

Hist. 302

History of American Thought Since 1859

Spring 1997

To: Students Interested in History 302

From: Paul Boyer

This is the syllabus of Hist. 302 for the Spring 1996 semester. The syllabus will be very similar for the spring of 1997, with one or two possible changes in the reading list, and perhaps in the lectures. The exam schedule (Midterm, Final) and paper assignment will be the same.

The new syllabus will be available a week or so before the spring term begins.

If you have further questions about the course, please contact me at: psboyer@facstaff.wisc.edu, or 262-8151.

PSB, 11/8/96

University of Wisconsin
Department of History
Spring Semester 1996

Hist. 302 History of American Thought, 1859-Present Boyer/Daniels

This course explores the shifting currents of American intellectual history over the past 130+ years. We will examine how writers, philosophers, journalists, feminists, environmentalists, and even industrial tycoons, music-hall performers, and daredevil pilots have shaped American public discourse and popular culture during these years of massive social, economic, and political change.

Assigned Work. Course work includes regular lecture attendance, midterm exam, term paper, final exam, and active discussion participation. The final grade will take all of these components into account.

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

Michael Kammen, Ed., Contested Values: Democracy and Diversity in American Culture
Jack London, The Call of the Wild
Horatio Alger, Ragged Dick
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland
Walter Lippmann, Drift and Mastery
F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby
Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God
Paul Boyer, By the Bomb's Early Light
Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451
David Farber, Ed., The Sixties
Aldo Leopold, Sand County Almanac
David Hollinger, Post-Ethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism

Paper. The paper should be a maximum of 8 pages (typed, double spaced). You have two paper options: (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), by a post-Civil-War U.S. author, relevant to the themes of the course. (Note: If you choose Option 2, please clear your topic with the TA, Eric Daniels.) You need not do additional research beyond a close reading of the work itself. The paper should be your considered response to the work, not a summary of the ideas of others. It should be well organized with a title page, an introduction, a thesis (that is, a central argument that you develop and support), and a conclusion. No extensions except in documented cases of illness or family emergency. The paper must be entirely your own work; plagiarism is an extremely serious offense under University regulations. You should choose your book and begin work on your paper early in the semester. Papers are welcome any time prior to the final due date, Friday, May 3.

Office Hours:

Eric Daniels: To be announced

Paul Boyer: By appointment. Phone 262-8151.

Office: Institute for Research in the Humanities, Washburn Observatory,
1401 Observatory Drive

Lecture and Reading Schedule

- M 1/22 Course Introduction
 W 1/24 The Civil War as a Cultural Watershed

DARWINISM IN AMERICA

- F 1/26 The Darwinian Intellectual Revolution

Week 2 Reading: Sumner, "The Absurd Effort to Make the World Over" (Kammen, pp. 34-41);
 Jack London, The Call of the Wild

- M 1/29 The Scientific and Religious Debate Over Evolutionary Theory
 W 1/31 Darwinism and Social Thought
 F 2/2 The Rise of Naturalism: Evolutionary Theory and American Literature

URBAN ANXIETIES AND SUCCESS FORMULAS IN A CHANGING SOCIAL ORDER

Week 3 Reading: Horatio Alger, Ragged Dick

- M 2/5 American Popular Music in an Age of Social Change
 W 2/7 Horatio Alger: A Second Look at the "Rags to Riches" Tales
 F 2/9 Booker T. Washington: Variations on the Alger Theme

Week 4 Reading: Lester Ward, Psychic Factors of Civilization; Andrew Carnegie, The Gospel of Wealth
 (Kammen, pp. 29-34, 45-50)

- M 2/12 Andrew Carnegie: The Industrial Tycoon as Social Philosopher

DISSIDENT VOICES AND REFORM IDEOLOGIES IN THE GILDED AGE

- W 2/14 Lester Ward and Thorstein Veblen: Two Critical Voices
 F 2/16 Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Darwinian as Radical Feminist

Week 5 Reading: Gilman, Herland; Gilman, "Birth Control" (Kammen, pp. 136-141).

- M 2/19 Social Panaceas, Utopias, and Nightmares
 W 2/21 W.E.B. DuBois and the Problem of Double Identity
 F 2/23 William James I: Psychologist of the Soul

Week 6: No Reading. Hour Exam preparation

- M 2/26 William James II: Pragmatism and the Crisis of Faith

W 2/28 **HOUR EXAM**

FROM SELF TO SOCIETY: SOCIAL THOUGHT IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY

F 3/1 Science, Society, and Schools: The Social Thought of John Dewey

Week 7 Reading: Walter Lippmann, Drift and Mastery;
Jane Addams, "Charitable Effort" (Kammen, pp. 50-55)

M 3/4 Herbert Croly: Redefining Liberalism for the Urban-Industrial Age

W 3/6 Walter Lippmann: Social Justice and Social Order in a Mass Society

F 3/8 Jane Addams: The Middle-Class Woman in an Urban-Industrial Age

[Spring Recess]

Week 8 Reading: Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby

M 3/18 "Scientific" Racism: The Underside of Progressive Ideology

ALIENATED INTELLECTUALS AND CULTURE WARS IN THE 1920s

W 3/20 World War I as Cultural Watershed: Randolph Bourne

F 3/22 New Currents in American Fiction and Cultural Criticism

Week 9 Reading: "The Scopes Trial"; Mencken, On Being an American; Tarkington, America and Culture (Kammen, pp. 143-161, 179-189).

M 3/25 Sinclair Lewis: Babbitts and Scientists

W 3/27 The Achievement and Limitations of the Harlem Renaissance

F 3/29 Guest Lecture

Week 10 Reading: Henry Luce, "The American Century" and Charles A. Lindbergh speech
(Kammen, pp. 191-204). (Also discuss term paper this week.)

M 4/1 Black Stereotypes in 1920s Mass Culture

W 4/3 The Lone Eagle: Hero Worship and Social Insecurities

F 4/5 University Holiday

SOCIAL THOUGHT IN YEARS OF DEPRESSION, FASCIST MENACE, AND WAR

Week 11 Reading: Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

M 4/8 Desperate Visions: Fictions of the Early 1930s

W 4/10 Rediscovering America: The Era of the Popular Front

F 4/12 Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston: Black Fiction of the Thirties

Week 12 Reading: Boyer, By the Bomb's Early Light (selections); Martin Luther King, Letter from Birmingham Jail, Autobiography of Malcolm X (excerpts) (Kammen, pp. 271-287).

HIROSHIMA TO VIETNAM: MUSHROOMING FEARS, LONELY CROWDS, CULTURAL FERMENT

- M 4/15 Nuclear Weapons in American Culture: An Overview
- W 4/17 Political Engagement to Cultural Criticism: 1950s Social Thought
- F 4/19 Martin and Malcolm: Conflict or Convergence?

Week 13 Reading: Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451; Farber, Ed., The Sixties (selections)

- M 4/22 Liberalism in Crisis: The Sixties

IN THESE TIMES: TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THOUGHT

- W 4/24 Since Friedan: Contemporary Feminist Ideological Crosscurrents
- F 4/26 Newt's Roots: Conservative Thought from Hayek to Gingrich

Week 14 Reading: Leopold, Sand County Almanac; "Environmentalism and Its Critics" section, Kammen, pp. 251-267.

- M 4/29 666 and All That: Prophecy Believers' Scenarios of the Future
- W 5/1 Silent Spring and After: Environmentalist Scenarios of the Future
- F 5/3 The Computer in Social Thought and Popular Culture (PAPER DUE TODAY)

Week 15 Reading: E. A. Ross and Horace Kallen selections (Kammen, pp. 115-128); Hollinger, Post-Ethnic America

- M 5/6 Chewing Gum for the Eyes? Mass Culture and Its Critics
- W 5/8 The Pursuit of Happiness: Americans' Endless Quest for Self-Realization, Self-Actualization, and Self-Fulfillment
- F 5/10 E Pluribus Unun? The Search for Common Ground in a Fragmenting Society