

American Cultural History, 1880-1940
University of Florida
Fall 2019

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This graduate seminar will explore American cultural history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Our primary aim will be to consider the methods of—and methodological dilemmas posed by—cultural history. Our seminars will center on several guiding questions: What do historians talk about when they talk about "culture"? How can claims about culture be empirically (or otherwise) demonstrated? How should cultural sources be interpreted? How can interdisciplinary methodologies benefit historians? A related aim of the course will be for students to become knowledgeable about foundational works and recent trends in the field so that they can incorporate these ideas and methods in their own work, and know how to identify them in others. Emphasis will be placed on working with primary sources; in addition to numerous secondary readings, sources will include selections from Henry Adams, Josiah Strong, William Alexander Percy, D.W. Griffith, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and others. Writing requirements will include a primary source-based essay on a topic developed by the student.

Grading

Book Reviews: 25%
Participation: 25%
Final Essay: 50%

Readings

Books

Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Mariner Books Edition, 2000)
Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*
Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*
Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940*
John Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*
Benjamin E. Wise, *William Alexander Percy: The Curious Life of a Mississippi Planter and Sexual Freethinker*
David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*

E-Books available through Smathers Library

Eric Avila, *American Cultural History: A Very Short Introduction*
Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*
Josiah Strong, *Our Country*

Documents online

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" from *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973; New York: Basic Books, 2000)
(http://www.sociosite.net/topics/texts/Geertz_Thick_Description.php)
Leo Marx, "Believing in America"
(<http://bostonreview.net/BR28.6/marx.html>)

Lawrence W. Levine, "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences," and responses by Robin D. G. Kelley, Natalie Zemon Davis, T.J. Jackson Lears, and Levine, *American Historical Review* 97, no. 5 (December 1992), 1369-1430. (JSTOR)

On E-Reserve through Smathers library

William H. Sewell, Jr., "The Concept(s) of Culture" in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)

James W. Cook and Lawrence B. Glickman, "Twelve Propositions for a History of U.S. Cultural History" in *The Cultural Turn in U. S. History: Past Present & Future*, ed. Cook, Glickman, and O'Malley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)
(hard copy also on reserve in Library West—due to copyright restrictions only pp3-45 are on E-Reserve; you will need to read the rest in hard copy)

Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, "Introduction" in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Amy Kaplan and Donal Pease, eds (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993)
(hard copy also on reserve in Library West)

Lynn Hunt, "Introduction: History, Culture, and Text" in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1989)
(hard copy also on reserve in Library West)

Course Schedule

Unit 1: Methodology

Week One: Aug 26

Eric Avila, *American Cultural History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2018)

No Class Sept 2—Labor Day

Week Two: Sept 9

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (1973)

Lynn Hunt, "Introduction: History, Culture, and Text" (1989)

William H. Sewell, Jr., "The Concept(s) of Culture" (1999)

James W. Cook and Lawrence B. Glickman, "Twelve Propositions for a History of U.S. Cultural History" (2008)

Week Three: Sept 16

Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "You Must Remember This: Autobiography as Social Critique" (1998)

Trysh Travis, work-in-progress workshop, reading TBA

Unit 2: Modernity, Memory & Authority

Week Four: Sept 23

Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, Ch's 1 & 7

Henry Adams, *Education*, Ch's 1-4, 15, 21-35

Michael Saler, "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographical Review"

Week Five: Sept 30

David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*

Unit 3: Race

Week Six: Oct 7

Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, Ch. 1 and Conclusion

Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*

Week Seven: Oct 14

Film Viewing: D.W. Griffith, *Birth of A Nation*

Amy Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*

Unit 4: Empire

Week Eight: Oct 21

Josiah Strong, *Our Country*

Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, "Introduction" in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*

Leo Marx, "Believing in America" (2003)

Unit 5: Sexuality

Week Nine: Oct 28

Benjamin Wise, *William Alexander Percy*

William Alexander Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee*, Ch's 1-2, 9-13, 21-27

Unit 6: Mass Culture & The Working Class

Week Ten: Nov 4

Kasson, *Coney Island*

Lawrence W. Levine, "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its

Audiences," and responses by Robin D. G. Kelley, Natalie Zemon Davis, T.J.

Jackson Lears, and Levine, *American Historical Review* 97, no. 5 (December 1992),

1369-1430.

Unit 7: Writing Cultural History

Week Eleven: Nov 11

No Class: Individual Meetings. Final Essay Proposals Due.

Week Thirteen: Nov 23

Writing Workshop: Essay Draft Due

Final Essays Due Tuesday Dec. 10