University of Gdańsk

Subject card

Subject name and code	The Rise and Fall of the American Counterculture, PG_00205057		
Field of study	American Studies		
Date of commencement of studies	October 2025	Academic year of realisation of subject	2026/2027
Education level	Bachelor's studies	Subject group	Obligatory subject group in the field of study Optional subject group
Mode of study	full-time studies	Mode of delivery	at the university
Year of study	2	Language of instruction	English English C1
Semester of study	4	ECTS credits	2.0
Learning profile	academic	Assessment form	credit
Conducting unit			
Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)	Subject supervisor	mgr Robert Urbański	
	Teachers		

Lesson types

Lesson type	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
Number of study hours	0.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30

E-learning hours included: 0.0

Learning activity and number of study hours

Learning activity	Participation in didactic classes included in study plan	Participation in consultation hours	Self-study	SUM
Number of study hours	30	2.0	18.0	50

Subject objectives

The Rise and Fall of the American Counterculture elective focuses on the cultural dissidents and revolutionaries of the 1960s era: the hippies. This course explores the history and evolution of the hippies and other cultural dissenters, the emergence, development, and decline of the American counterculture from the 1950s to the 1970s.

It focuses on the ideological rebels and social visionaries commonly associated with the hippie movement, examining how they challenged mainstream values and institutions in the United States. Students will analyze the historical roots of the counterculture in the postwar period, including influences such as the Beat Generation, civil rights activism, and anti-war protests.

The course traces the movement's growth during the 1960s, paying particular attention to its peak years, when alternative lifestyles, music, art, and political engagement became highly visible. Topics include communal living, experimentation with identity and spirituality, and the role of music festivals and rampant indulgence in drug use in spreading countercultural ideas.

Finally, it raises the question of whether this period caused more harm than good to American values and norms, and how it planted the foundations for revolutionary change in contemporary America.

Learning outcomes

Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
[AMERL3_U03] is able to use acquired subject knowledge to identify, analyze, interpret and explain cultural phenomena and processes in North America, using concepts and methods from cultural and religious studies.	Is able to independently acquire and consolidate knowledge in the field of American Studies in an organised and systematic manner, using modern techniques for gathering, classifying and analysing information, in accordance with the guidance of an academic supervisor.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU2] presentation/project/paper/ report [SU4] test/exam - oral or written
[AMERL3_U06] Able to communicate orally and in writing on issues related to American and British culture and literature, using specialized terminology in cultural and religious studies and literary studies.	is able to independently plan and pursue lifelong learning	[SU5] implementation of a problem task
[AMERL3_K01] is ready to critically evaluate his knowledge and skills, especially in American cultural and literary studies, as well as the basic contextual knowledge of American studies concerning history, social sciences, geography, linguistics and art and English.	Is prepared to critically assess the extent of their knowledge in American Studies and related and supporting disciplines, and recognises the importance of this knowledge in solving theoretical and practical problems.	[SK1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SK5] implementation of a problem task
[AMERL3_W07] Has advanced detailed knowledge of selected issues concerning cultural phenomena and processes in North America.	Knows and understands the basic concepts and principles of intellectual property protection and copyright law.	[SW3] text preparation/written work
[AMERL3_W05] Has advanced knowledge of the basic conceptual and terminological apparatus of cultural and religious studies applicable to the study of cultural phenomena and processes in North America.	Knows and understands the fundamental dilemmas of contemporary civilisation in the context of intercultural communication and the world of media, or US politics and economics.	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written [SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion

Subject contents

The course examines the emergence, development and decline of American counterculture from the 1950s to the 1970s, with particular emphasis on the hippie movement. It explores the ideological and social roots of rebellion, including the Beat Generation, the civil rights movement and anti-war protests. Topics include alternative lifestyles, music, art, spirituality and changing social values. The course also analyses the counterculture's impact on American society and its lasting influence on contemporary America.

Prerequisites and co-requisites

English language proficiency at C1 level, with the ability to communicate fluently in both spoken and written English, and a general knowledge of the United States.

Assessment methods and criteria

Subject passing criteria	Passing threshold	Percentage of the final grade
80	50.0%	100.0%

Recommended reading

Basic literature

1. Damon R. Bach, The American Counterculture: A History of Hippies and Cultural Dissidents (2020).
2. Terry H. Anderson, The Sixties, 6th edition (2025).
3. Alex Zamalin, Counterculture: The Story of America from Bohemia to Hip-Hop (2025).
4. Brian Haley, Hopis and the Counterculture: Traditionalism, Appropriation, and the Birth of a Social Field (2024).
5. Robert J. Campbell, Haight-Ashbury, Psychedelics, and the Birth of Acid Rock (2023 edition).

	Supplementary literature	1. https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/postwarera/1960s-america/a/the-counterculture-of-the-1960s 2. https://www.history.com/topics/1960s 3. https://web.stanford.edu/dept/press/cgi-bin/yawp/chapter-25-the-sixties.html 4. https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/teachers/modules/1960s/index.cfm 5. https://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/us/mod09_1960s/context.html 6. https://www.history.com/articles/vietnam-war-hippies-counter-culture 7. https://dh.scu.edu/exhibits/exhibits/show/counter-culture 8. https://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/lessonplan/the-sixties/index.html 9. https://depts.washington.edu/moves/ 10. https://snccdigital.org/
	eResources addresses	Basic https://www.history.com/topics/1960s?utm_source=chatgpt.com - History Channel 1960's
Example issues/ example questions/ tasks being completed	1. Postwar American Society and the Birth of Counterculture. 2. The Beat Generation and Its Influence on Youth in the 1960s. 3. The Hippie Movement: Ideology, Values, and Lifestyle. 4. The Vietnam War and Anti-War Protests. 5. The Civil Rights Movement and the Struggle for Equality. 6. Rock Music as the Voice of a Generation: Bob Dylan, The Beatles, and Jimi Hendrix. 7. Woodstock 1969 and the Culture of Music Festivals. 8. Social Experimentation, Free Love, and the Sexual Revolution. 9. Drugs, Consciousness, and Spirituality in Hippie Culture. 10. Hippie Communes and Alternative Ways of Life.	
Work placement	Not applicable	