

Reading Guide for Week 9

Revolutions II: Feminism as a Mass Movement and the Emergence of Gay Liberation

Today we conclude the fourth unit of the course, “The Flood: Breaking Barriers, c. 1960-1980.” Last week we looked at the emergence of second wave feminism and its roots in other mid-century social movements and the highly gendered social structure of postwar America. This week, we will discuss the impacts of second wave feminism, and the challenges it faced, as it grew into a mass movement. We will also explore the development of LGBTQ activism during this era.

To capture the flavor, complexity, and diversity of mass-movement feminism and the early years of Gay Liberation, I have assigned a large number of primary sources for the week. They are listed on Canvas in chronological order. Some of these sources are longer and more dense than others – I recommend taking a brief glance at all of them (so you know what you’re in for) before diving into reading. Several additional sources, listed as “optional” are also available on Canvas for students eager to learn more about identity, activism, and organizing during this era.

Assigned Texts

- Nancy Rosenstock, “[Second-Wave Feminism: Accomplishments and Lessons](#),” *Against the Current* v. 211 (March/April 2021).
- Library of Congress, “[1969: The Stonewall Uprising](#),” in LGBTQIA+ Studies: A Resource Guide
- Carl Whitman, “A Gay Manifesto,” *The Red Butterfly*, 1969.
- Boston Women’s Health Collective, Preface to *Our Bodies, Ourselves* [1973], in *Modern American Women*, Ware, ed, (1989) 417-422.
- Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” [1977], in *Modern American Women*, Ware, ed, (1989) 354-364.
- Angela Davis, “[The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective](#),” from *Women, Race, and Class* [1981].

Optional

- Radicallesbians, “What is a Lesbian?” [1970], in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, Kerber, ed. (2004) 580-582.
- Third World Gay Liberation, “What We Want, What We Believe” [1971], in *Takin’ It to the Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Bloom and Brienes, eds. (1995) 502-506.
- Barbara Ehrenreich, “What is Socialist Feminism?” *Win Magazine* [1976], 1-6.
- KPFA Radio, Audio Recording, “[Asian American Women vs. The Women’s Movement](#),” 1979.

Questions to Consider

Nancy Rosenstock is a feminist activist who participated in the Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1970s. In her essay assigned this week she offers a broad overview of second-wave feminism. What challenges did feminist activists in the 1960s and 1970s face? What strategies did they use to confront these challenges? What is the legacy of second-wave feminism, and why do you think it matters?

Read the front page of LOC's collection on the 1969 Stonewall Uprising, then peruse the rest of the site. We will watch a documentary, *Screaming Queens* (2005), about a similar uprising that took place in San Francisco three years before Stonewall. Compare these two moments of queer resistance. Why has Stonewall become a part of popular historical memory while other uprisings from the era (and earlier) have not?

Carl Whitman was a member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and an activist for Gay rights. His 1969 manifesto presents a radical program for the Gay Liberation movement. Which of his claims did you find particularly surprising, inspiring, or important? How does this manifesto stand the test of time, 55 years after it was written?

The Boston Women's Health Collective was founded in 1969 and authored one of the most important founding texts of the women's health movement, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, A self-help guide for women seeking to take charge of their own health and bodies. Why did the BWHC think such a text was necessary? What can we learn from this group (and others we explore this week) about collective action and organizing?

The Combahee River Collective was a group of black feminist activists who formed in Boston in the 1970s. Their statement on Black Feminism is another essential document from the American Women's Movement, and is widely credited with popularizing the concept of intersectionality. What does the collective mean by "the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity"? How do *they* interpret the idea that "the personal is political"?

Angela Davis is a Marxist feminist activist and a distinguished Professor of the History of Consciousness and Feminist Studies at UC Santa Cruz. "The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective," is the final chapter of her pathbreaking 1981 book, *Women, Race, and Class*. Why does Davis think housework matters? What does it have to do with capitalism? Feminism? What do you think of her proposed response to the problem of housework?

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