

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY FULLERTON

Spring 2005

**Honors 201B
Sophomore Honors Seminar
MW 1-2:15
UH 239**

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Office Hours: MW: 4-7
Friday: By Appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW, DESCRIPTION, AND OBJECTIVES:

The first semester of this one year sequence examined the cultural, social, and historical foundations of American life. In particular, we attempted to understand what it means to be an American. Implicit in our conversation was the idea that America is “exceptional.” The idea of American exceptionalism dates back to the Puritans but the concept was formalized by American historians and social scientists during the 1950s. Some historians have argued that the concept of exceptionalism was created after WWII in order to differentiate America from the political movements and institutions of Europe. Whatever the case, the concept is embedded in the American consciousness. This was evident from President Bush’s current inaugural speech that emphasized how that Americans have an obligation to spread our exceptional values to all nations of the world. President Bush is certainly not the first President since the 1950’s to speak in these terms.

This semester we will attempt to understand how the American character has helped shape the events of the 20th Century, and how events, in turn, have influenced what it means to be an American. In other words, has America remained differentiated from the rest of the world? Exceptionalism can be a parochial attitude at best, and a justification for the exercise of American power at worst. In an era of globalization and increasing cosmopolitanism, is exceptionalism a meaningful category?

Since the Civil War, American history can be divided between the following periods:

- 1860-1890 Expansion and Consolidation
- 1890-1940 Age of Reform
- 1945-1962 Period of Economic Growth and Cultural Uniformity
- 1962-1975 Political Revolution
- 1975-2005 Social and Political Reaction

This periodization indicates that the 20th Century began with an impulse to reform which carried until the mid-70s. It is a paradox of the 20th Century that it began with

reform and ended with a reaction against 75 years of generally progressive politics. Explaining this paradox is one of the goals of the class this semester.

I have oriented the class around two tentative explanations for the paradox of 20th Century American History. First, in the words of the conservative writer Richard Weaver, “ideas have consequences.” If there was to be a reaction against the dominant liberal ideology of the 20th Century it had to come primarily from a fresh set of ideas. The conservative movement in the U.S. was moribund until the mid 1950s and it took nearly twenty years to refine the conservative ideology which ultimately challenged the liberal consensus. We will first trace the development of liberalism and the conservative counter response.

Second, Nobel Laureate Robert Fogel (2000) has argued that the conservative reaction to liberal consensus is rooted in the tension between technological advance and societal values. He argues that it is often the case that technology and its attendant changes create stress for the moral framework of society. Shifts in values must occur to accommodate new technologies. It is no accident that religious awakenings in the U.S. have accompanied social and political change. Today for example, the tension between liberal and conservative politics is mirrored by a split in religion between the newer evangelical churches and the old established churches. This is not unlike the tension between evangelicalism and Unitarianism during the Second Great Awakening (1800-1830).

It is our task this semester, to explore the historical roots of the current conflict of ideologies which is related to American exceptionalism. I have proposed in this syllabus to integrate a study of culture, history, philosophy and politics to accomplish the goals of the class.

More specifically our goals are as follows:

- To understand the reform impulse of progressivism and its relationship to the New Deal and subsequent social movements in the 1960s and 70s. We wish to inquire as to whether or not these chapters in 20th Century history are separate or whether they reflect a continuous movement.
- To understand ideological shifts in the 20th Century.
- To understand why inequality declined from 1900 to 1970 and why since 1970 we have become a more egalitarian society.
- To understand the role of the U.S. in the modern world.
- To understand America’s transition to the “modern” and the attendant reaction.
- To understand the relationship between economics, culture and politics.
- To understand changes in American social and political institutions.

BOOKS:

All of the assigned articles can be found in, Hollinger, David A. and Charles Capper. 2001. *The American Intellectual Tradition, Vol 2*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. You should be able to obtain a copy at the Titan Bookstore.

All students should also obtain a copy of Frank, Thomas. 2004. *What’s the Matter with Kansas: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. New York: Henry Holt.

All students will read the following novels:

Robert Penn Warren, *All the Kings Men*.

John del Vecchio, *The Thirteenth Valley*.

Students will read one of the following:

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*

Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

All students will read one of the following:

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*.

William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust*, or *Light in August*

Note that each student will be required to read four novels over the course of the semester. We will make the reading assignments the first day of class so that you will be able to pace your readings.

GRADES:

Four short papers 3-5 pages will be assigned during the course of the semester. These papers will deal with some aspect of the readings. Students should be prepared to present their papers in class. Each paper will count for 15 points (10 for the written part and 5 points for the oral presentation). The final exam will be posted on Blackboard one week prior to the due date. The exam should be about 5 pages. The final will count for 30 points. A student may earn up to 10 points for attendance and participation. I will not use the + or – system. Grades will be awarded as follows:

90-100 A

80-90 B

70-80 C

60-70 D

GUIDELINES FOR ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

1. All written assignments are to be typed and double-spaced. Please use Times Roman font 12.
2. Number all pages.
3. Please use a title page. No binders, folders, etc.
4. Please use one inch margins all around.
5. The first paragraph should contain a thesis statement and the outline of your paper. Do not delay this until later paragraphs. The thesis statement should contain a description of the topic you are examining, and how you will examine it. You should also make some statement about why your topic is important, or why anyone should read your paper.
6. The body of your paper should present the substance of your argument. In longer research papers you should always include a review of the relevant literature.
7. The conclusion should bring together the various parts of the paper and lead to your final analysis or judgment about the question. Please indicate whether your research has left important questions unanswered, or where future research might begin.
8. Do not cite a dictionary to define terms. The purpose of this class is to learn to conceptualize terms.

9. Become accustomed to using a style manual. I prefer that you use the *American Political Science Review* style of embedded citations. You should refer to a recent issue of the *APSR*. For unusual style or formatting questions please use the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
10. Always include a bibliography. For your final paper please annotate the bibliography.
11. If you cite the Internet make sure your citation conforms to the proper style.
12. In conducting your research please use scholarly, peer-reviewed journals. There is simply a lot of “junk” on the internet and you should not develop the habit of citing large numbers of unreviewed sources. Please use the search engines provided by the library.
13. I recommend that for longer papers you make use of headings and subheadings in order to demarcate different sections of your paper. In using this procedure, it will help you outline your work.
14. Do not double space twice between paragraphs.
15. Pencil or ink corrections are not acceptable.
16. Avoid slang and popular colloquialisms. Develop the habit of using a Thesaurus.
17. Employ the services of the University Writing Lab.
18. Writing is revision.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

I encourage cooperation and collaborative learning. However, all written work must be your own. The CSUF catalogue states: “Plagiarism is defined as the act of taking the specific substance of another and offering it as one’s own without giving credit to the source. When sources are used, acknowledgement of the original author or source must be made following standard scholarly practice.” Plagiarism includes lack of proper citations as well as the purchasing of papers from a service or another student. In addition, copying text from internet sources is plagiarism. If I suspect academic dishonesty I will use an on-line program that detects plagiarism. If you are ever uncertain, please ask.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE:

January 31:

- Introduction
- Course Overview
- Expansion and Consolidation 1860-1890

February 2:

- The American Mind in the Early 20th Century

Reading Due: George Santayana, “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy.”

February 7 and 9:

- Pragmatism and the Re-Definition of American Democracy

Reading Due: William James, "What Pragmatism Means." John Dewey, "Philosophy and Democracy."

February 14, 16 and 23:

- The Social Consequences of Industrialization

Reading Due: Thorsten Veblen, from, "The Theory of the Leisure Class."
Kate Chopin, "The Awakening." Theodore Dreiser, "Sister Carrie."

February 21:

- No Class, President's Day

February 28, March 2:

- Populism, then and now.

Reading Due: Thomas Frank, "What's the Matter with Kansas."

March 7 and 9:

- Social Gospel and the Third Great Awakening
- Progressivism
- The New Deal

Reading Due: Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements."

March 14 and 16:

- The American Adam goes To War

Movie: "Once an Eagle"

March 23 and 25:

- Korea, The Forgotten War. Viet-Nam, The Unforgettable War.

Reading Due: Noam Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals."

John del Vecchio, *The Thirteenth Valley*.

March 30: No Class, Spring Break.

April 4 and 6:

- The Mind of the South

Reading Due: John Crowe Ransom, "Unreconstructed but Unregenerate."

Robert Penn Warren, "All the Kings Men."

April 11, 13, 18 and 20:

- Race in America

Reading Due: Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Malcolm X. "The Ballot or the Bullet."

Toni Morrison, "Beloved" William Faulkner, "Light in August."

April 25 and 27

- Feminism

Reading Due: Judith Butler, from "Gender Trouble." Nancy Chodorow, "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective." Betty Friedan, from "The Feminine Mystique."

May 2 and May 4:

- Some Post-Modern Perspectives

Reading Due: Thomas Kuhn, from "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions." Richard Rorty, "Science as Solidarity."

May 9 and 11:

- Multiculturalism

Reading Due: Ralph Ellison, "The Little Man at Chehaw Station." Kwame Appiah, from, "In My Father's House."

May 16 and 18:

- The Fourth Great Awakening
- The Conservative Counter Revolution

Reading Due: Samuel Huntington, "The Democratic Distemper."

May 25:

FINAL EXAM DUE