American social and cultural history: 1860-1940

Scope of the course:

In this course we will examine historical works about the lives of ordinary people from about 1860 to 1940. Our effort will be to explore the behavior and beliefs of non-elite people, their daily activities, crucial life-course decisions, and their reactions to major social transformations that affected their lives.

The common readings fall under three themes: emancipation, industrialization, and cultural production. Students will have an opportunity to explore a topic of their choice during a three-week independent reading unit in the middle of the semester.

Methodological emphasis:

Although this is not a course in methodology, there will be continual attention to methodological problems encountered in studying ordinary people in the past. Despite an outpouring of interesting recent work on social and cultural history, our knowledge on many matters is rudimentary and precarious. Thus, methodology will be one of our central concerns.

Assignments:

In addition to reading the assigned works carefully and contributing to the general discussion, each student will prepare three papers. One of these papers will report on work done and insights gained during the independent reading period.

Paperback books to purchase:

Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long* (Vintage)
Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (Oxford)
Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Sorrow, Labor of Love* (Basic)
Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, et al., *Like a Family* (North Carolina)
John Bodnar, *The Transplanted* (Indiana)
David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas* (Texas)
Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements* (Temple)
Roland Marchand, *Advertising and the American Dream* (California)
Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (North Carolina)

The Kaestle book, *Literacy in the United States* (Yale, $35) is currently available only in hardback. You can buy it at the University Bookstore if you wish, but I will also place several copies on reserve.
Class meetings:

The seminar meets on Tuesday mornings, from 10:00 until 12:00. Please inform me in advance if you must miss any session.

Office hours:

My office hours are from 1:30 to 3:00 PM on Tuesdays in Room 215 Education Building, or by appointment. My phone numbers are: 263-2394 (History), 262-2812 (Education), or 238-5910 (home).

Reading assignments:

Week 1          Week 2
September 8     September 15

Introduction to the course

UNIT ONE: EMANCIPATION

The short-run, grassroots impact


Kaestle: writing tips and stylistic exhortations

Supplementary reading:


Week 3
September 22

Cultural evolution

READ: Lawrence Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977, pb).

On tape: Folk materials as evidence

Supplementary reading:


Gene Bluestein, The Voice of the Folk: Folklore and American Literary Theory (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1972, pb).


Week 4
September 29

Black women and work


Supplementary reading:

Jacqueline Jones, The Dispossessed: America's Underclass from the Civil War to the Present (N.Y.: Basic, 1992)


William H. Harris, The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War (New York, Oxford University Press, 1982, pb).


**UNIT TWO: CAPITALISM AND CULTURE IN THE INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION**

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<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>October 6</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic clash: the Chicano experience</td>
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Presentation: the state of Chicano history (guest)

Supplementary reading:


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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>October 13</th>
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Discussion: broad works of synthesis
Supplementary reading:


Week 7
October 20

The industrialization of the countryside


Bonus discussion: oral history (guest)

Supplementary reading:


UNIT THREE; INDEPENDENT PROJECTS

Week 8
October 27

Individual conferences

Week 9
November 3

Social gathering, no seminar meeting

Week 10
November 10

Oral reports (double session).

UNIT FOUR: CULTURAL PRODUCTION, REPRODUCTION, AND RESISTANCE

Week 11
November 17

The stratification of culture


Supplementary reading:


**Week 12**

**November 24**

**Advertising**


Supplementary reading:


**Week 13**

**December 1**

**Literacy and the reading public**


Discussion: history and policy
Supplementary reading:


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**Week 14**  
**December 4**

Advertising


Supplementary reading:


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**Week 15**  
**December 15**

Popularizing high culture

Supplementary reading:


