

21H.105. AMERICAN CLASSICS. Spring 2010. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:30.
Instructor: Prof. Pauline Maier

Course Description:

This subject is devoted to reading and discussing basic American historical texts that are frequently cited but often remain unread, understanding their meaning, and assessing their continuing significance in American history and culture. Since it is a "Communications Intensive" subject as well as a HASS-D, 21H.105 is dedicated to improving students' capacities to write and speak publicly. It requires a substantial amount of writing, participation in discussions, and individual presentations to the class.

Requirements:

1) Regular attendance, completion of readings, and participation in discussions. This constitutes a significant component of students' performances in the subject.

2) Completion of three papers of 4 to 5 pages based on the readings assigned for a specific week. Students will be divided into three groups. The members of each group will submit three papers, due at three-week intervals during the early part of the term. The papers of group I will be due on weeks 2, 5, and 8; of group II on weeks 3, 6, and 9; of group III on weeks 4, 7, and 10. Papers must be turned in at the Tuesday class in the week when they fall due. (On week 3, when there is no Tuesday class, students should submit papers electronically on or before Wednesday morning so they can remain on the same writing and revision schedule.) Papers are usually returned on Thursday, and those students asked to rewrite the papers should see the writing assistant as soon as possible thereafter. Rewrites must be submitted within two weeks, i.e. no later than the week before the next paper is due.

Students sometimes find that they have a paper due in 21H.105 just when they have heavy obligations in other subjects. They can, of course, prepare their papers ahead of time. They can also exchange places with students in other groups. Such arrangements must, however, be announced to the instructor *before* the week in which the first paper is due, and they last for only one cycle.

3) On the Tuesday of the week in which students have papers due they make brief presentations to the class on the subjects of their papers. During the final weeks of the term, when students are no longer obliged to write papers on the assigned readings, these presentations will continue. That is, students in group 1 should be prepared to speak about the readings on April 27; group 2 on May 4, and group 3 on May 11, unless the instructor announces a changed format for those classes.

4) Preparation of a final paper, roughly 10 pages in length, on a notable historical work that was not assigned as required reading. A list of possible topics will be provided; topics not on the suggested list must be approved by the instructor. Students will be asked to submit their topics in the class on April 15, and the topics will be discussed in class on April 22. The paper is due at the final meeting of the class on May 13.

ALL papers must be double-spaced, written in clear and correct English, and identify the source and page numbers of all direct quotations. Final papers must include footnotes or endnotes in correct form (or, where citations are drawn entirely or predominately from a single text, page citations within the text) and a bibliography.

Please consult the Guide to Notes and Bibliographies that will be posted on the course website for 21H.105.

There will be no final examination.

Readings:

Most readings are available in paperback books. Others are accessible as electronic reserves on the 21H.105 course website. Those paperbacks ordered for purchase are designated below by an asterisk.

Week 1. Feb. 2-4. Introduction; the Puritans.

John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," a sermon of 1630, from Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings, I (rev. ed.; New York, 1963), 194-99.

William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647, esp. chapters 4 and 9, pp. 23-27 and 58-63 in the edition edited by Samuel Eliot Morison (New York, 1979), which has adapted the language for modern readers (see his comments on this and on Bradford's history, pp. vii-xii).

Week 2. Feb. 9-11. "The First Famous American": Benjamin Franklin.

* The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin with Related Documents, ed. Louis P. Masur. Bedford/St. Martin's paperback, 2nd edition (2003). (ISBN13: 978-0-312-40415-4 and 10: 0-312-40415-8).

NOTE: Discussion will focus particularly on Franklin's autobiography, not all parts of which are equally important. Sections toward the end that describe in detail Pennsylvania politics and the Seven Years War can generally be skimmed, although they include some significant passages. Although much of the introduction simply repeats information from the autobiography, take particular notice of information on the writing and publication of the autobiography. Some documents at the end of the book might help assess the sincerity of Franklin's regime for acquiring virtue. Others, including the essay on pp. 174-82 (frequently published as "The Way to Wealth") and the satiric essay on the slave trade on pp. 191-93 are classic Franklin.

This edition unfortunately does not include the epitaph Franklin wrote in 1728: "The Body of B. Franklin Printer / (Like the Cover of an Old Book / Its Contents torn out / And stript of its Lettering & Gilding) / Lies here, food for Worms. But the Work shall not be lost; / For it will, (as he believ'd) appear once more, In a new and more elegant Edition / Revised and corrected. *By the Author.*"

Tuesday, February 16: Monday Schedule.

Week 3. Feb. 18. Paine's "Common Sense" and the Declaration of Independence.

* Thomas Paine, Common Sense and Related Writings, Dover Thrift edition (ISBN 0-486-29602-4).

The committee or "Jefferson" draft of the Declaration of Independence, with Congress's editings (June -July 1776).

Week 4. Feb. 23-25. The Constitutional Convention.

* Adrienne Koch, ed., Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Reported by James Madison. Ohio University Press (ISBN 978-0-8214-0765-3). Start with the Introduction, Madison's preface.

This is a long and complicated source of immense importance. To make sense of it, you need to know how the convention was organized. In short, the delegates went over its plan of government no less than four times, changing and adding to it each time.

After a few days in which the convention elected its officers and in general organized itself, Edmund Randolph presented a plan of government (“the Virginia Plan” since it was devised by the Virginia delegation) in 15 resolutions (pp. 30-33; May 29). After that, for a FIRST time, the convention over Randolph’s resolutions in a committee of the whole---a committee that consists of all the delegates, but meeting in a relatively informal way, without being restricted by the convention’s rules of debate. The committee took Randolph’s 15 resolutions, and, after dismissing an alternative plan proposed by Paterson of New Jersey, recommended the 19 resolutions on pp. 148-51 (June 19). Then the delegates went over those resolutions a SECOND time, this time sitting as a convention (compare the heading for June 19 on p. 140 with that for June 20 at p. 154, when the delegates sat as a convention). It expanded the 19 resolutions of June 19 into the 23 resolutions of July 26 on pp. 379-85. At that point, most delegates took a break while a “Committee of Detail” took those resolutions and made them into a draft Constitution, which it presented to the re-convened convention on August 6: see pp. 385-98. Then for a THIRD time the convention went over the plan of government, now organized into a draft constitution, making several important additions and revisions. Then a “Committee of Style” incorporated those changes into the draft Constitution and fixed up its form. See its report on September 12 (pages 616-626). Then the convention went over the plan a FOURTH time, considering a large range of possible changes. It finally finished up and adjourned on September 17.

How should you approach this reading? Take a look at the beginning, with Randolph’s presentation. You might look at the way his resolutions were changed in the committee of the whole and then in the convention. The early part of the convention had some terrific crises, first over Patterson’s proposal, and then---the truly biggest issue, one the convention almost blew up over--- on representation. (See the make-or-break debates from pp. 220-98, with the little additional flare-up on 299-302.) Thereafter, debates proceeded more calmly, and you can pick and choose which issues to follow. Debates over the presidency, which many said was the hardest issue the convention faced, are on pp. 306-14, 322-35, 356-72, and then again on 573-79, 582-97, and 605-66. There were also some interesting debates on the slave trade and whether slaves should be counted in determining how many members of the House of Representatives a state got. Work from the Index backwards to check out specific issues. Or choose a delegate---James Wilson of Pennsylvania, for example, or Gouverneur Morris, George Mason, or maybe Alexander Hamilton---and follow him through the convention.). Do look at the final week of the convention. Why did Mason and Randolph and Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts refuse to sign? Did other people think the Constitution was perfect? Why or why not? And what did the convention do? The best way to get at that is to compare the Virginia Plan with the Constitution. What did the convention change? Why? Look, too, at the convention’s closing days, pp. 650-59. In other words, look through the

summaries of what it did in each of the four stages to get a sense of how the convention functioned, and then choose an issue or a person to follow.

Week 5. March 2-4. Exploring the West.

Jefferson's instructions to Capt. Meriwether Lewis, June 20, 1803, available at: <http://www.mt.net/~rojomo/landc.htm> and also (in a somewhat better format) <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/jefflett.html>

* Gary E. Moulton, ed., The Lewis and Clark Journals; University of Nebraska Press pb. (ISBN0-8032-8039-4) Read the preface, introduction, "editorial principles," and afterword. Feel free to skim, and don't be surprised if it takes some time to get into the story. There are memorable passages in the book, which tells the tale of a great adventure and a lot about the country and its peoples at that time, but the "good parts" are scattered, which makes it difficult to define just which pages to read.

This edition provides an extensive introduction, which should make navigating the journals easier. However, papers should be based on *the journals themselves*, not those parts supplied by the editor.

Week 6. March 9-11. Slave Narratives: Frederick Douglass :

* Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass..., with an introduction by David Blight. Bedford/St. Martins paperback, 2nd edition (2002). (ISBN: 0312257376.) Read the introduction and supplementary documents as well as the autobiography.

Week 7. March 16-18. "The Little Lady Who Caused This Big War."

* Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin. Penguin Classics pb. (ISBN 140390030) This is a long book, but it's easy reading. Start early.

March 22-26: Spring Vacation.

Week 8. March 3- April 1. The Lincoln-Douglas Debates; Lincoln.

Lincoln's "House Divided" speech at Springfield, June 16, 1858, when he accepted the Republicans' nomination for senator (read this before reading the Lincoln-Douglas debates), his First Inaugural (1861), the Gettysburg Address (1863), and his Second Inaugural Address (1865), reliable versions of which are available at <http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/speech.htm>

* Harry Holzer, ed., The Lincoln-Douglas Debates: The First Complete, Unexpurgated Text. Fordham University Press paperback (2004). ISBN 0-8232-2342-6). Read the Preface, Introduction, descriptions of "the scene" for each of the debates, all of which were held in 1858, and the appendix as well as the debates themselves, much of which you can skim. The speeches are long, but include many repetitions since the speakers went over the same issues, sometimes reading passages from previous speeches, again and again. Much of the content was pretty well established after the first three debates, but it's useful to ask who you think came out best in the various debates, and, more important, whether the speakers' positions changed. For example, does Lincoln state his position differently in Ottawa and Freeport, in the northern part of Illinois, which was settled by migrants from free states, than in Charleston or Alton, which were settled

by people from the South who were in general more pro-slavery? As this edition (*do not accept substitutes!*) makes clear, the debates took place outside, without microphones, to audiences that often interrupted the speakers. Even the audience's interjections and the speakers' responses, which Holzer scrupulously includes, are interesting.

Week 9. April 6-8. Ulysses S. Grant and the Civil War.

* U. S. Grant, Personal Memoirs, Penguin pb. (ISBN 0140437010), esp. pp. xiii-xxvi, 3-54, 92-133, read about some battle of the Civil War (Shiloh, 177-99, for example; Vicksburg was more important, but the account is also much longer), 376-82, 525 (bottom) -35, 558-61, 580-640.

Week 10. April 13-15. Making Money---and Giving it Away.

(Review Franklin, "The Way to Wealth," in The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, Masur ed., 174-82.)

* Horatio Alger, Ragged Dick or, Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks. Signet pb., with an introduction by Alan Trachtenberg (ISBN 0451524802).

Andrew Carnegie, The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays, Edward C. Kirkland, ed. (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 3-13 ("Introduction: How I Served My Apprenticeship") and 14-49 (the "Gospel of Wealth"), in "Readings." There are copies at least of the second of Carnegie's essays on the Internet, but be sure to read an *unabridged* copy.

Tuesday, April 20: Patriot's Day Holiday; no class.

Week 11, April 22. DISCUSSION: Paper Topics; Writing Final Papers.

(No reading.)

Week 12. April 27-29. Segregation and Blacks' Dreams of Success.

* Booker T. Washington, Up From Slavery, esp. chs. 1-5, 7-8, 10-14 (pp. 29- 77, 85- 100, 108-57); and W.E.B. DuBois, Souls of Black Folk, chapters on Washington and "Of the Meaning of Progress," pp. 240-61, in Three Negro Classics. Avon paperback. (ISBN 0380015811).

Week 13. May 4-6. What a Difference the Radio Made: the Presidency, at Home.

* Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Great Speeches. Dover Thrift ed. (ISBN 0486408949). Pay particular attention to the "fireside chats"---and anything else that catches your interest.

Week 14. May 11-13 Free at Last?

* Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (1963), Norton paperback (ISBN 0-440-32497-1), esp. chs. 1, 2, 10, 12 (esp. pp. 305-09) and ch. 14 (esp. 342-48, 377-78). This book is often cited as a founding event of the "Women's Liberation" movement. If so, why does it seem dated now? Did Friedan overstate "the problem that has no name," and why had it become a problem since the days of Harriet Beecher Stowe? Do you think the

more “liberated” roles of women today (compared to those she described) emerged from arguments like Friedan’s or from longer-term trends, which were reversed only temporarily in the wake of World War II?

Martin Luther King, “Letter from the Birmingham Jail,” April 19, 1963, and “I have a dream” speech, August 28, 1963, and available at <http://www.mlkonline.net/speeches.html>

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