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21H.105 American Classics
Spring 2006

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21H.105. AMERICAN CLASSICS. Spring 2009. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:30.

Instructor: Prof. Pauline Maier

Writing Tutor: Nora Delaney

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 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 tutor 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 28; group 2 on May 5, and group 3 on May 12, 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 16, and the topics will be discussed in class on April 23. The paper is due at the final meeting of the class on May 14.

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. There will be no final examination.

Readings:

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

Week 1. Feb. 3-5. 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. 10-12. "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. In the introduction, much of the introduction simply repeats information from the autobiography, take particular note 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 17: Monday Schedule.

Week 3. Feb. 19. 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. 24-26. The Constitutional Convention.

* Adrienne Koch, ed., Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Reported by James Madison. The Norton Library (ISBN 0393304051).

(NOTE 1/27/09: This book has apparently gone out of print. Madison's Notes are available online, with a relatively user-friendly version at

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/convention/>

If we need to go with the online version, which uses dates instead of pages, revised instructions will be distributed.)

Start with the Introduction, Madison's preface, and pp. 21- 166. This includes the convention's opening; the presentation of the Virginia plan, and the delegates' consideration of that plan's provisions while acting as a Committee of the Whole, including the presentation and rejection of the alternative New Jersey plan. *On June 19 the Committee of the Whole reported to the convention* (i.e. the same delegates wearing different hats) *the resolutions on pp. 148-51*, which the meeting proceeded to discuss---again---in its official capacity as a convention. (Note how the designation for June 20 differs from that of June 19, i.e. "IN CONVENTION" rather than "IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE.") 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 more calmly, 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 the convention debated the draft, revisiting issues it had decided earlier in the light of other decisions. Note the predictions of the future that emerged during a discussion of suffrage, pp. 402-04; and the 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, i.e. a revised version of the Constitution* (616-27). That led to what was, in effect, the delegates' fourth time through the plan of government (i.e. the first was the Committee of the Whole's consideration of the Virginia resolutions, to June 19; the second was the convention's consideration of the resolutions from the Committee of the Whole, from June 19 to July 26; the third was the convention's debates on the draft Constitution produced by the Committee of Detail, August 6- September 12, and the fourth its debates on the polished Constitution proposed by the Committee of Style, September 12-17). In this final phase, 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 3-5. 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 10-12. 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 17-19. "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 24-26: Spring Vacation.

Week 8. March 31- April 2. 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 7-9. 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 14-16. 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 21: Patriot's Day Holiday; no class.

Week 11, April 23. DISCUSSION: Paper Topics; Writing Final Papers.

(No reading)

Week 12. April 28-30. 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 5-7. What a Difference the Radio Made: the Presidency, at Home.

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

Week 14. May 12-14. 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, "I have a dream" speech, August 28, 1963, available at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/Ihaveadream.htm>