

AMERICAN CIVILIZATION BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR, 1000-1865

Loyola University Chicago
HIST 111, Sect. 024
Fall 2008
2232

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"Democratic nations care but little for what has been, but they are haunted by visions of what will be. . . . Thus not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart."

Alexis de Tocqueville (1840)

American civic culture cherishes both liberty and equality, individual freedom and social justice. These impulses, frequently in conflict with each other, pervade political, economic, and social life in the United States. This course provides an introduction to the history of these tensions as they shaped the American character. Since much of this history remains unknown, forgotten, or shrouded in mythology, the course provides a framework to understand and critique American democracy. Many of the revolutionary generation believed the study of history was a prerequisite to citizenship, for a civilization without knowledge of its past has little chance of comprehending its own identity. This course, then, is an exercise in understanding the ongoing struggle regarding what it means to be an American. Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? How do I lead a good and honest life? How have earlier Americans answered these questions? The major themes will include the interaction between Indians and Europeans, the transplantation of European and African cultures to North America, forces leading to the creation of the United States, the development of American nationalism, the growth of coercive forms of labor such as slavery, the birth and impact of industrialization, and the culminating event of nineteenth-century America - the Civil War.

The course requirements and their percentage of the final grade are: 1) a midterm exam (35%), 2) a final take home essay exam (35%), 3) participation and class discussion (30%). The exams will be based primarily on the readings below and secondarily on lectures and class discussions. Students will receive study sheets one week before each exam which will outline questions and issues that will be included in each exam. Midterm exams and grades will be returned before 21 October 2008.

A primary responsibility of students is to complete the reading before the date of the scheduled class and contribute their thoughtful, reflective opinions in class discussion. Students should allocate enough time to complete the required reading, approximately 90 pages per week. The readings can be interpreted in a variety of ways and students should formulate some initial positions and questions to offer in the class discussion. For every article or book, students should be prepared to answer all of the questions found in the "Critical Reading" section of the syllabus below. All required readings may be purchased at Barnes and Noble Bookstore in the Granada Center on Sheridan Road.

Students who are disabled or impaired should meet with the professor within the first two weeks of the semester to discuss the need for any special arrangements.

The required readings are:

David J. Weber, What Caused the Pueblo Revolt of 1680? (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1999).

Joseph J. Ellis, What Did the Declaration Declare? (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1999).

Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845); and Harriet Jacobs (Linda Brent), Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861), both in Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (ed.), The Classic Slave Narratives (New York: Mentor, 1987); or available at:

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Douglass/Autobiography/>

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/23>

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/jacobs/hjhome.htm>

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/11030>

Henry David Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience" (1849), any edition, or available at:

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Thoreau/CivilDisobedience.html>

<http://www.constitution.org/civ/civildis.htm>

W.J. Rorabaugh, The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Richard Current, The Lincoln Nobody Knows (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958).

Students who attend class will receive lecture notes via Group Wise electronic mail sometime after class. The notes serve as the "textbook" for class and eliminate the need to engage in frantic note-taking. Students can more carefully listen and contemplate the arguments and ideas discussed in each lecture.

Since those in attendance will receive the notes electronically, students have no need for computers which should be turned off during class. Upon accessing the notes, students should transfer the notes to a disk and print a "hard" copy. To receive the notes, students must attend the class. No attendance, no notes.

COURSE MEETING DATES AND ASSIGNMENTS

26 & 28 Aug.: Indians and Europeans: Civilization or Invasion?

2 Sept.: Discussion of Weber, What Caused the Pueblo Revolt of 1680?, pp. 1-80, 115-132.

4 & 9 Sept.: Puritans, Quakers and Cavaliers

11 Sept.: The American Revolution

16 Sept.: Discussion of Ellis, What Did the Declaration Declare?.

18 Sept.: The Constitution and a New Republic

23 Sept.: The Age of Jackson

25 Sept.: Discussion of Rorabaugh, The Alcoholic Republic

30 Sept.: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

2 & 9 Oct.: American Slavery

7 Oct.: Midsemester Break - NO CLASS

14 Oct.: Discussion of Douglass, Narrative of the Life; and Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.

16 Oct.: The Mexican-American War

21 Oct.: Discussion of Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience."

23 & 28 Oct.: The Urbanization of America

30 Oct.: P.T. Barnum and the Emergence of Popular Culture

4 Nov.: Another Invasion: Immigration and Nativism

6 Nov.: The Abolitionists: Fanatics or Saints?

11 & 13 Nov.: Slavery, John Brown and "Bloody Kansas"

18 Nov.- 2 Dec.: The American Civil War (5 classes)

20 Nov.: Discussion of Current, The Lincoln Nobody Knows.

27 Nov.: THANKSGIVING - NO CLASS

4 Dec.: Conclusions

FINAL TAKE HOME EXAMINATION: Due Tuesday, 9 Dec. 2008, 11 a.m.,
511 Crown Center

DISCUSSIONS AND CRITICAL READING

Discussion and class participation are very important parts of your grade (30 percent). Incisive, imaginative and thoughtful comments that generate and facilitate discussion are weighed heavily in final grades. Asking questions, responding to student questions and contributing to an ongoing discussion are a necessary part of the learning experience. Failure to speak in class will only lower a student's final grade. Discussions are scheduled for 6 class periods, each worth 5 "points." Students will receive 1 point for attendance, 2 points for minimal participation, and 3 to 5 points for active participation. Students who raise questions that generate discussion in other classes will earn extra points.

The best ways to prepare for and contribute to class discussion are: 1) complete the reading on time, and 2) critically analyze the reading. The primary goal of critical reading is to find the author's interpretation and what evidence and influences led to that conclusion. Never assume a "passive" position when reading a text. If students ask and attempt to answer the following questions, they will more fully comprehend and understand any reading.

1. What is the thesis of the author?
2. Does the author have a particular stated or unstated point of view? How does the author construct their argument? Are the author's goals, viewpoints, or agendas revealed in the introduction or preface? Does the author provide evidence to support the argument? Is it the right evidence? In the final analysis, do you think the author proves the argument or does the author rely on preconceived views or personal ideology? Why do you think that?
3. Does the author have a moral or political posture? Is it made explicit or implicit in the way the story is told? What is the author's view of human nature? Does change come from human agency and "free will" or broad socio-economic forces?

4. What assumptions does the author hold about society? Does the author see society as hierarchical, pluralistic, democratic or elitist? Does the author present convincing evidence to support this view?

5. How is the narrative constructed or organized? Does the author present the story from the viewpoint of a certain character or group? Why does the author begin and end at certain points? Is the story one of progress or decline? Why does the author write this way?

6. What issues and events does the author ignore? Why? Can you think of alternative interpretations or stories that might present a different interpretation? Why does the author ignore certain events or facts?

Students who miss a class discussion or feel reluctant to speak in class have the option of writing a 3-4 page review essay on the required reading. The essay should summarize the author's thesis in one paragraph and then proceed to criticize and analyze some aspect of that thesis. Students who elect to write such essays must submit them within two weeks of the class discussion.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism will result in a final grade of F for the course as well a letter, detailing the event, to be placed in the offending student's permanent file in the Dean's office. The definition of plagiarism is:

You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else's words or ideas but fail to credit that person. You plagiarize even when you do credit the author but use his [or her] exact words without so indicating with quotation marks or block indentation. You also plagiarize when you use words so close to those in your source, that if your work were placed next to the source, it would be obvious that you could not have written what you did with the sources at your elbow.

Wayne Booth, Gregory C. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, The Craft of Research (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 167.

To avoid plagiarism, take notes carefully, putting all real quotes within quotation marks, while summarizing other parts in your own language. This is difficult; if you do not do it

correctly, it is better to have all your notes in quotes. The worst thing is to alter a few words from the source, use no quotation marks, and treat the notes as a genuine summary. You will likely copy it out as written on your notecard, and thus inadvertently commit plagiarism. Changing around a word, a phrase, or a clause is still plagiarism if it follows the thought sequence or pattern in the original. On the other hand, do not avoid plagiarism by making your paper a string of quotations. This results in poor writing, although it is not criminal.

In any case, do not let this prevent you from quoting your primary sources. As they are the "evidence" on which you build your argument, you will need to quote them at necessary points. Just be sure to put quotation marks around them, or double indent them as in the example above, and follow the quote with a proper foot or endnote. The university has developed a helpful website that you may find useful in preparing your syllabi or in discussing these issues with your class. See:

<http://www.luc.edu/is/cease/ai.shtml>