

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
Department of History

SEMESTER II YEAR 1979-80

<u>COURSE NO.</u>	<u>COURSE TITLE</u>	<u>INSTRUCTOR</u>
History 406	American Cultural History, 1860 to the present	Daniel Rodgers

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is designed to explore the history of popular values, ideologies, and cultural norms in American life from the Civil War to the present. Lectures will deal with the cultural impact of industrialization, developments in science and psychology, the changing shape of mass culture, patterns of family life and child rearing, and trends in literature and the arts. The major theme of the lectures is the collapse of the Victorian moral universe and the subsequent twentieth-century attempts to find a viable substitute--in science and technological promise, in a revived sense of community, in counter-culture romanticism, and in retrenchment in tradition.

The heart of the course, however, will not lie in the lectures but in the discussion groups which will meet for 1½ hours each week (at times to be arranged the first week of classes). Some discussion sections will be led by a graduate assistant, some by myself. Their aim is to confront students with original source materials in American cultural history, to prod their powers of analysis, and to encourage the "doing" (not merely the absorption) of history.

LECTURES

Twice weekly.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS and EXAMS

Two 5-6 page papers on some aspect of the assigned readings will be required during the term. The final two weeks of class will be devoted to independent reading projects. Each student will choose a problem in American cultural history and write a 12-15 page paper analyzing that problem and relating it to the themes and readings of the course. There will be no examinations.

GRADING SYSTEM

Assignments will be weighted approximately in proportion to the number of pages required, but grading will not be done on a strictly mathematical basis. Improvement, extraordinary work and extraordinary lapses, and, in particular, class discussion will all be considered in the final grade.

REQUIRED READINGS

See attached syllabus. Readings may vary somewhat.

History 406: American Cultural History, 1860 to the Present

1. Lectures: The first industrial era, 1865-1898
2. Lectures: The moral universe of the middle class  
Readings: Booker T. Washington, Up from Slavery (1901).
3. Lectures: Below the middle class--workers and immigrants in industrial America  
Readings: Documents of labor conflict
4. Lectures: Forces of change--science, class conflict, family tensions  
Readings: Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward (1888).
5. Lectures: The 1890's and the crisis of the old order  
Readings: Gail Parker, ed., The Ovenbirds: American Women on Womanhood, 1820-19
6. Lectures: The age of energy, 1898-1929  
Readings: Stephen Crane, Great Short Works of Stephen Crane.
7. Lectures: The scientist v. the child--the debate over new sources of coherence  
Readings: Sinclair Lewis, Arrowsmith (1925).
8. Lectures: The origins of mass culture  
Readings: Robert and Helen Lynd, Middletown (1929).
9. Lectures: Nervousness in the arts  
Readings: Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (1926).
10. Lectures: The age of retrenchment, 1929-1959  
Readings: A movie of the 1930's
11. Lectures: The recurrent crisis: depression, war, cold war, witch-hunt  
Readings: Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (1952).
12. Lectures: The suburban style of life  
Readings: David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd (1950) and Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman (1949).
13. Lectures: The traditionalists, the beats, and the existentialists  
Readings: Jack Kerouac, Dharma Bums (1958).
14. Lectures: From Montgomery (1957) to Woodstock (1969)  
Readings: Individual reading project
15. Lectures: Our times  
Readings: Individual reading project