American Cultural History, 1880-1940       Benjamin E. Wise
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Fall 2019                           benwise@ufl.edu

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
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

On E-Reserve through Smathers library
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)

Course Schedule

Unit 1: Methodology

Week One: Aug 26

No Class Sept 2—Labor Day

Week Two: Sept 9
Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (1973)
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
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

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*

Unit 6: Mass Culture & The Working Class

Week Ten: Nov 4
Kasson, *Coney Island*
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