

Reading Guide – Delinquents and Rebels: The 1950s as Prelude to the 1960s

Today we launch Unit 6 of the course, which focuses on the emergence of dissenting protest movements in the 1950s and their massive expansion in the 1960s. This week we will explore “Beat” and youth culture from the 1950s (Tuesday) and the rise of student activism and the New Left in the 1960s (Thursday). Next week we will examine the anti-nuclear and environmental movements from 1960s into the 1980s. The theme across the unit is “the end of consensus.”

Assigned Materials

- Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, “Past as Prologue: The 1950s as an Introduction to the 1960s,” in *“Takin’ It to the Streets”: A Sixties Reader* (2003) 1-11.
- James Gilbert, “Mass Culture and The Fear of Delinquency: The 1950s,” *Journal of Early Adolescence* 5:4 (1985) 505-516.
- Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, “The Making of a Youth Culture,” from *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (2012) 138-157.
- Louis Menand, “Drive, He Wrote,” *The New Yorker* (2007), 1-10.
- Lester David, “Are You a Conformist or a Rebel,?” *Los Angeles Times* (Oct. 1959).
Bosley Crowther, “Delinquency, ‘Rebel Without a Cause’ has Debut at Astor,” *New York Times* (Oct. 1955) 1-2

Questions to Consider

There are three major themes in the readings for today: Concerns about “juvenile delinquency” in 1950s culture, *actual* delinquents and rebels from the era (“Beats” like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg), and 1950s youth culture more generally – including its connections to youth protest movements in the 1960s (our topic for **Session 20**).

As you read, try to make connections between these themes and the various readings. How does the material this week “fit” with materials from earlier weeks?

MIT OpenCourseWare
<https://ocw.mit.edu>

21H.211 The United States in the Nuclear Age
Spring 2016

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <https://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.