halliwell's essay, "Elvis and 1956."

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