

U.S. Intellectual History since the Civil War

History 326-0
L06 Harris Hall (basement level)
Mon. and Wed. 9:30am–10:50am
Advanced undergraduate lecture course

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Course description

This course traces the history of the United States since the Civil War through its ideas. How have intellectuals understood, reacted to, or participated in such developments as the rise of the corporation, Jim Crow segregation, World War II, the Cold War, the social movements of the 1960s, and globalization? How has the role of intellectuals changed with the emergence of the research university and the inclusion of new voices on the national stage? We will explore questions such as these as we read a variety of primary sources from throughout the period, beginning with Social Darwinism and ending with the memoirs of Barack Obama.

This class has two main purposes. The first is to introduce you to a particular method of approaching the past. Like social history, cultural history, diplomatic history, and economic history, intellectual history—the study of ideas and intellectuals—offers a specific way of explaining events, which we will explore throughout the quarter. The second purpose of this class is to acquaint you with some of the most powerful, influential, and interesting texts in the U.S. intellectual tradition. By the end of this course, you will have read widely in the canon of U.S. social theory and will be equipped to carry out any number of research projects within the field.

Assignments and grading

This is, above all, a reading class: your job is to read the major texts of U.S. intellectual history and understand them. I will introduce new material in lecture, but the main purpose of those lectures will be to support an understanding of the assigned readings.

Reading

Readings will almost always be under one hundred and fifty pages per week. All of the readings will be primary sources. I will provide some historical context in the lectures, but I will also expect that you will come to the class already familiar with the basic contours of U.S. history. As we will talk about the course readings extensively during the class sessions (there is no separate discussion section for this course), it is imperative that you do the assigned reading before the class for which that reading is listed.

As you read, I strongly advise that you take notes. Some people do this by underlining key passages and writing notes in the margins (note: do *not* do this in library books!). Others prefer to take notes in a notebook or on a computer. Any system you would like to use is fine, but it is important that you keep some kind of record, because we'll be going through a lot of material over the course of the semester and it will be hard to keep track of it all if you are not writing things down.

Quizzes

Your main obligation for this course is to do the reading, carefully and on time. In order to encourage you in this, and to keep you on the straight and narrow, I'll give a series of pop quizzes throughout the quarter, administered at the start of the class. If you are late or absent, you will have an opportunity to make up the quiz if and only if (1) you have emailed me by midnight *before* the day of the class to tell me that you will not attend and why or (2) you have a documented emergency. These pop quizzes will not be difficult if you have done the reading with care, but they are nevertheless important, as they add up to a quarter of your grade. They will cover the reading and nothing else.

Midterm and final

Whereas quizzes will cover only the assigned reading due that day, the midterm and final will cover material from the readings, the lectures, and the discussions, often in combination or comparison. The question format will be varied, and will likely include passage identifications, chronologies (where you will be required to place events and texts in order), multiple-choice questions, and short essays. Your exams will be graded anonymously.

Essay

Choose a book from any one of the lists at www.booksofthecentury.com or from the timeline at the end of *The American Intellectual Tradition* and explain how it is a product of its time. The assignment here is *not* to locate it in time as if you were an archaeologist and the book were an undated artifact (arguing, for example, that the book must have been written after World War II since it mentions that war). It is rather to connect the arguments within the book's covers to historical episodes and larger discussions outside of them. That will require you to refer in your essay to books and articles other than the book you are considering, although it is perfectly fine with me if those books and articles are simply those that we have read for this course. The book you choose must be one that you have not previously read, even in part, and it must be over 150 pages in length and published originally in the United States. Your essay should be at least 8 pages in length (not including bibliography), double spaced, in 12-pt Times New Roman font (or some font of a similar size—i.e., not Courier), and with 1-inch page margins. It should feature an interesting, non-obvious thesis; clear, correct, and persuasive prose; and properly formatted citations in either of the two systems described in Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers* (any edition).

Do not put your name on your essay. Instead, sign it with the middle letter and three numbers of your NetID. So, if your NetID is onr256, sign your essay N256. This will allow me to grade your work anonymously.

Participation

You will not be graded on your participation in this class. But the success of this class will depend on us having a free, lively, and informed discussion. So please come to class with your reading notes and with any questions that you had when going over the books.

Grading

Final: 30%
Midterm: 20%

Quizzes: 25%
Essay: 25%

Plagiarism

An easy way for an undergraduate to destroy her college career is by plagiarizing. The college's rules concerning academic integrity can be found at www.northwestern.edu/uascc. Please read them, as you will be held accountable to them. The main principles you need to know are these:

- 1) If you are relying on somebody else's ideas or information, cite that person as the source.
- 2) If you are using someone else's words, enclose those words in quotation marks and cite that person as the source. If you take someone else's sentence, change it around a little bit, and then present it as your own, you are still plagiarizing and are still quite likely to get caught.

I will immediately report all suspected cases of plagiarism to the dean's office.

In my experience plagiarism is most likely to occur when students get themselves into a bind. They haven't done the reading they were supposed to, or they haven't understood it, and now they have to write a paper that they don't have time to write. So they find something that someone else has written, shift it around, and present it as their own work, sometimes without fully acknowledging to themselves how much they have relied on their outside source. *This is remarkably easy to catch.* If you

find yourself facing the choice of turning in clearly inadequate work or turning in plagiarized work, please trust me that you are better off choosing the former. If you turn in inadequate work, the worst thing that can happen to you is that you will get a bad grade on that particular assignment. If you turn in plagiarized work and get caught, the *best* thing that can happen to you is that you will fail the assignment and be reported to the administration. More likely, you will fail the entire course and get reported to the administration. The worst that can happen to you is that you will have a disciplinary hearing and be expelled.

Electronics

Electronics in the classroom can be enormously helpful, but they can also be distracting, both to their users and, more importantly, to other students. If you are the sort of student who would benefit from using a laptop or tablet during class, please send me an email and we will work out some suitable arrangement. But unless you have made some prior arrangement with me, laptops, tablets, phones, and any other devices that a flight attendant would growl at you for using during takeoff are prohibited.

Course books

These books are available at the university bookstore in Norris (except for the course reader). There is, however, no need to purchase them as I have also placed them on reserve at the library. With the exception of Hollinger and Capper's *American Intellectual Tradition*, it does not matter which edition of the book you buy or use. It matters in the case of *AIT* because different editions of that anthology have different reading selections, and any edition other than the 6th will not contain all of the assigned readings.

- Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (1934; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005)
- W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; New York: Dover Publications, 1994)*
- David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds., *The American Intellectual Tradition*, vol. 2, *1865 to the Present*, 6th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)
- William James, *Pragmatism* (1907; New York: Dover Publications, 1995)*
- Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 50th anniv. ed. (1962; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012)
- Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899; New York: Dover Publications, 1994)*
- Course reader, available at Quartet Digital Printing, 825 Clark Street

* = Book is in the public domain and can be obtained online for free.

Schedule of readings and assignments (reading is due to be completed on the date listed)

Mon., Jan. 7.

- Introduction to course: no reading due.

Wed., Jan. 9.

- William Graham Sumner, "Sociology" (1881), in *American Intellectual Tradition*

Mon., Jan. 14.

- Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), chaps. 3–4, 6–8

Wed., Jan. 16.

- W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), chaps. 1, 3, and 5.

Wed. Jan. 23.

- William James, *Pragmatism* (1907), lectures 2–3

Mon. Jan. 28.

- William James, *Pragmatism* (1907), lectures 6–8

Wed. Jan 30.

- Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (1934), chaps. 1–3, and 8

Mon. Feb. 4.

- F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), chaps. 3 and 5–6 in reader

Wed. Feb. 6.

- Dwight Macdonald, “The Responsibility of Peoples” (1945) in reader

Mon. Feb. 11. Midterm

Wed. Feb 13.

- Daniel Bell, “The End of Ideology in the West” (1960), in *AIT*
- W. W. Rostow, “Some Lessons of History for Africa” (1960) in reader

Mon. Feb. 18.

- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), chaps. 1 and 3 in reader.
- Betty Friedan, excerpt from *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), in *AIT*

Wed. Feb. 20.

- Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (1964), in reader
- Harold Cruse, “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American” (1968), in *AIT*

Mon. Feb 25.

- Herbert Marcuse, excerpt from *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), in *AIT*

Wed. Feb. 27.

- Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), preface, chaps. 1–6

Mon. Mar. 4.

- Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), chaps. 7–13

Wed. Mar. 6.

- Edward Said, excerpt from *Orientalism* (1978), in *AIT*

Mon. Mar. 11.

- Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father* (1995), introduction and chaps. 1 and 4 in reader.

Fri. Mar. 15: Essay due by 3pm in my mailbox on the 2nd floor of Harris Hall (there is an alcove there with a kitchen and mailboxes).