UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON
Department of History
Semester 1, 1983-84

History 901
Readings in American Intellectual History

Prof. Boyer

Introduction

In the fourteen weeks of the course (after an opening session devoted to organizational matters) we will be looking at recent books and articles in the field of American intellectual history. Weeks 2-12 are organized on a chronological basis; weeks 13-14 on a topical basis. The dual aim is to gain familiarity with significant recent work on topics of interest to intellectual historians, and to explore the various methodologies and approaches intellectual historians use.


Reading and Assigned Papers.

For each week, a list of recent books and articles has been prepared. At the first organizational meeting, we will go over these lists, and each student will choose a book or article to read for each week. (Each student's choices should result in an approximately 50-50 mix of books and articles.) It will then be the student's responsibility to prepare for each week, in ditto or Xerox form, a 2-3 page paper on his or her reading for that week. Copies of these papers will be distributed to each class member, and to the instructor. These papers should be in the form of a 500-600 word review, such as one might write for a historical journal, concisely summarizing the main themes and/or central thesis of the book or article; discussing the use of sources; and, in the concluding paragraphs, critically assessing its strengths and weaknesses.

In addition, there will be one longer paper (8-10 pages) in which you should expand your analytical and critical discussion of one of the books or articles you have read. These longer papers will be welcome at any time during the semester; the final due date will be two days after the final meeting of the class.

Class Discussions.

At each class meeting, oral reports on two books or articles will be presented by students, following a schedule to be worked out at the first meeting. These reports, occupying about 15 minutes each, should briefly summarize the content and major themes of the work, critically evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, if possible indicate its place in the scholarly literature, and suggest what it contributes (or fails to contribute!) to our understanding. After each report, another student, designated as "Respondent," will comment on the presentation, and ask questions about any matters left unclear in the report. After the response, we will then move into about thirty minutes of general discussion of the book or article, and the historical topic to which it relates. The books or articles that will be the subject of these oral reports have been starred on the attached weekly lists of readings.

Office Hours: Humanities 4131, Mon., 1:30-2:30; Wed., 4-5; Fri., 11-12, or by appointment.
Course Outline

Week 2: The Seventeenth Century: Puritans and Perry Miller


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Week 3: The Eighteenth Century


Week 4: Ideology and Culture in the Revolutionary Era

_____________, The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson (1974).
Eric Foner, Thomas Paine and Revolutionary America (1976).

Week 5: The Antebellum Period I: Political and Social Thought; Reform


Spencer C. Olson, "The Oneida Community and the Instability of Charismatic Leadership," JAH (Sept. 1980).
Anne Scott, "Women's Perspective on the Patriarchy in the 1850s," JAH (June 1974).
Lewis Saum, The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America (1980).
Lawrence J. Friedman, Invention of the Promised Land (1975). Patriotic literature.
*Anne C. Rose, Transcendentalism as a Social Movement (1981).

John C. Greene, "American Science Comes of Age, 1780-1820," JAH (June 1968).
Week 7: The Antebellum Period III: Black Thought and Culture; Views of Indians; The Pro-Slavery and Anti-Slavery Arguments; Abolitionism

Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (1982).
*Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness, Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom (1977).

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Week 8: The Gilded Age, I: Social, Political, Religious Thought: Darwinism

Emerson, Pierce, Baldwin, Ross, Hall, Royce.

Week 10: The 1900-1920 Period


** "The Problem of Pragmatism in American History," JAH (June 1980).
Week 11: The 1920s and 1930s

John P. Diggins, Mussolini and Fascism: The View From America (1972).
Paul A. Carter, Another Part of the 1920s (1977).
Richard H. Pells, Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years (1973).
Andrew Bergman, We're in the Money: Films of the 1930s (1970).

Week 12: The Fifties

Robert A. Nisbet, Quest for Community (1953).
Dennis McNally, Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and American Culture (1980).
Andrew Dowdy, Films of the Fifties (1973).
Greil Marcus, Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n Roll Music (1976).

G. W. Domhoff and Ballard Hoyt (eds.), C. Wright Mills and the Power Elite (1968).
Week 13: The Sixties to the Present

* , America's Quest for the Ideal Self: Dissent and Fulfillment in the '60s and '70s (1983).
Nigel Young, An Infantile Disorder? The Crisis and Decline of the New Left (1977).

Week 14: Theoretical Issues and Orientations: I


Week 15: Theoretical Issues and Orientations: II

Selected readings from Higham and Conkin, *New Directions in American Intellectual History*.