

Weather Alert

Special Weather Statement until 5PM CDT TUE

[Home](#) / [News](#)

https://www.bgdailynews.com/news/wku-kicks-of-project-recognizing-th-anniversary-of/article_7d452536-232b-544e-9f51-ee4e24010b0e.html

TOP STORY

WKU kicks off project recognizing 50th anniversary of 1968

AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com 12 min ago



Most college students today feel no connection to 1968, a year that included the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and the deadly Tet Offensive in the Vietnam War, among other historic events.

Now, a group of Western Kentucky University faculty members hopes to change that with Project 1968. The cross-discipline initiative recognizes the 50th anniversary of 1968 and the pivotal events that made it one of the most consequential years in U.S. history.

“Focusing on this year should help some students connect the dots,” said Mac McKerral, a journalism professor organizing the project.

While some students may have learned about the year through documentaries or history books, McKerral had a front-seat experience.

As a high school student, McKerral remembers watching violent clashes between police and protesters at the 1968 Democratic National Convention play out on his television screen.

At the time, McKerral said he didn’t have a complicated view of the Vietnam War. He remembers becoming more opposed to the war after the Tet Offensive in early 1968, when Communist forces led a deadly campaign against the U.S.

The U.S. and its allies withstood the assault, but news coverage of the offensive ultimately eroded public support for the war.

The WKU project is also borrowing from the anti-war teach-ins that student activists organized at universities across the country.

“In some cases they took over campus buildings,” McKerral said.

The teach-ins at WKU will focus on educating students in an interactive way about the history of 1968, with sessions on the music of the time and the Tet Offensive, for example. The project is bringing faculty together from across the university.



The project is also reaching out to the broader Bowling Green community by asking for personal reflections from people who lived during the year.

Many photos from WKU’s archived collection are displayed in an online gallery at wkuproject68.com, the project’s official website. A gallery is also on display in Jody Richards Hall.

With the unpopular war and fractured politics that characterized the age, McKerral sees many parallels between then and now.

One example is the black power salute by African-American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos during the 1968 Olympics and the present-day protests by black NFL athletes kneeling during the national anthem. McKerral noted that both protests had essentially the same message: opposing the unfair treatment experienced by African-Americans.

“History is kind of tending to repeat itself,” he said, adding the goal of the project is to teach students that “many of the important issues in 1968 have remained so” 50 years later.

Ad

– Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN_edbeat or visit bgdailynews.com.



Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

