History 600: Public Intellectuals in the U.S.

This course is designed for students interested in exploring the life of the mind in the twentieth-century United States. Specifically, we will examine the life of particular minds—intellectuals of different political, moral, and social persuasions and sensibilities, who have played prominent roles in American public life over the course of the last century. Despite the common conception of American culture as profoundly anti-intellectual, we will evaluate how professional thinkers and writers have indeed been forces in American society. Our aim is to investigate the contested meaning, role, and place of the intellectual in a democratic, capitalist culture. We will also examine the cultural conditions, academic and governmental institutions, and the media for the dissemination of ideas, which have both fostered and inhibited intellectual production and exchange.

Roughly the first third of the semester will be devoted to reading studies in U.S. and comparative intellectual history, the sociology of knowledge, and critical social theory. In addition, students will explore the varieties of public intellectual life by becoming familiarized with a wide array of prominent American philosophers, political and social theorists, scientists, novelists, artists, and activists. Students will use the first weeks of class to identify a public intellectual on whom they would like to write their final papers. Beginning week five, students will devote the bulk of their time to researching and writing their final paper on the life and thought of the intellectual of their choosing.

Assignments and Grading
The main assignment in this course is a 20-25 page research paper on a major twentieth-century American intellectual. In preparation for this final paper, students will have several weekly readings, as well as short writing, oral, and research assignments. For the weeks in which a common seminar reading is assigned, students will be expected to write paragraph-length questions based on those readings (noted with an *). Paragraph-length questions are due by 8 p.m. Sunday night (before Monday’s class meeting). Writing your weekly questions...
will prove to be a very useful strategy for synthesizing the reading and focusing your thoughts before coming to class.

All reading and writing assignments listed on the syllabus are mandatory. In addition, attendance is mandatory. If for any reason you are unable to come to class, please email me in advance to let me know. Unexcused absences and/or tardiness will result in a poor participation grade.

Grading will be based on class participation, weekly paragraph-length questions, encyclopedia entries, paper proposal and bibliography, and a final paper, with the breakdown as follows:

1. Participation & Attendance. Informed and engaged contribution to class discussions. 20%
2. Paragraph-Length Questions. Based on the readings for class. 10%
3. Encyclopedia Entries (paragraph-length) for 3 major U.S. thinkers. 10%
4. Proposal and Bibliography for Final Paper. Proposal should be 2-3 double-spaced pages/ bibliography of primary and secondary sources should be 1 single-spaced pages. 5%
5. Oral Presentations. 10-minutes synopsis of final paper for classmates, plus Q & A. No grade.
6. Final Paper. 20-25 page final research paper with bibliography. 55%

Students with Disabilities: Please notify me early in the semester if you have a documented requirement for accommodation in this course. If you have any questions about this or require any assistance, feel free to contact me or the McBurney Disability Resource Center at 263-2741.

Readings
The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

Julien Benda, Treason of the Intellectuals (1927)
Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (1962)

All other required readings (essays, articles, and book chapters) are on e-reserves. All of the required books are available on 3-hour reserve at the College Library.
Preparation for First Class Meeting on Jan. 28th:
In order to hit the ground running, your assignments for the first class meeting are:
1. Do all the readings listed for week 1 and submit by email (ratnerrosenh@wisc.edu) your 4-paragraph length questions based on the readings by **8 p.m. Sunday, January 27th**.
2. Familiarize yourself with some of the thinkers on the public intellectuals list and:
   a. come prepared to discuss your impressions.
   b. come with a list of 6 people on whom you would be interested to write your encyclopedia entries.
3. Review the course syllabus and come with any questions you may have about it.

Course Outline:

**Week 1 (Jan. 28) - Course Introduction: History and Meaning of the “Intellectual”**

- Raymond Williams, “Intellectual,” in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), pp. 169-171.

From: *Prospect Magazine*, “Global Public Intellectuals Poll Results,” pages 20-23; and review the full results of the poll online at [www.prospect-magazine.co.uk](http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk)

**Week 2 (Feb. 4) - Emergence of the Public Intellectual in the U.S. & 1st Library Meeting**


*Note: Today’s class will meet in Memorial Library, rm. 436.*

**Week 3 (Feb. 11) - The Responsibility and Social Function of the Intellectual**

- Julien Benda, *Treason of the Intellectuals* (1927)

Encyclopedia entries due no later than this Friday, February 15th by 5 p.m. Please send them as a Word document per email to Professor Ratner-Rosenhagen, Ronit Stahl, and cc: the course listserv.

Susan Sontag

Week 4 (Feb. 18) Independence and Belonging, Opposition and Advocacy: Dilemmas of the Intellectual*

Garry Wills

Week 5 (Feb. 25) American Anti-Intellectualism; Or, The Uses and Abuses of Intellect in the U.S.*

2-3 page proposal and bibliography (of primary and secondary sources) for final paper due Saturday, March 1st by 10 a.m. Please email to both instructors.

Week 6 (Mar. 3) No Class Today. Individual meetings this week with Professor Ratner-Rosenhagen and Ronit Stahl to discuss paper proposals.

Week 7 (Mar. 10) 2nd Library Meeting
*Note: Today’s class will meet in Memorial Library, rm. 436.*

Week 8 (Mar. 17) SPRING BREAK -- No Class
Week 9 (Mar. 24) Decline of the Public Intellectual*
Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (Basic, 1987)

Week 10 (Mar. 31) No Seminar Meeting; Course time devoted to independent research and writing

Week 11 (Apr. 7) Primary Source Workshop
*Bring in 1 of your primary sources to examine together with your classmates.*

Week 12 (Apr. 14) Trouble-Shooting Workshop
*Come prepared to discuss any substantive or structural problems you are having with your research and writing. You will be expected to help each other test and reformulate your ideas.*

Week 13 (Apr. 21) Oral Presentations

Week 14 (Apr. 28) Oral Presentations

Week 15 (May 5) Oral Presentations

*Final papers due Monday, May 12th at 10:00 a.m. in Prof. Ratner-Rosenhagen’s office.*
Examples of 20th-Century Public Intellectuals in the U.S.

Jane Addams
Mortimer Adler
Kwame Anthony
Appiah
Hannah Arendt
James Baldwin
Amira Baraka
William Barrett
Jacques Barzun
Daniel Bell
Robert Bellah
Randolph Bourne
Allan Bloom
Harold Bloom
Sidney Blumenthal
Sissela Bok
Daniel Boorstin
Wayne Booth
Louis Brandeis
David Brooks
Van Wyck Brooks
Norman O. Brown
William Sloane Coffin, Jr.
Henry Steele Commager
Stanley Crouch
Dinesh D'Souza
Robert Coles
Noam Chomsky
John Dewey
Joan Didion
E. J. Dionne
W.E.B. DuBois
Freeman Dyson
Albert Einstein
T.S. Eliot
Ralph Ellison
Jean Bethke Elshtain
Barbara Ehrenreich
Amitai Etzioni
Susan Faludi
Frances Fitzerald
Waldo Frank
John Hope Franklin
Betty Friedan
Milton Friedman
Thomas Friedman
Francis Fukuyama
David Galberttner
John Kenneth
Galbraith
Henry Louis Gates
Peter Gay
Carol Gilligan
Allen Ginsberg
Nathan Glazer
Emma Goldman
Paul Goodman
Doris Kearns
Goodwin
Stephen Jay Gould
Clement Greenberg
David Halberstam
Edith Hamilton
Learned Hand
Michael Harrington
Friedrich Hayek
Robert Heilbroner
Gertrude Himmelfarb
E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
Christopher Hitchens
Richard Hofstadter
Oliver Wendell Holmes
Sidney Hook
bell hooks
Irvng Howe
Robert Maynard Hutchins
Michael Ignatieff
Jane Jacobs
William James
John Kenneth
Galbraith
Mike Gold
Steven Jay Gould
Alfred Kazin
George Kennan
Martin Luther King
Alfred Kinsey
Henry Kissinger
Jonathan Kozol
Naomi Klein
Irving Kristol
William Kristol
Paul Krugman
Thomas Kuhn
Christopher Lasch
Mary Lefkowitz
Max Lerner
Meridel Le Sueur
Walter Lippmann
Seymour Martin Lipset
Alain Locke
Mabel Dodge Luhan
Martin E. Marty
Margaret Mead
C. Wright Mills
Dwight MacDonald
Catharine MacKinnon
Norman Mailer
Thomas Mann
Herbert Marcuse
Mary McCarthy
Marshall McLuhan
Alexander Meiklejohn
Louis Menand
H.L. Mencken
Arthur Miller
C. Wright Mills
Martha Minow
Norman Mailer
Thomas Mann
Martha Nussbaum
Joyce Carol Oates
Cynthia Ozick
Robert Oppenheimer
Camille Paglia
Orlando Patterson
Steven Pinker
Norman Podhoretz
Richard Posner
Ezra Pound
Hilary Putnam
Robert Putnam
Philip Rahv
Ayn Rand
Diane Ravitch
John Rawls
Robert Reich
Adrienne Rich
David Riesman
Richard Rodriguez
Richard Rorty
Harold Rosenberg
Walt Rostow
Philip Roth
Constance Rourke
Jeffrey Sachs
William Safire
Edward Said
Michael Sandel
Margaret Sanger
George Santayana
Elaine Scarf
Amartya Sen
Richard Sennett
Judith Shklar
Susan Sontag
Shelby Steele
Lincoln Steffens
Gertrude Stein
I.F. Stone
Leo Strauss
Andrew Sullivan
Allen Tate
Paul Tillich
Lionel Trilling
John Updike
Vidal
Booker T.
Washington
Ida B. Wells
Cornel West
Morton White
William H. Whyte
Elie Wiesel
Leon Wieseltier
George Will
Patricia Williams
Garry Wills
Edmund Wilson
E.O. Wilson
William Julius
Wilson
Naomi Wolf
Tom Wolfe
C. Vann Woodward
Malcolm X
Howard Zinn
For Further Reading:
Bernard-Henri Lévy, ed., What Good are Intellectuals?: 44 Writers Share Their Thoughts (Algora, 2000).