

Inquiry into the 1950s
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Far from a time of “the bland leading the bland,” the 1950s is a decade of great change and social upheaval. Advertising and entertainment are transformed by television. Science is changed by the space race and government funding. William Levitt invents the suburb. Eisenhower establishes the national interstate system. The Beat poets rebel against the establishment. Ray Kroc invents fast food. Joe McCarthy invents modern media politics. Rosa Parks refuses to relinquish her seat. Jackson Pollack paints. Charlie Parker plays saxophone. Elvis Presley plays rock n’ roll.

This course will look at this tumultuous decade and explore how people made sense out of this tumult. We will read contemporary texts, conduct interviews, explore archives, and watch films that offer their own versions of history. We will investigate how the 1950s shaped our own time, and what relevance the events of the decade have for us today.