

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

History 901  
Proseminar in American history

Fall, 1990  
Carl Kaestle

American social and cultural history, 1860 - 1940

Some supplementary information

I. Working definition of social history

**SOCIAL HISTORY:** The study of daily routine behavior, crucial life course events, and shared beliefs of the various groups of nonelite people who make up the great majority of the population, with the intention of discovering systematic patterns and inferring the causes of change in these patterns over time.

Typically, this definition leads us to the study of births, marriages, deaths (fertility, health, customs related to demographic events); of socialization, childrearing and childcare, and educational patterns; work conditions, recruitment, workplace culture; geographic and occupational mobility, income, expenditures, and opportunity; cultural and religious conflict, immigration, and assimilation; the political behavior of people (as voters, as rioters); the purpose and effect of institutions that deal with nonelite people; roles and power relationships (gender roles in society, in the family); community development; ideology, values and communication at the popular level; --- to name but a few.

This definition implies that the social historian takes as a central problem and theme the relationship between behavior and belief, between structure and ideas.

Finally, trying to infer causes for changes in behavior or belief patterns leads social historians to an interest in large social transformations like the development of capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, migration, and emancipation.

II. Scope of the field: a crude outline of social and cultural history topics

- A. The family
  - 1. Sexuality, reproduction
    - a. Fertility
    - b. Birth control
    - c. Childbirth
    - d. Prostitution
    - e. Homosexuality
    - f. Sexuality: other topics
    - g. Gender
  - 2. Stages of life, transitions
    - a. Life course: theoretical, general
    - b. Childhood, childcare
    - c. Youth, adolescence
    - d. Courtship, marriage
    - e. Divorce
    - f. Old age, death
  - 3. The home, housework
  - 4. Family budgets, household economy
- B. Women
  - 1. Women's sphere, ideology
  - 2. Women's institutions
  - 3. Women's rights
- C. Education
  - 1. Elementary and secondary
  - 2. The higher learning
    - a. Higher education
    - b. Professional knowledge, science and society
- D. Work
  - 1. Corporate capitalism
  - 2. Labor, men at work, people at work
  - 3. Women at work
  - 4. Unions
- E. Communication, media
  - 1. Print media
    - a. Books
    - b. Magazines
    - c. Newspapers
  - 2. Film
  - 3. Electronic media
    - a. Radio
    - b. Television
  - 4. Computers and society

- F. Consumer culture
  - 1. Advertising
  - 2. Consumers, distribution of goods
- G. Public opinion
- H. Leisure
  - 1. General
  - 2. Sports
- I. Communities
  - 1. Works on community as an idea, as a force
  - 2. Urban history: case studies, syntheses
  - 3. Rural history: case studies, syntheses
- J. European ethnicity and immigration
  - 1. The immigrant experience
  - 2. Assimilation, nativism, pluralism
- K. Racial minorities
  - 1. Black Americans
  - 2. Hispanic Americans
  - 3. Asian Americans
  - 4. Native Americans
- L. Poverty, income
- M. Deviance
  - 1. Crime, prisons, criminal justice
  - 2. Insanity, asylums
- N. Health, medicine
- O. Other reforms
- P. Religion and society
- Q. Success, mobility
  - 1. The success ethic
  - 2. Mobility studies
- R. Countercultures, utopias

III. Some journals that deal with American social and cultural history

American Historical Review  
Journal of American History  
Journal of Social History  
Journal of Interdisciplinary History  
Social Science History  
Historical Methods  
Reviews in American History  
William and Mary Quarterly  
Journal of Family History  
History of Education Quarterly  
Labor History  
Journal of Negro History  
Signs  
Feminist Studies  
Urban History  
American Quarterly  
New England Quarterly  
Radical History Review  
Ethnic Studies  
History and Theory

IV. Some assessments of social and cultural history

Olivier Zunz, ed., Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1985, pb)  
James B. Gardner and George Rollie Adams, eds., Ordinary People and Everyday Life: Perspectives on the New Social History (Nashville, American Association for State and Local History, 1983)  
John Higham and Paul Conkin, New Directions in American Intellectual History (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, pb)  
Michael Kammen, ed., The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1980, pb)  
Stanley Kutler and Stanley Katz, eds., The Promise of American History: Progress and Prospects (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, also published as volume 10, number 1 (December, 1982) of Reviews in American History.  
James A. Henretta, "Social History as Lived and Written," American Historical Review 84 (December, 1979), 1293-1322  
Bernard Bailyn, "The Challenge of Modern Historiography," American Historical Review 87 (February, 1982).  
Journal of Interdisciplinary History, volume 13 (Spring, 1983), special issue on quantitative research techniques.  
Theda Skocpol, "Social History and Historical Sociology: Contrasts and Complementarities," Social Science History 11 (Spring, 1987).

V. Preparation: critical reading for discussion of works in social and cultural history.

- A. What are the major arguments of the book?
- B. What sorts of evidence are used to support them?
- C. How adequate is the evidence? How conclusively does it support the argument?
- D. Are there alternative explanations for the same evidence?
- E. What overarching assumptions about human nature and society guide the author? Are implicit or explicit theories used? Appropriately, persuasively?

VI. Samples of my essay reviews:

Reviews of single works:

Michael Katz's The People of Hamilton, in Reviews in American History vol. 4 (December, 1976)

Colin Burke's, American Collegiate Populations, in Science vol. 220 (May, 1983)

Review of several works:

"Social Reform and the Urban School," History of Education Quarterly vol. 12 (Summer, 1972)

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
Department of History

History 901  
Proseminar in American History

Carl Kaestle  
Fall, 1990

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)  
Lawrence Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow (Harvard)  
Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements (Temple)  
Roland Marchand, Advertising and the American Dream (California)  
Nancy Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism (Yale)

The Labaree book, The Making of an American High School, is available only in hardback. I have asked the bookstores to stock it as an optional purchase, and I shall place several copies on reserve when we approach that date on the syllabus.

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 Wednesdays 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                    Introduction to the course  
September 4

UNIT ONE: EMANCIPATION

Week 2                    The short-run, grassroots impact  
September 11

READ: Leon Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery (New York, Alfred Knopf, 1979).

Bonus discussion: writing tips and stylistic exhortations

Supplementary reading:

W. E. B. Dubois, Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880 (New York, Russell & Russell, 1935, Atheneum pb., 1962).

William Gillette, Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879 (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1979, pb).

Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, pb).

Jacqueline Jones, Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873 (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York, Harper & Row, 1988).

James McPherson, The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964, pb)

William S. McFeeley, Yankee Stepfather: General O. O. Howard and the Freedmen (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968, Norton, pb).

Week 3  
September 18

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).

Bonus discussion: Folk materials as evidence

Supplementary reading:

Richard M. Dorson, American Folklore (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1959).

Richard M. Dorson, American Folklore and the Historian (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971).

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

John W. Blassingame, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South (New York, Oxford University Press, revised edition, 1979, pb).

Thomas Webber, Deep Like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community, 1831-1865 (New York, Norton, 1978, pb).

Week 4  
September 25

Black women and work

READ: Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present (New York, Basic books, 1985, pb).

Bonus discussion: visit to Wisconsin State Historical Library

Supplementary reading:

Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York, Partheon, 1976, pb).

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

Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York, Oxford University Press, 1982, pb).

Julie A. Mathaei, An Economic History of Women in America: Women's Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism (New York, Schocken Books, 1982, pb).

David M. Katzman, Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America (New York, Oxford University Press, 1978, pb).

Leslie Woodcock Tentler, Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1979, pb).



UNIT TWO: CAPITALISM AND CULTURE IN THE INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION

Week 5  
October 5

Ethnic clash: the Chicano experience

READ: David Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987)

Bonus discussion: state of Chicano history (guest)

Supplementary reading:

Richard Griswold del Castillo, The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890: A Social History (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979, pb).

Albert Camarillo, Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979, pb).

Guadalupe San Miguel, "Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981 (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1987).

Mario T. Garcia, Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920 (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981).

Vicki Ruiz, Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987)

Rodolfo Acuna, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (New York, Harper & Row, third edition, 1988, pb).

Week 7  
October 16

The industrialization of the countryside

READ: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly, Like A Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1987, pb).

Bonus discussion: oral history

Supplementary reading:

Stephen Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1985, pb).

Jonathan Prude, The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pb).

Thomas Dublin, Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860 (New York, Columbia University Press, 1979, pb).

Tamara K. Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, pb).

Jack Temple Kirby, Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960 (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1987, pb).

Don S. Kirschner, City and Country: Rural Responses to Urbanization in the 1920s (Westport, CN, Greenwood Press, 1970).

### UNIT THREE; INDEPENDENT PROJECTS

Week 8  
October 23

Individual conferences

Week 9  
October 30

Social gathering, no seminar meeting

Week 10  
November 6

Oral reports (double session).

UNIT FOUR: CULTURAL PRODUCTION, REPRODUCTION, AND RESISTANCE

Week 11  
November 15

The stratification of culture

READ: Lawrence W. Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988)

Supplementary reading:

T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," American Historical Review 90 (June, 1985), 567-593.

Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," Media, Culture and Society 4 (1982), 33-50 and 303-322.

Christopher Wilson, "The Rhetoric of Consumption: Mass-Market Magazines and the Demise of the Gentle Reader, 1880-1920," in Fox and Lears, Culture of Consumption, pp. 39-64.

Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste (Paris, 1979, Eng. transl., Harvard, 1984, pb)

Herbert J. Gans, Popular Culture & High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste (New York: Basic Books, 1974)

Norman Jacobs, ed., Culture for the Millions? Mass Media in Modern Society (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1959).

Carl F. Kaestle, Helen Damon-Moore, Lawrence C. Stedman, Katherine Tinsley, and William Vance Trollinger, Jr., Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading Since 1880 (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming)

Week 12  
November 20

Leisure and class

READ: Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1986, pb).

Supplementary reading:

Roy Rosenzweig, Eight Hours for What We Will: Work and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920 (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pb).

John Kasson, Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century (New York, Hill & Wang, 1978, pb).

Neil Harris, Humbug! The Art of P. T. Barnum (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973, pb).

Perry Duis, The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920 (Champaign-Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1983).

Lewis Erenberg, Steppin' Out: New York Night Life and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930 (Westport, CN, Greenwood Press, 1981, pb).

Week 13  
November 27

Education and social structure

READ: David F. Labaree, The Making of an American High School: The Credentials Market and the Central High School of Philadelphia, 1838-1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988)

Supplementary reading:

Lawrence Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957 (New York, Knopf, 1968, pb).

Joel Spring, Education and the Rise of the Corporate State (Boston, Beacon Press, 1972, pb).

William J. Reese, Power and the Promise of School Reform: Grass-Roots Movement During the Progressive Era (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1986, pb).

Joel Perlmann, Ethnic Differences: Schooling and Social Structure Among the Irish, Italians, Jews and Blacks in an American City, 1880-1935 (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988)

David Hogan, Class and Reform: School and Society in Chicago, 1880-1930 (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press).

Julia Wrigley, Class Politics and Public Schools: Chicago, 1900-1950 (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1982).

David B. Tyack, The One Best System: A History of Urban Education (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1974, pb).

Week 14  
December 4

## Advertising

READ: Roland Marchand, Advertising and the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940 (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, pb).

### Supplementary reading:

Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Roots of the Consumer Culture (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1976, pb).

Michael Schudson, Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society (New York, Basic Books, 1984).

Stephen Fox, The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators (New York, William Morrow, 1984).

Daniel Pope, The Making of Modern Advertising (New York, Basic Books, 1983).

Raymond Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System," in Williams, Problems in Materialism and Culture (London, Verso, 1980), pp. 170-195.

Week 15  
December 11

## Women challenge cultural constraints

READ: Nancy F. Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987, pb.)

### Supplementary reading:

Rosalind Rosenberg, Beyond Separate Spheres: The Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, pb).

Barbara Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985).

Margaret Rossiter, Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940 (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, pb).

William P. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969, pb)

Sheila Rothman, Woman's Proper Place (New York: Basic, 1978, pb)

Ellen Carol Dubois, Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Woman's Movement in America, 1848-1869 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978, pb)

Joan W. Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988)