

University of Wisconsin
Department of History
Spring Semester 1990

Hist. 302 History of American Thought, 1859 to the Present Boyer

This course explores the shifting currents of American intellectual history over the past 130 years. We will examine how novelists, philosophers, journalists, feminists, and even industrial tycoons, daredevil pilots, and TV sitcom writers have shaped American public discourse during these years of massive social, economic, and political change.

Assigned Work. The work of the course consists of regular lecture attendance, a midterm exam, a term paper, and a final exam. Approximate weight: Midterm: 20%, Paper: 40%, Final Exam: 40%.

Reading. The following assigned books, all in paperback, are on sale in the University Bookstore and have been put on library reserve:

William Graham Sumner, What Social Classes Owe to Each Other
Stephen Crane, Maggie, A Girl of the Streets
Horatio Alger, Ragged Dick
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland
Walter Lippmann, Drift and Mastery
F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby
Nathaniel West, A Cool Million
Paul Boyer, By the Bomb's Early Light
Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451
Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth
Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death

Paper. The paper should be 8-10 pages (typed, double spaced) in length. There are two paper options, the second of which should be cleared with the instructor: (1) A critical analysis (not just a summary) of one of the assigned books; (2) a critical analysis of some other book (fiction or non-fiction) published in America during the time period covered by the course. Note: Except perhaps for some basic biographical information about the author, you need not do additional research beyond a close reading of the work itself. Specifically, you should not do extensive research in secondary studies about the book or author you are writing on. The paper should be your considered response to the work, not a summary of the ideas of others. The paper should be well organized with a title page, an introduction, a thesis (that is, a central point or points that you develop and support with quotes from the book), and a conclusion. Due date: Wednesday, May 2. There will be no extensions except in documented cases of illness or family emergencies. You should choose your book, and begin work on your paper, early in the semester. Note: Papers are welcome any time prior to the final due date.

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1-2 p.m., or by appointment, Humanities 4131.

Telephone: Office: 262 8151; Home: 233 7202

Lecture and Reading Schedule

M 1/22 Course Introduction

DARWINISM IN AMERICA

W 1/24 The Darwinian Intellectual Revolution

F 1/26 The Scientific and Religious Debate Over Evolutionary Theory

M 1/29 Darwinism and Social Thought
Reading: Sumner, What Social Classes Owe to Each Other

W 1/31 The Rise of Naturalism: Evolutionary Theory and American Literature
Reading: Crane, Maggie

F 2/2 To be announced

M 2/5 Andrew Carnegie: The Industrial Tycoon as Social Philosopher

W 2/7 Horatio Alger: A Second Look at the "Rags to Riches" Tales
Reading: Alger, Ragged Dick

F 2/9 Booker T. Washington: A Black Variation on the Alger Theme

DISSIDENT VOICES AND REFORM IDEOLOGIES IN THE GILDED AGE

M 2/12 Lester Ward and Thorstein Veblen: Two Critical Voices

W 2/14 Social Panaceas, Utopias, and Nightmares

F 2/16 Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Darwinian as Radical Feminist
Reading: Gilman, Herland

M 2/19 The Intellectual Journey of William Dean Howells

W 2/21 William James I: Psychologist of the Soul

F 2/23 William James II: Pragmatism and the Crisis of Faith

FROM SELF TO SOCIETY: SOCIAL THOUGHT IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

M 2/26 Science, Society, and Schools: The Philosophy of John Dewey

W 2/28 Herbert Croly: Redefining Liberalism for the Urban-Industrial Age

- F 3/2 Walter Lippmann: Social Justice and Social Order in a Mass Society
Reading: Lippmann, Drift and Mastery
- M 3/5 The Social Thought of Jane Addams
- W 3/7 HOUR EXAM
- F 3/9 Reform and Reaction: The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement
- M 3/12 "Scientific" Racism: The Underside of Progressive Reform
- W 3/14 Sigmund Freud Comes to America
- F 3/16 Multiplicity and Unity: Henry Adams' Search for Meaning in History
[Spring Break]

ALIENATED INTELLECTUALS AND CULTURE WARS IN THE 1920S

- M 3/26 World War I as Intellectual Watershed: The Agony of Randolph Bourne
- W 3/28 Chastened Intellectuals in the Aftermath of the War
- F 3/30 New Currents in American Fiction and Cultural Criticism
Reading: Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby
- M 4/2 Sinclair Lewis: Babbitts and Scientists
- W 4/4 The Achievement and Failure of the Harlem Renaissance
- F 4/6 Black Stereotypes in 1920s Mass Culture
- M 4/9 The Lone Eagle: Hero Worship and Social Insecurities

AMERICAN SOCIAL THOUGHT IN A DECADE OF DEPRESSION AND FASCIST MENACE

- W 4/11 Desperate Visions: Fictions of the Early 1930s
Reading: West, A Cool Million
- F 4/13 University Holiday
- M 4/16 Rediscovering America: The Era of the Popular Front
- W 4/18 Richard Wright and Other Depression-Era Black Writers

HIROSHIMA TO VIETNAM: MUSHROOMING FEARS, LONELY CROWDS, NEW-LEFT ACTIVISTS

- F 4/20 The Atomic Age Dawns, 1945-1954
Reading: Boyer, By the Bomb's Early Light, pages to be assigned
- M 4/23 Political Engagement to Cultural Criticism: 1950s Social Thought
Reading: Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451
- W 4/25 Living with the Bomb, 1954 to the Present
- F 4/27 Remembering the 1960s: New Left Ideology; "Movement" Culture

THE MODERN TEMPER: CONTOURS AND FISSURES IN CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

- M 4/30 Schizophrenia on the Right: The Varieties of Conservative Thought
- W 5/2 Since Friedan: Contemporary Feminist Ideology
Term Paper Due Today
- F 5/4 Antichrist and Apocalypse: A Fundamentalist Scenario of the Future
Reading: Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth
- M 5/7 Silent Spring and After: The Rise of Environmentalism
- W 5/9 The Cultural Consternation of E.D. Hirsch and Allen Bloom
- F 5/11 Chewing Gum for the Eyes? Mass Culture and Its Critics
Reading: Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death