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21H.105 American Classics  
Spring 2006

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21H.105. AMERICAN CLASSICS. Spring 2006. 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 often cited but often remain unread, understanding their meaning, and assessing their continuing significance in American culture. Since it is a "Communications Intensive" subject, 21H.105 is also dedicated to improving students' capacities to write and speak well. 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 11 (because there's no reading for week 10). Papers must be turned in at the Tuesday class in the week when they fall due. However, on week 3, when there is no Tuesday class, they can be turned in on Thursday. Papers are usually graded and returned on Thursday, and those students asked to rewrite the papers should see the writing tutor as soon as possible thereafter. Rewrites need to be done before two weeks have passed and 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 each present to the class a brief summary 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 May 2; group 2 on May 9, and group 3 on May 16. In some cases the format for those classes might be changed, however.

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, but students can propose others not on the list. However, topics not on the suggested list must be approved by the instructor on or before April 20. The paper is due at the final meeting of the class on May 18.

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 (or, where citations are drawn entirely or predominately from a single text, page citations within the text) and a bibliography. A "Guide" to notes and bibliographies for history papers is attached.

There will be no final examination.

Readings:

Most readings are available in paperback books. Others are accessible on the Internet, and those that cannot be so accessed will be collected in a course packet at the Humanities Reserve Room from which students can make Xeroxed copies for their personal use. Those paperbacks ordered for purchase are designated below by an asterisk.

Week 1. Feb. 7-9. Introduction; the Puritans.

John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," a sermon of 1630.

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. 14-16. "The First Famous American": Benjamin Franklin.

\* Franklin, The Autobiography and Other Writings. Bantam Classic paperback (ISBN 0-553-21075-0), vii-xiii, 3-230, 270.

NOTE: Discussion will focus particularly on Franklin's autobiography, but not all parts of it are worth equal attention. Sections toward the end that describe in detail Pennsylvania politics and the Seven Years War need not be followed closely, but note pp. 108, 111-19, and 150-51.

Tuesday, February 21: Monday Schedule.

Week 3. Feb. 23. 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 George Mason draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights as it appeared in the Pennsylvania Gazette, June 12, 1776.

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

Week 4. Feb. 28- March 2. The Constitutional Convention.

\* Adrienne Koch, ed., Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Reported by James Madison. The Norton Library (ISBN 0393304051). Introduction, Madison's preface, then pp. 21- 166. This includes the convention's opening; presentation of the Virginia plan; presentation and rejection of the alternative New Jersey plan; and resumption of debate based on the resolutions Virginia had proposed. Note the resolutions on pp. 148-51, since the debates immediately thereafter are keyed to them. Skim the make-or-break debates on resolutions 7 and 8 that runs from pp. 220-98, with the little additional flare-up on 299-302. Thereafter, debates proceeded with less fireworks, and you can pick and choose which issues to follow. Discussion over whether Congress should veto state laws, as Madison insisted, is on 304-05; debates over the presidency, which many said was the hardest issue the convention faced, are on pp. 306-

14, 322-35, 356-72. As a result of these discussions, the convention produced a revised set of resolutions (pp. 379-85), which a Committee of Detail made into a draft constitution while the convention adjourned from July 26-August 6 (see pp. 385-96). Then it debated the draft, revisiting issues it had discussed before in the light of other decisions. Note predictions of the future that emerged during a discussion of suffrage, pp. 402-04; and discussions of slavery and the slave trade on pp. 409-13, 502-08. In late August the convention set up a Committee of Eleven to propose solutions to several problems it hadn't solved. The committee's recommendations opened another round of debates, especially on the executive (see 573-79, 582-97, and 605-66 on impeachment). Finally, on September 12, a Committee of Style set up to incorporate changes into the draft constitution and refine its wording presented its report (616-27). That led to still more debates, in the course of which George Mason raised the issue of a bill of rights (630). Read also the record of the convention's closing days, 650-59.

Week 5. March 7-9. 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 awhile 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 14-16. Slave Narratives: Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs

\* Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass...and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Modern Library Classics paperback (ISBN 0679783288). Read all of the Douglass carefully; read more selectively in the Jacobs autobiography in part for comparative purposes.

Week 7. March 21-23. "The Little Lady Who Caused This Big War."

\* Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin. Penguin Classics pb. (ISBN 0140390030) This is a long book, but it's easy reading. Start early!

March 28 and 30: Spring Vacation.

Week 8. April 4-6. The Lincoln-Douglas Debates; Lincoln.

\* Harry Holzer, ed., The Lincoln-Douglas Debates: The First Complete, Unexpurgated Text (Fordham University Press paperback; ISBN 0-8232-2342-6). Read the Preface, Introduction, descriptions of "the scene" for each of the debates, and the appendix as well as the debates themselves, much of which you can skim. The speeches

are long, but include many redundancies 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, settled by migrants from free states, than in Charleston or Alton, 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 their interjections, which Holzer scrupulously includes, are interesting.

Also Lincoln's "House Divided" speech at Springfield, June 16, 1858, when he accepted the Republicans' nomination for senator (you should probably 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>

Week 9. April 11-13. 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.

Tuesday, April 18: Patriot's Day Holiday; no class.

Week 10, April 20. DISCUSSION: Paper Topics; Writing Final Papers.  
(No reading)

Week 11. April 25-27. Making Money---and Giving it Away.

(Review Franklin, "The Way to Wealth," in Autobiography and Other Writings, 184-93.)

\* 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.

Week 12. May 2-4. 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 pb. (ISBN 0380015811).

Week 13. May 9-11. What a Difference the Radio Made: the Presidency, at Home.

\* Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Great Speeches. Dover Thrift ed. (ISBN 0486408949)

Week 14. May 16-18. Free at Last?

\* Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (1963), Norton paperback (ISBN 0-440-32497-1), esp. chs. 1-4, 10, 12, 14.

Martin Luther King, "I have a dream" speech, August 28, 1963, available at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/Ihaveadream.htm>