

Reference Books

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American Countercultures: An Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles, and Radical Ideas in U.S. History. Ed. by Gina Misiroglu. New York: Sharpe Reference, 2009. 3 vols. alkaline \$299 (ISBN 978-07656-8060-0).

American Countercultures: An Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles, and Radical Ideas in U.S. History explores individuals, groups, and ideologies that “stand outside the mainstream and that actively or implicitly, [seek] to change the status quo” (xxxi). This three-volume set presents a broad and engaging examination of countercultures and their effect on American society.

The encyclopedia is extensive in its coverage. It contains more than five hundred well written, alphabetically arranged articles. Articles are signed and most contributors are scholars. Entries contain cross-references and a list of further readings. The encyclopedia investigates a wide time period extending from the arrival of the Puritans to the present day. In addition to its expansive coverage of time, the encyclopedia includes a variety of subjects, such as personalities (“Nader, Ralph”); groups (“Baby Boomers”); places (“Greenwich Village, New York City”); art, literature, and music (“Warhol, Andy,” “*Catcher in the Rye*,” “Snoop Dogg”); media and publications (“Film, Cult,” “*MAD*”); recreation (“Biker Culture”); ideologies (“Bohemianism”); and religious, political, and social factions (“Quakers,” “Green Party,” “White Supremacists”). The articles clearly state the association between the subject under discussion and countercultures. For example, the article on Frank Zappa notes that the musician appealed to his fans to question “the political and ideological machinations of the status quo” (777). Additionally, the text discusses international countercultural influences on the United States (“Volkswagen Beetle”). Furthermore, countercultures explored span a wide ideological spectrum (“Communism,” “McCarthyism,” “Fundamentalism, Christian,” “Unitarianism”). Finally, there are some entries that, at first glance, may appear not to belong in an encyclopedia of this nature (“Advertising,” “Democratic Party”); however, the relationship of these topics to countercultures is made evident. For example, countercultures use “subvertising” to oppose the advertising industry’s role in maintaining the status quo (12).

In addition to the main text, the encyclopedia contains useful supplementary features. For example, an introductory essay clearly defines and characterizes countercultures. Moreover, a bibliography and annotated filmography guide users to other resources. Another helpful tool is the collection of primary source documents. Additionally, black-and-white photographs complement the text. Finally, each volume contains a common index.

Another volume that examines nonmainstream groups and individuals is Neil A. Hamilton’s *Rebels and Renegades: A Chronology of Social and Political Dissent in the United States* (Routledge, 2002). In *Rebels and Renegades*, Hamilton examines radicals, extremists, and moderate reformers in 180 articles. Examples of topics covered in Hamilton’s work include civil rights campaigners, women’s rights activists, abolitionists, white supremacists, anarchists, cults, and militia groups, all of which are covered in *American Countercultures*. On the other hand, the focus of Hamilton’s single-volume title is narrower than *American Countercultures*, which extends its coverage beyond social, religious, and political nonconformists. Additionally, *Rebels and Renegades* contains significantly fewer articles than *American Countercultures*.

American Countercultures and *Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Culture* (Routledge, 2001) share some similar content. Both encyclopedias have entries on Generation X, marijuana, pornography, *Doonsbury*, and the Internet, among others; however, these works also have significant differences. For instance, the goal of *Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Culture* is to encompass all facets of American culture. Additionally, this encyclopedia contains a considerably greater number of articles (twelve hundred) than *American Countercultures*. Furthermore, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Culture* contains a greater coverage of topics related to race and ethnicity, sports, architecture, and science and technology. Finally, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Culture* explores a shorter time frame than *American Countercultures*.

American Countercultures is an accessible text that shows how dissidents have influenced U.S. society. It complements other works on American culture and nonmainstream groups and is recommended for public and undergraduate libraries.—Michelle Hendley, *Reference Librarian, State University of New York, College at Oneonta*

Civil Disobedience: An Encyclopedic History of Dissidence in the United States. By Mary Ellen Snodgrass. Armonk, New York: Sharpe Reference, 2009. 2 vols. \$199 (ISBN 978-0-7656-8127-0).

American history has been marked by countless acts of protest and dissent as individuals and groups struggled to define the meanings of liberty and freedom. Regardless of the political viewpoint being asserted, civil disobedience, or the willful refusal to obey the law as a form of peaceful protest, has been an important tactic employed in the pursuit of freedom, justice, and equality. Author Mary Ellen Snodgrass, who has written a number of reference works, describes the people, groups, events, movements, and ideas that constitute the history of civil disobedience and dissidence in the United States. The primary strength of this work is that it brings together in one source entries on topics that would otherwise have to be located in a variety of reference works such as general encyclopedias, biographical sources, and specialized reference works on topics such as slavery, the civil rights movement, religion, and women’s suffrage, to name a few.

Volume 1 comprises encyclopedic entries arranged al-