

Reading Guide – Rethinking Nature in a Nuclear Age (plus quick review of The Student Movement and the New Left)

This week we continue Unit 6 of the course, which examines the rise of dissent and the end of consensus, from the 1960s into the 1980s. To make up for our cancelled class last week, we will devote a short portion of class to reviewing materials on student movements and the New Left. The bulk of our discussion, however, will be focused on the emergence of modern environmentalism and the readings assigned for this week.

Assigned Materials for this week

- Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, “The New Left,” from *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (2012) 158-178.
- Steven Lubar, “‘Do Not Fold, Spindle, or Multilate’: A Cultural History of the Punch Card,” *Journal of American Culture* 15:4 (1992) 43-54.
- Students for a Democratic Society, Excerpt from “The Port Huron Statement,” in *Takin’ It to the Streets’: A Sixties Reader* (2003) 49-61.

Assigned Materials for next week

- Timothy May, “The End of Enthusiasm: Science and Technology,” in *The Columbia Guide to American Life in the 1960s*, eds. Farber and Bailey (2001) 303-311.
- Ian Tyrell, “Modern Environmentalism,” in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, eds. Agnew and Rosenzweig (2006) 328-340.
- Thomas Robertson, “Introduction: From Rubbish to Riots,” in *The Malthusian Moment: Global Population Growth and the Birth of American Environmentalism* (2012) 1-12.
- Rachel Carson, Selections from *Silent Spring* [1962], Reprint (1994) 1-13 [Chapter 3, “Elixirs of Death,” is Optional]
- [SKIM] Paul Ehrlich, “Introduction: The Problem,” in *The Population Bomb* (1968) 15-35.
- [Optional] The Ehrlich-Commoner Debate (1972)

Questions to Consider

I’d like to focus our catch-up conversation at the start of class on the Lubar article and the SDS “Port Huron Statement.” How does the Lubar make sense with earlier units from the course? Why do many historians consider the Port Huron Statement a “Cold War document”?

The May and Tyrell readings both offer background on the emergence of modern environmentalism and the changing American relationship to technology and scientific “progress.” Feel free to skim through the Tyrell if you are short on time. Robertson offers a more analytic account of the emergence of late twentieth-century environmentalism and its relationship to growing concerns about rising global population – concerns most notably advanced by the ecologist and best-selling author Paul Ehrlich. What links do you see between the nuclear age/Cold War and Ehrlich, the *Population Bomb*, and growing fear of overpopulation during the late 1960s and early 1970s?

Rachel Carson’s classic, *Silent Spring*, is mentioned in most of the other readings assigned for this week. What do you think made this book so popular and important? How does it fit into the course’s themes and questions of the course?

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