

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
Department of History  
Semester II, 1984-85

History 302

Prof. Paul Boyer

History of American Thought 1859 to the Present

This course examines the shifting currents of American social thought from the Age of Darwin to the Age of Reagan. We will explore how successive generations of novelists, philosophers, theologians, sociologists, and activists responded to the dramatic changes in the social and technological framework of American life in these eventful decades.

This is primarily a lecture course, but several classes have been set aside for discussion. For undergraduates, the work of the course consists of a midterm, a final, a paper (see below), and participation in the scheduled discussions. Grading is as follows: Midterm: 25%, Paper and discussion: 25%, Final: 50%. For graduate students and those wishing Honors credit, several additional discussion sections will be scheduled, supplementary readings will be suggested, and the paper will be longer (ca. 15-18 pages), with the topic to be worked out in consultation with the instructor.

Assigned Books. The following are all in paperback, and should be available in the University Bookstore. In addition, they have been placed on Reserve in Helen C. White.

Lewis Perry, Intellectual Life in America  
Horatio Alger, Ragged Dick  
Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward  
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland  
William James, Pragmatism and Other Essays  
John Dewey: The Essential Writings (Ed., David Sidorsky)  
The Social Thought of Jane Addams (Ed., Christopher Lasch)  
Sinclair Lewis, Arrowsmith  
Nathaniel West, A Cool Million  
Jonathan Schell, The Fate of the Earth

Paper: Undergraduates will write a 7-8 page paper on one of the assigned books in the course, on one of the thinkers or writers discussed in lecture, or on some relevant topic approved by the instructor. Papers will be welcome at any time during the semester up to the final due date: Friday, May 3. IMPORTANT: University penalties for plagiarism can be severe. All quoted or closely paraphrased material in a paper must be clearly attributed to the original source.

Office Hours: Mon., Wed., 1:30-3:30, or by appointment.  
Office: Humanities 4131.

Lecture, Discussion, and Reading Schedule:

I. THE GILDED AGE

- M 1/21 Course Introduction  
General reading for this unit: Perry, Intellectual Life in America, pp. 263-316.
- W 1/23 The Meaning of the Civil War
- F 1/25 The Darwinian Revolution
- M 1/28 Discussion: The Impact of Darwinism  
Reading: John Dewey: "The Impact of Darwinism on Philosophy" (1909) in Sidorsky (ed.), Dewey: The Essential Writings, pp. 13-22
- W 1/30 William Graham Sumner: Social Darwinist
- F 2/1 Andrew Carnegie: The Tycoon as Social Philosopher
- M 2/4 DISCUSSION: Horatio Alger, Ragged Dick (1867)
- W 2/6 Booker T. Washington: Variations on the Alger Theme
- F 2/8 Panaceas, Utopias, and Revolutionary Nightmares  
(Reading: Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward [1888]).
- M 2/11 Lester Ward and Thorstein Veblen: Critics of Laissez Faire Ideology and Gilded-Age Culture
- W 2/13 Charlotte Perkins Gilman: the Darwinian as Feminist  
(Reading: Gilman, Herland [1915]).
- F 2/15 "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?"
- M 2/18 William James: Psychologist of the Soul
- W 2/20 William James and the Origins of Pragmatism  
(Reading: James, "What Pragmatism Means" [1907]).
- F 2/22 Darwinism and American Fiction: Norris, Dreiser, London
- M 2/25 HOUR EXAM

II. THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

- W 2/27 From Self to Society: The Social Thought of John Dewey  
(Reading: Dewey, "The Significance of the Problem of Knowledge" [1897]; "The Democratic Conception in Education" [1916] in Sidorsky [ed.], John Dewey: The Essential Writings, 53-69, 219-225.)
- F 3/1 Theorists of Social Control in an Urban-Industrial Age

- M 3/4 Herbert Croly: Political Theory in the Age of TR and Wilson
- W 3/6 Walter Lippmann and the Crisis of Authority
- F 3/8 "Scientific" Racism: The Worlds of Charles B. Davenport and Madison Grant
- M 3/11 W. E. B. DuBois and the Dilemma of the Black Intellectual
- W 3/13 DISCUSSION: The Social Thought of Jane Addams  
(Reading: Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements" [1892]; excerpt from Democracy and Social Ethics [1902]; excerpt from Twenty Years at Hull House [1910]; "Why Women Should Vote" [1910]; and "The Larger Aspects of the Woman's Movement" [1914]. Lasch, pp. 1-43, 62-84, 143-162. Also xiii-xxxi.)
- F 3/15 Multiplicity and Unity: Henry Adams' Search for Meaning
- SPRING RECESS
- M 3/25 Freud Comes to America
- W 3/27 Randolph Bourne and the Watershed of World War I  
(Reading: John Dewey, excerpt from Creative Intelligence [1917], in Sidorsky, pp. 86-95; Jane Addams, excerpt from Peace and Bread in Time of War [1922], Lasch, 231-246.)

### III. THE ERA BETWEEN THE WARS

- F 3/29 The 1920s: Defection of the Intellectuals  
(General reading for this unit: Perry, Intellectual Life in America, pp. 319-376.)
- M 4/1 Views of Science and Technology in the 1920s: Hope and Promise
- W 4/3 Views of Science and Technology in the 1920s: A Darker Side
- F 4/5 UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY
- M 4/8 DISCUSSION: Sinclair Lewis, Arrowsmith (1925)
- W 4/10 When Harlem Was in Vogue: White Fantasies and Black Realities in the 1920s.
- F 4/12 Social Thought in the 1930s: Niebuhr, Dewey, and the New Deal
- M 4/15 Literature and Society in the Early Depression Years
- W 4/17 The Era of the Popular Front: Literature and Politics, 1935-40
- F 4/19 DISCUSSION: Nathaniel West, A Cool Million (1934)

IV. SINCE WORLD WAR II

- M 4/22 Scientists and Public Policy, 1939-1947  
(General reading for this unit: Perry, Intellectual Life in America,  
pp. 381-454.)
- W 4/24 The End of Ideology? Social Thought in the 1950s
- F 4/26 Nuclear Weapons in American Thought and Culture.
- M 4/29 Nuclear Weapons in American Thought and Culture.
- W 5/1 DISCUSSION: Jonathan Schell, The Fate of the Earth
- F 5/3 Rise and Fall of the New Left. PAPER DUE TODAY
- M 5/6 Paradoxes and Contradictions on the Right.
- W 5/8 Apocalyptic Visions; A Canticle for Leibowitz, The Late Great Planet  
Earth, etc.
- F 5/10 Technology, Consciousness, and Culture