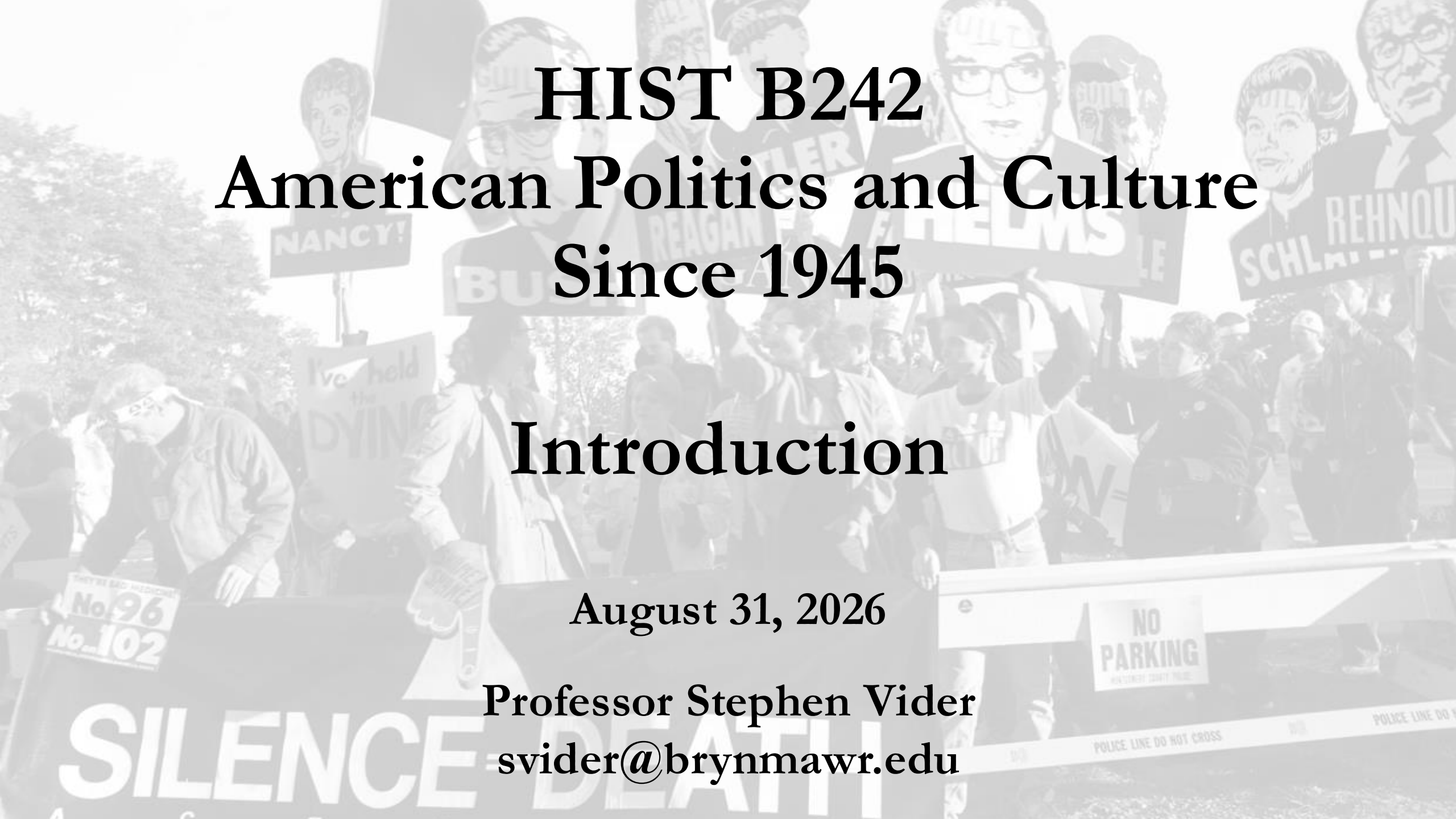


HIST B242
American Politics and Culture Since 1945

Introduction

August 31, 2026

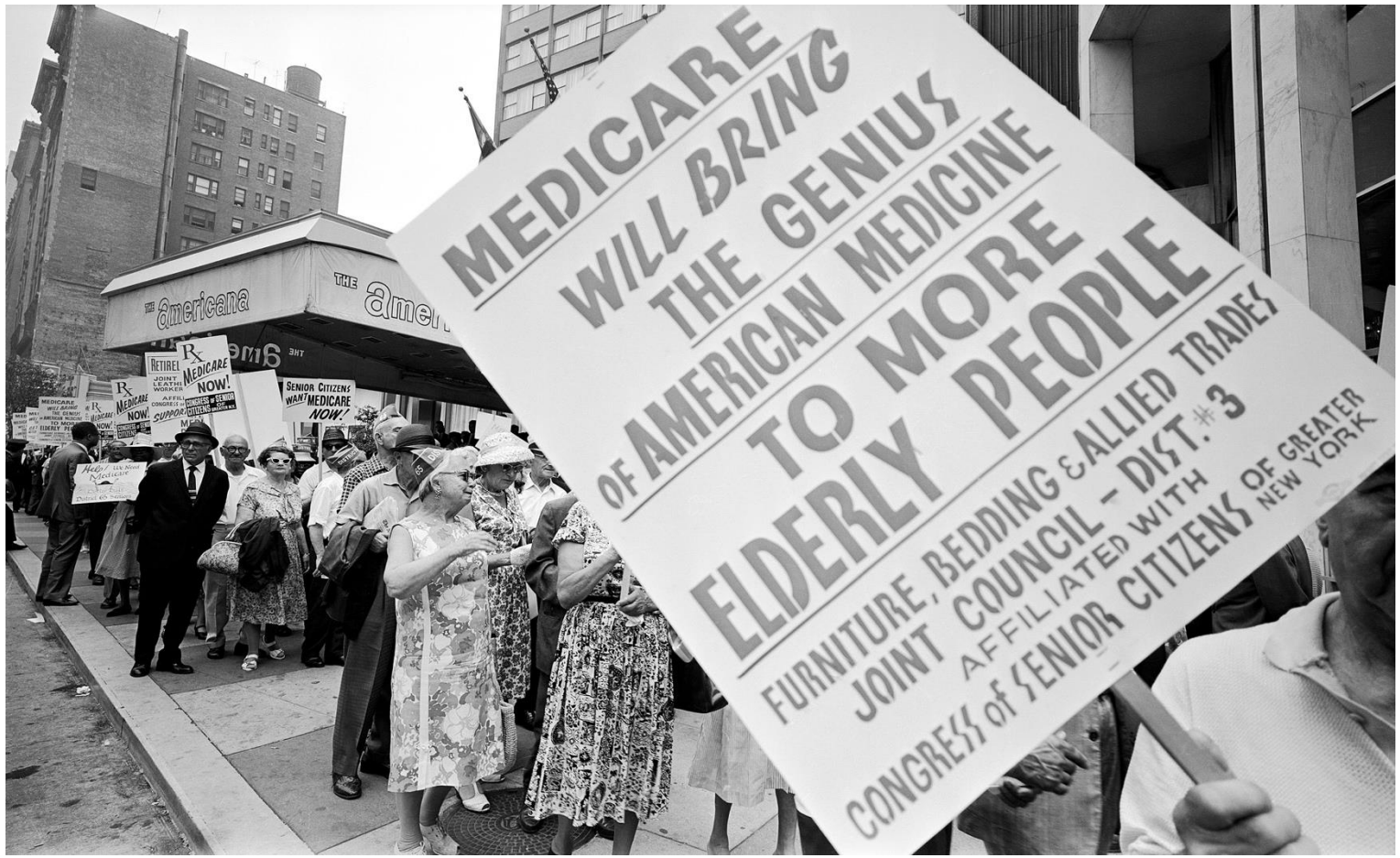
Professor Stephen Vider
svider@brynmawr.edu

Quick link to syllabus:
https://tinyurl.com/HISTB242

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THIS SEMESTER

1) How did ideas about the role and responsibilities of the government change?

"Shall I Build a House After the War?" and "Shall I Go Back to School?" G.I. Roundtable pamphlets, 1944



Senior citizens in support of Medicare at American Medical Association conference, New York, 1965

"Medicare will bring the genius of American medicine to more elderly people"

Source: Getty Images

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THIS SEMESTER

2) How were ideas about gender, sexuality, and the family reshaped in the years since 1945?

Miss America Pageant Protest, Atlantic City, 1968

Clip from *Up Against the Wall Miss America,* 1968 (Source: Internet Archive)

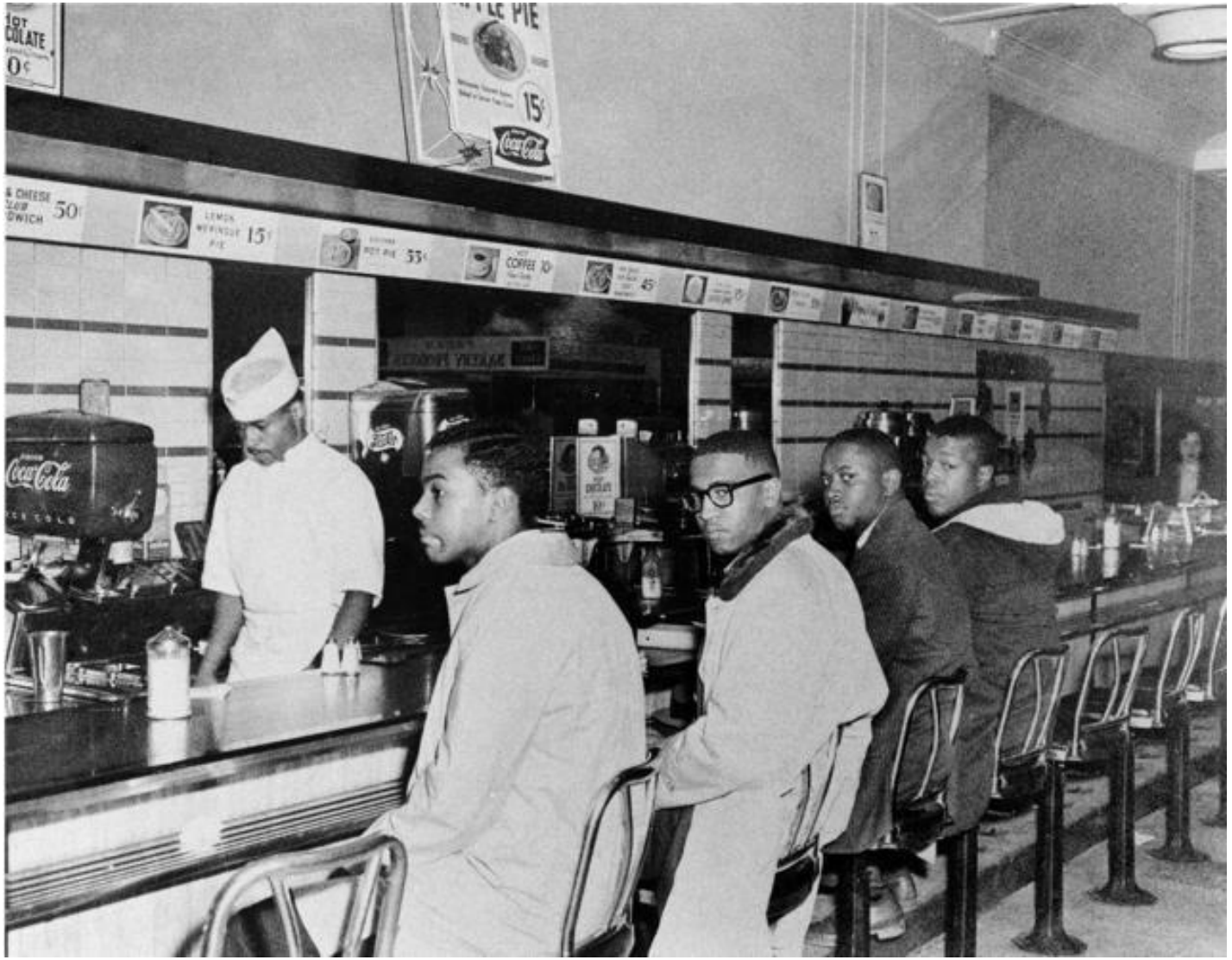
“Gay and Proud” dir. Lilli Vincenz (1970), Library of Congress

Anti-Equal Rights Amendment protest, led by Phyllis Schlafly at White House, 1977

(Source: Associated Press)

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THIS SEMESTER

3) How did activists push for racial, social, and economic justice and greater community self-determination, and what are the legacies of that activism?



Day 2, Woolworth's Lunch Counter Sit-in, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1960

Source: Jack Moebes Photo Archive

Lincoln Hospital takeover, 1970

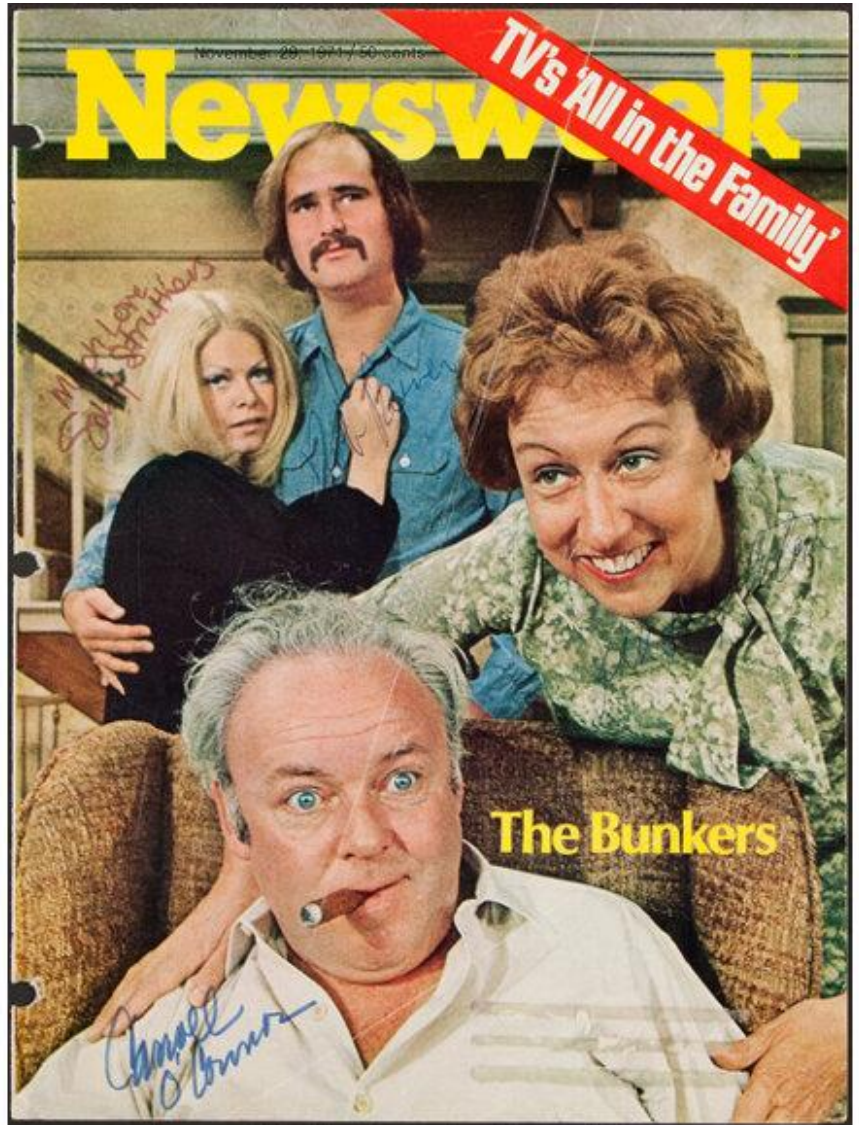
Source: ***New York Times***

ACT UP New York Day of Desperation, Grand Central Station, 1991)

Source: ***New York Times***

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THIS SEMESTER

4) How did popular culture reflect and reshape larger social and political shifts? And how did new media technologies alter American politics and everyday life?



***All in the Family*, premieres January 1971;**
***Newsweek* cover November 1971**

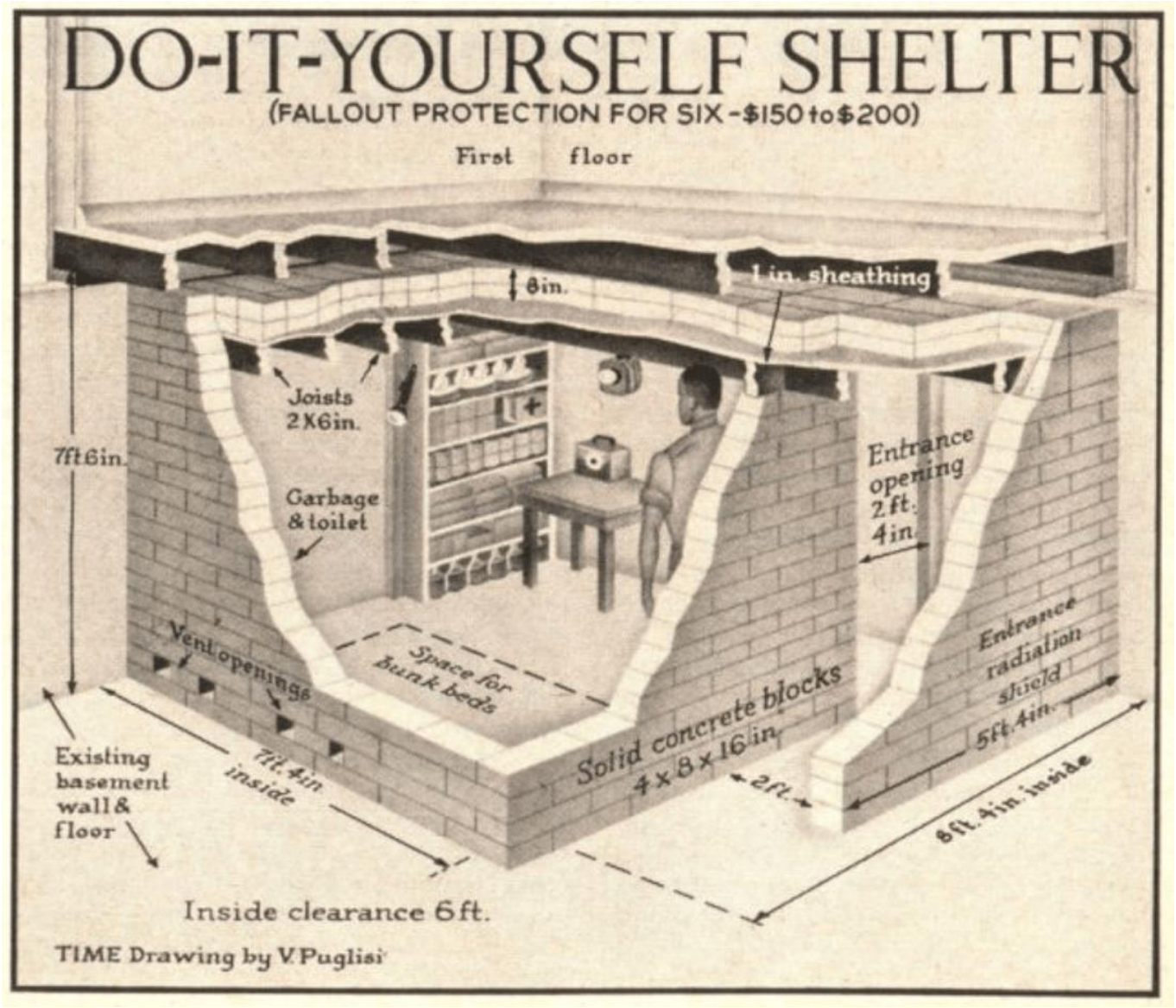
"Don't watch TV tonight. Play it!"

"We're the games you play on your own TV set."

Atari ad, 1978

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THIS SEMESTER

5) How did changing government policies around welfare, immigration, military intervention, incarceration, labor, trade, and the environment impact the lives of ordinary people? And how did activists come to see everyday life as political?

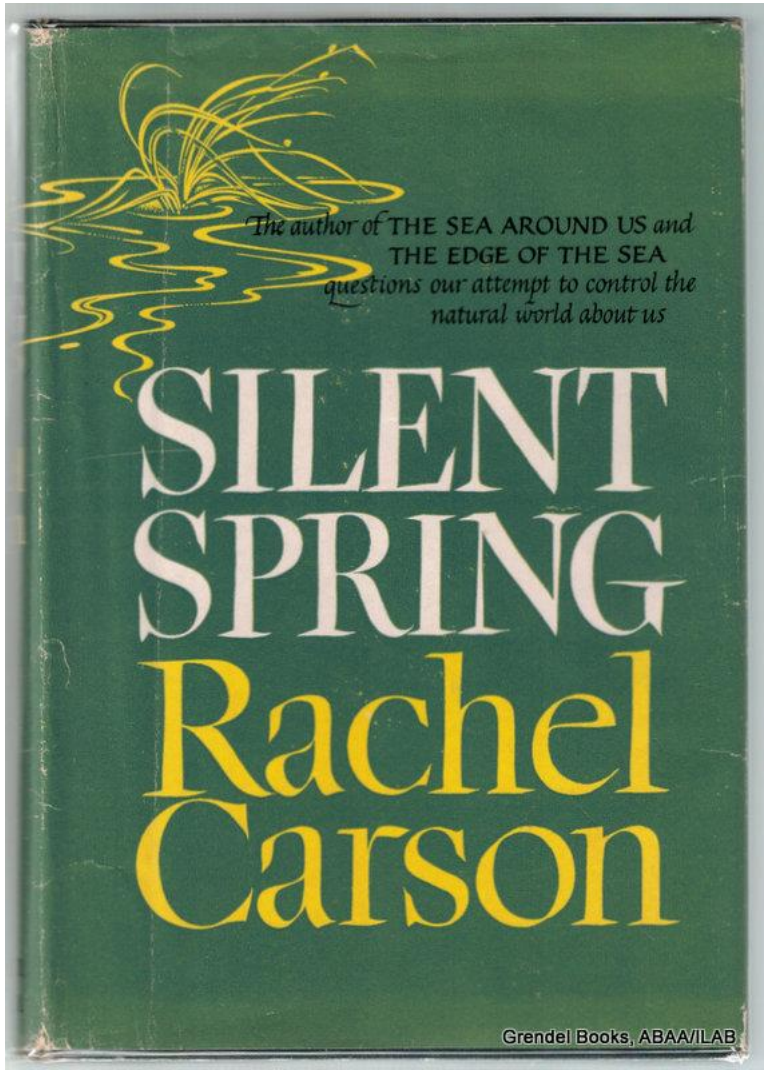


"Do-It-Yourself Fallout Shelter," *Time* magazine 1959

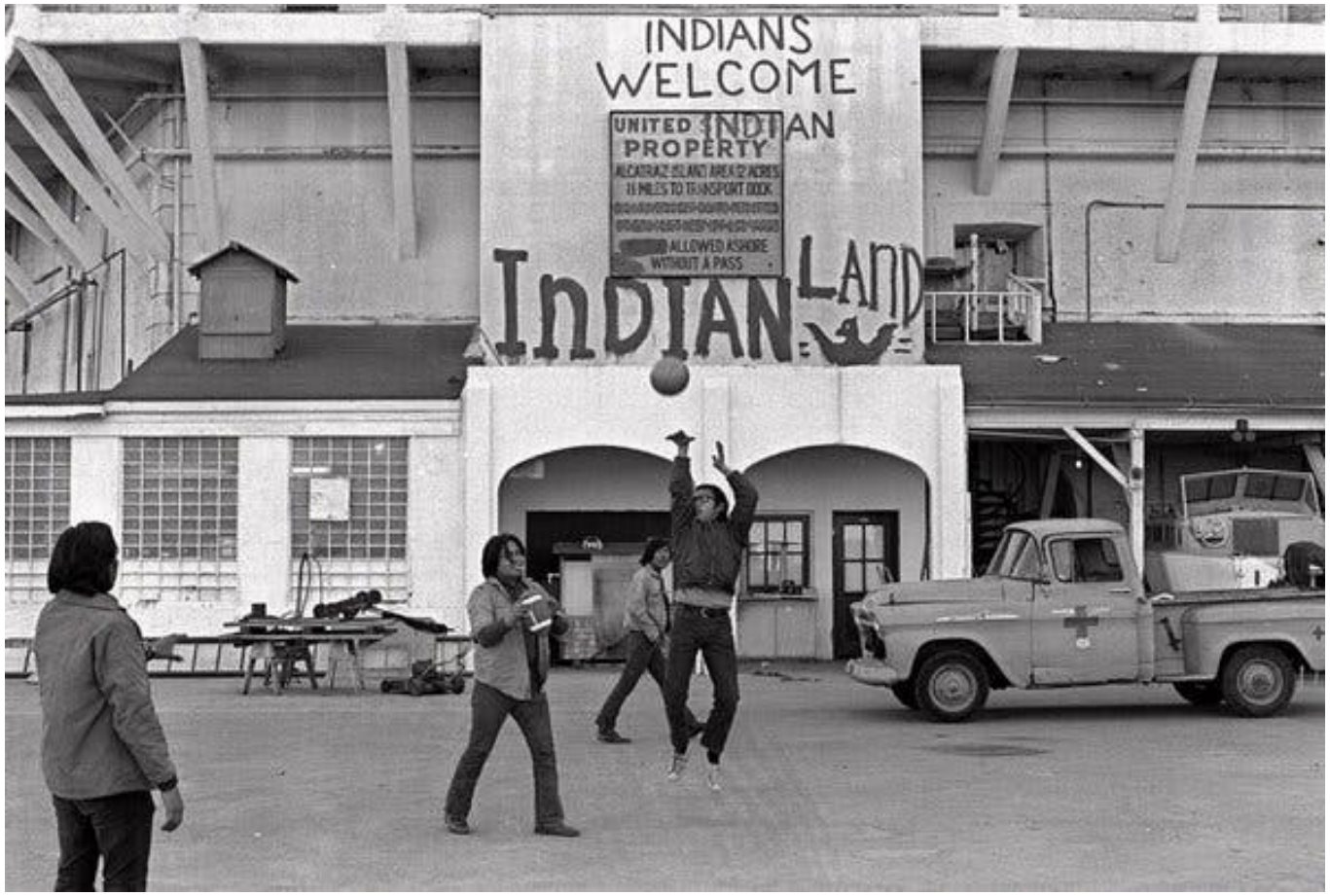
Braceros (Mexican guest workers) cross U.S. Mexico border on bridge to Hidalgo, Texas, 1956

Photo: Leonard Nadel, Bracero History Archive.

Rachel Carson (1962)
Photo by Alfred Eisenstandt
(National Portrait Gallery)



Published 1962



Alcatraz Occupation, 1969 (Source: AP)

John Trudell and Fenicia Ordóñez
with family at Alcatraz 1970
(© Bengt af Geijerstam)

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THIS SEMESTER

6) What stories – and whose stories – matter in understanding and analyzing the past and its meanings for the present and future?

In-Class Exercise: "What We Want, What We Believe"

Lyndon Johnson delivering
State of the Union address, 1965

Bobby Seale and Huey Newton,
Founders of the Black Panther Party
(1971; Source: Smithsonian)

The Diggers
(*San Francisco Chronicle*, 1966)

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