

HSTY 325: U.S. Politics, Culture, and Society, 1790-1860

Case Western Reserve University
Tuesday & Thursday 1:15-2:30 P.M.
Guilford House 317
Fall 2009

Professor Daniel A. Cohen
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Course Syllabus

DESCRIPTION: This is a survey of the history of the United States from 1790 to 1860, exploring the transformation of American politics, religion, and culture during that period, as well as the development of distinctive regional economies and social systems in the South, the Midwest, and the Northeast. We will focus especially on the emergence of a series of social and cultural institutions, patterns, and conflicts that still characterize the United States at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Particular attention will be paid to the experiences of women and African Americans.

BOOKS: The following seven books have been assigned for this course: P. T. Barnum, *Life*; Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*; George Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided*, Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*; David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*, Revised Edition; and Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple*. All of them can be purchased at the campus bookstore. Some additional required readings are available through the library's on-line course e-reserve system; please be sure to print-up "hard" copies of all of those required readings. All required readings for this course are either in one of the seven assigned books or on e-reserve. In addition to the required readings, the bookstore has ordered several copies of a short textbook of early American history by Charles Sellers, Henry May, and Neil McMillen, entitled A Synopsis of American History; although readings from this text are strictly optional, some of you might want to purchase copies as a useful supplement to the class lectures.

REQUIREMENTS: (1) Attendance at all class meetings, both lectures and discussions, is mandatory. Sign-up sheets will be distributed at each class to monitor attendance. Five or more unexcused absences from class meetings may result in your failure of the course, regardless of grades on papers and exams; any more than two unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction; (2) All reading assignments must be completed by the due date; (3) Students will be expected to participate actively in classroom discussions; (4) Students will write four typed, double-spaced papers of 4 pp. in length over the course of the semester (paper topics for all of the reading assignments are provided on this syllabus), two before the midterm exam and two after the midterm exam; each paper is due on the day that the relevant reading is discussed in class; students have the option of writing additional papers over the course of the semester, in which case only the top 4 paper grades will be counted toward the course grade; late papers be accepted only under extraordinary circumstances—and only if cleared with me in advance; (5) There will be a midterm exam consisting of one or two essay questions on Thursday, October 15, and a final exam—also consisting of one or more essays—on Thursday, December 10, 12:30-3:30; students will

have the option of completing the final essay(s) in advance as a typed 8-10 page paper (in which case it will be due at 3:30 on the day of the exam).

ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATION: Over the course of the semester, I look forward to meeting individually with all of the students in this course, either during my regular office hours or by appointment. I especially want to be sure to meet with—and accommodate the needs of—students with disabilities who are registered with the Coordinator of Disability Services (368-5230) and who may need individual arrangements.

GRADING: Grades will be based on classroom attendance and participation (30%); papers (10% each); midterm (10%); and final exam (20%). Please note: Four papers, a midterm, and a final exam *must* be submitted in order to receive a passing grade for this course.

INTELLECTUAL HONESTY: “All forms of academic dishonesty including cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, and obstruction are violations of academic integrity standards. Cheating included copying from another’s work . . . or using unauthorized sources, notes or computer programs. Plagiarism includes the presentation, without proper attribution, of another’s words or ideas from printed or electronic sources. It is also plagiarism to submit, without the instructor’s consent, an assignment in one class previously submitted in another. Misrepresentation includes forgery of official academic documents, the presentation of altered or falsified documents or testimony to a university office or official, taking an exam for another student, or lying about personal circumstances to postpone tests or assignments. Obstruction occurs when a student engages in unreasonable conduct that interferes with another’s ability to conduct scholarly activities. Destroying a student’s computer file, stealing a student’s notebook, and stealing a book on reserve in the library are examples of obstruction.” (Quoted from Case Western Reserve University, Academic Integrity Standards, Policies and Procedures: Definition of Violations)

Here is a more elaborate discussion of the varieties of plagiarism (abstracted from the student handbook of another university): Plagiarism consists of presenting the work of others as if it were the student’s own. Plagiarism is dishonest and it defeats the purpose of an education—to improve the student’s own powers of thinking and expression. Using the ideas or findings of someone else without crediting the source, even though the material is expressed in the student’s own words, is plagiarism. Copying the exact language of someone else without putting the quoted material in quotation marks and giving its source is plagiarism. The most blatant form of plagiarism occurs when papers or other assignments are ordered to specification, purchased, or freely provided by friends, and presented under the student’s own name. At Case, plagiarism is punishable by various sanctions, including “failure in the work in question, failure in the course, university disciplinary warning, university disciplinary probation, university disciplinary suspension, or expulsion” (Quoted from CWRU, Academic Integrity Standards, Policies and Procedures)

In writing the papers required for this course, you will frequently want to quote, paraphrase, or otherwise cite one or another of the course readings; that is entirely appropriate. However, when you use someone else’s exact language you must always put it in quotation marks and, whether quoting or not, you must always be careful to indicate (either parenthetically or in a footnote) the source that you are using. In citing a work, you should always provide enough information to enable your reader to check your source; in short papers based on a fixed body of readings, like those assigned for this course, a parenthetical reference to the author’s last name and page number will generally be sufficient. In addition, you may want to *discuss* a paper topic with another student in the course; that is also permissible; however, you should always be careful to acknowledge when another student—or anybody else—provides you with a useful fact, idea, or interpretation. **When in doubt, you should always err on the side of acknowledging sources or assistance.** Please feel free to consult with me in doubtful cases. **WARNING:** While general *discussion* of course topics or themes with other students is permitted,

students should *not* collaborate in writing papers (such collaboration will be considered a form of academic misconduct). Even the reading of another student's paper—either from this semester or from a previous semester—in advance of submitting your own is *not* permitted and will be considered a form of academic misconduct. Any student showing or providing a paper to another student before that second student has submitted his or her own paper is also guilty of academic misconduct.

Week 1:

Tuesday, August 25: Course Introduction: Democratic America

Thursday, August 27: Lecture: Political Transformation, Part I: The Rise of the First Party System

Week 2:

Tuesday, September 1: Lecture: Political Transformation, Part II: From First to Second Party Systems

Thursday, September 3: Lecture: Political Transformation, Part III: Second Party System

Week 3:

Tuesday, September 8: Discussion: Political Parties: An Intellectual History Approach

Required Reading: Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840* (entire book).

Paper Topic: Summarize the overarching argument of Hofstadter's book, with particular attention to the following: (1) Discuss the range of attitudes among eighteenth-century Englishmen and Anglo-Americans towards political parties and/or factions; (2) Discuss the favorable attitude toward political parties embraced by American politicians such as Martin Van Buren by the second quarter of the nineteenth century; (3) How does Hofstadter explain that transition in attitudes?; (4) How did the actual functioning of political parties during the first half of the nineteenth century compare to the theoretical expectations concerning factionalism, pluralism, and social/political conflict laid out by James Madison in Federalist #10?; (5) To the extent that you can judge, what are Hofstadter's own attitudes toward the two-party system that developed between 1790 and 1840—and toward politics and social/political conflict more generally—and how may those attitudes have influenced his analysis?; (6) **Optional issue** (do *not* devote too much space to this at the expense of the others): How does any of the above relate to the two-party system as it has operated in the United States in recent years or decades? Please note: Don't feel obliged to address these issues in the same sequence as they are laid out here; you may organize your essay as you like—just be sure that each of the issues is addressed somewhere in your paper.

Thursday, September 10: Lecture: Religious Transformation: The Emergence of Denominational Pluralism

Week 4:

Tuesday, September 15: Lecture: Cultural Transformation: The Rise of Sentimentalism

Thursday, September 17: Discussion: The Sentimental Novel

Required Reading: Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple* (entire book, including introduction by Cathy Davidson).

Paper Topic: Judging from her depictions of Charlotte and Montraville, Mr. Temple and Miss Weatherby, Mr. Temple and Miss Eldridge, Belcour and Mademoiselle La Rue, La Rue and Colonel Crayton, Montraville and Julia Franklin, Mr. and Mrs. Beauchamp, and the marriages of Mr. Temple's siblings (discussed briefly at the beginning of Chapter 2), what did Susanna Rowson see as the proper basis for relationships between men and women? In particular, what was her attitude toward romantic love? What was her attitude toward the "sexual double standard"? Did Rowson believe that men and women needed to adhere to the same "rules" in courtship? Is there any sense in which *Charlotte Temple* can be considered a feminist (broadly defined) novel? (Please note: You do not necessary have to *discuss* every one of the relationships mentioned above in your paper; however, be sure to *think about* all of those relationships in formulating your argument—do not simply focus on Charlotte and Montraville alone.)

Week 5:

Tuesday, September 22: Double Lecture: (a) Demographic and Geographic Transformations; (b) Agricultural South

Thursday, September 24: Discussion: Southern Honor

Required Reading: Edward L. Ayers, "Honor and Its Adversaries," in *Vengeance and Justice*, pp. 9-33 (e-reserve); Jereboam O. Beauchamp, *The Confession*, in Loren J. Kallsen, ed., *The Kentucky Tragedy*, pp. 3-109 (e-reserve).

Paper Topic: Evaluate Edward Ayers's interpretation of "Southern honor" on the basis of Beauchamp's *Confession*. In doing so, please consider the following questions: (1) What did the concept of "honor" mean to Beauchamp? (2) Would Beauchamp have agreed that "honor" and "public opinion" were "synonymous" (see Ayers, p. 13) (3) What types of people did Beauchamp consider "honorable" and why? (4) Was Beauchamp himself an "honorable" person, either by his own standards or by Ayers's? (5) Was Beauchamp's purpose in writing his *Confession* an "honorable" one? In writing this essay, please pay careful attention to such passages as those on pp. 19 (on Judge Tompkins), 76 (bottom half), 79 (on Holloway and Lane), and 83-84 (on why Beauchamp refused to cooperate with Governor Desha).

Week 6:

Tuesday, September 29: Lecture: Interpreting Slavery

Thursday, October 1: Discussion: Interpreting Slavery: The Case of Frederick Douglass

Reading: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*, pp. vii-125.

Paper Topic: Evaluate the competing interpretations of the experiences of enslaved African Americans offered by Stanley Elkins, Herbert Aptheker, Kenneth Stampp, and Fogel and Engerman on the basis of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*. Feel free to argue that the *Narrative* as a whole primarily supports one or another of the interpretations; however, try to find at least some support in the *Narrative* for each of the interpretations, if you can. If you like, you may also add the view of slaves as "Culture Builders" (briefly discussed at the end of the lecture) to the list of interpretations to evaluate.

Week 7:

Tuesday, October 6: Lecture: African Americans in the South: An Overview

Thursday, October 8: Lecture: Diversified Midwest and Industrializing Northeast

Week 8:

Tuesday, October 13: Discussion: Northern Society and Culture: The Case of Rochester, New York

Required Reading: Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* (entire book).

Paper Topic: What does Paul Johnson see as the relationship between economic, political, and religious change in Rochester during the 1810s through 1830s? In particular, how does he relate revivalism to the rise of modern capitalism? You might also consider: What is the ironic double meaning of the book's title? What is Paul Johnson's own attitude toward revivalism and the rise of capitalism in Rochester?

Thursday, October 15: Midterm Exam

Week 9:

Tuesday, October 20: Fall Break: NO CLASS!

Thursday, October 22: Lecture: Women in Early America

Week 10:

Tuesday, October 27: Discussion: Antebellum Women

Required Reading: Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* (1966), 151-74; Daniel Scott Smith, "Family Limitation, Sexual Control, and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America," *Feminist Studies* (1973), 40-57, plus Smith's 1979 postscript; Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* (1988), 9-39 (all on e-reserve or available via JSTOR, except for the 1979 postscript, which will be handed out in class: please remind instructor to do so!).

Paper Topic: Discuss the status of women in antebellum America, with particular reference to the competing scholarly interpretations of Barbara Welter and Daniel Scott Smith. In the process, please assess whether nineteenth-century gender ideology (characterized by Welter as “True Womanhood” and by Smith as “domestic feminism”) was an advantage or a disadvantage for American women. Please note that Smith actually examines the status of women during *three* periods of American history; it is the *second* of those periods (the “industrial”) that applies to the nineteenth century (and hence to the antebellum era). However, in assessing whether nineteenth-century gender ideology was an advantage or disadvantage to women, you should be sure to consider Smith’s argument concerning how the status of women in the nineteenth century related to their status during the previous and subsequent centuries. At some point in your paper, be sure to discuss the implications of Linda’s Kerber’s historiographic essay for the arguments of Welter and Smith.

Thursday, October 29: Lecture: African Americans in the North

Week 11:

Tuesday, November 3: Discussion: African Americans in the North: The Case of Elleanor Eldridge

Required Reading: Eldridge, *Memoirs* (entire book; e-reserve).

Paper Topic: Discuss Elleanor Eldridge as an (1) African-American (2) working-class (3) woman in the context of what you now know about those aspects of antebellum identity and culture. In particular, how did her economic experiences (which you should specify in some detail) compare with those of other northern blacks, women, and members of the working class during the early national and antebellum periods (as discussed in earlier lectures and readings for this course)? Could Eldridge be considered a “True Woman” or “sentimental heroine” in the nineteenth-century senses of those terms? Be sure to go over your lecture notes on “The Rise of Sentimentalism,” “Industrializing North,” “Women in Early America,” “Interpreting Slavery,” and “African Americans in the North” before writing this paper.

Thursday, November 5: Lecture: Emergence of a Consumer Culture

Week 12:

Tuesday, November 10: Discussion: A Pioneer of Mass Culture

Required Reading: P. T. Barnum, *The Life* (1855), pp. vii-xxxvii, 1-124, 134-41, 359-66, and 394-404; plus excerpts from other editions on e-reserve: Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, ed. Carl Bode (1981 ed.), pp. 79-132; Barnum, *Struggle and Triumphs* (Macmillan Company ed.), pp. 443-64.

Paper Topic: What moral or cultural values were embraced, expressed, or manipulated by P. T. Barnum in the various editions of his autobiography? Does his life and career—and his accounts of them—reflect any of the major value systems already explored in this course (such as democratic or patriotic values, evangelical Protestantism, and sentimentalism)? Discuss some of the ways that Barnum tried to “cash in” on those popular values? Do you find any other types of values reflected in Barnum’s autobiography, in his business practices, or in his political career; for example, can he be said to represent “consumer values”? If so, what are they?

Thursday, November 12: Lecture: Antebellum Reform, Part I

Week 13:

Tuesday, November 17: Lecture: Antebellum Reform, Part II

Thursday, November 19: Discussion: Interpreting Antebellum Reform: Institutions for Social Deviants

Required Reading: David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (1971) (entire book).

Paper Topic: Some scholars have characterized antebellum reform movements as essentially coercive attempts at “social control” during a period of profound social and economic change; other historians have portrayed the motives and goals of reformers as optimistic, idealistic, even utopian. Discuss David Rothman’s account of the rise of prisons, asylums, and almshouses in the nineteenth-century United States, explaining how his interpretation relates to those two schools of thought. Be sure to consider whether Rothman identifies significant differences among individual reformers (or groups of reformers), and by region, by institution (or type of institution), and/or over time.

Week 14:

Tuesday, November 24: Coming Apart, Part I

Thursday, November 26: Thanksgiving: NO CLASS!

Week 15:

Tuesday, December 1: Coming Apart, Part II

Thursday, December 3: Discussion: The Psychological Origins of the Civil War

Required Reading: George B. Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age* (entire book).

Paper Topic: Summarize and evaluate George Forgie’s psychohistorical interpretation of the coming of the Civil War. How does his cultural and psychological evidence and analysis relate to traditional political interpretations, with their emphasis on slavery and sectional conflict? Can both types of interpretation be valid?

Thursday, December 10, 12:30-3:30: Final Exam!