

History 204-601: The Fight to Define American Values 1965-2015

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Conflict over the fundamental values that guide American society has existed throughout history. One can locate this conflict in numerous historical events ranging from the decades long (and temporarily successful) temperance movement, to the quest to use government power to impose one's moral vision that dates back to colonial times, to the fear of political leaders (like John F. Kennedy) who some Americans perceived to have values that differed from their own.

Yet, the 1960s marked a demarcation point after which the fight for the soul of America intensified. Movements that had long been marginalized or disorganized found new strength and fed from one another as they asserted a new conception of American values. Their vision involved more tolerance for sexual minorities, the dislocation of traditional gender norms, less government interference in Americans' sexual choices, and a far more secular culture that privileged freedom and individual choice over morality. These Americans also perceived value in art, literature, and media that provided diversity and challenged traditional norms and boundaries. They sought to remove the triumphal varnish from American history and to acknowledge the nation's misdeeds.

Adherents to an older, more traditional set of norms and values vigorously resisted these changes. They resented the challenge to what they considered to be fundamental societal bedrocks. Whereas their opponents self-identified as champions of tolerance, inclusiveness, and diversity, these Americans, instead, saw people trying to water down the classics, distort history in an unpatriotic manner, and pass pornographic and blasphemous content off as legitimate art or literature. They abhorred the permissiveness of the opposition, and reacted with alarm to a perceived assault on the American family. Evangelical Christians, who had largely refrained from organized political action for decades, formed new groups to advance and defend their vision of American morality. Intensity of religious beliefs overtook identity politics to a degree in shaping coalition lines. This broader conflict manifested itself in a diverse array of battles over specific issues and incidents in the political and cultural realms.

This course will examine the fight to define American values at both the macro and micro levels. We will explore why such different conceptions of American values exist, what underlies them, and how they have changed over the last half century. In addition, we will analyze how fundamentally different values manifested themselves in specific political and cultural fights between 1962-2015. Finally, we will assess which side has won and lost these individual battles and why, as well as examining the broader trend—have American values and culture liberalized? Topics covered will include: gay rights, abortion, gun control, sex education, school prayer, religion, the Equal Rights Amendment, the battle over violence, sex and vulgarity in popular culture, laws governing sexual behavior, and the debate over fundamental authority in America.

This course offers students an opportunity to interact with all of tools in a historian's toolbox. We will use primary sources, including video clips, polling data,

music, movies, and television shows from the period that we're studying. We will also consult a variety of scholarly secondary sources, including biographies, journalistic narratives, and works from political science, media studies, gender studies, sociology, and psychology. We will evaluate claims made by scholars and attempt to make sense of some of their conflicting conclusions. Students will also have an opportunity to conduct historical research on a topic of their choosing.

Grading Breakdown:

Participation & Activities: 40%

Research Paper/Project: 60%

Class Participation/Activities: The quality of the class discussion in a seminar truly defines how educational and interesting the class is. Reflecting that importance, participation is worth forty percent of your class grade.

We have an opportunity to learn from one another and to push ourselves to think about the material in new and innovative ways. Students are always encouraged to share thoughts—**there is no stupid idea or question**. This is the portion of your grade over which you have total control—**a student who comes to class each week and says nothing all semester will receive a C for class participation**. Students who are active participants each week will do well.

Do not feel as though you need to say something about each topic. Participation grades will **not** reflect quantity of participation alone. Quality matters as well. A student who makes three really tremendous points per class may do as well as a student who makes ten comments. But when you have a thought, share it. Also do not hesitate to push each other. As long as interaction is respectful, some of the best classroom discussions come when students question one another and we puzzle together over a topic.

Class will not always consist of one large group discussion; often the class will be split into smaller groups to ponder a question. There will also be a fair number of interactive group activities, exercises, or debates throughout the course of the semester. These will change things up, and provide a variety of ways to participate in the class. These activities may include plotting a museum exhibit or podcast on a relevant topic, researching or simulating a historical debate, or identifying popular culture forms that embody specific ideas or understandings.

Sometimes the instructor may ask the class to identify and explain the significance of a key term related to the class material. The objective of this exercise is not to play “gotcha” or to force students to memorize definitions. Rather, the goal will be to make sure that all members of the class are working from the same playbook, and to

ensure that students are pulling key concepts from the readings and are comfortable working with these terms as we assess broader questions.

There may also be several short quizzes or writing assignments (as in 10-15 minutes or less). Again, the goal is not to play “gotcha;” rather the goal is to help you to organize your thoughts and to make sure that everyone is coming away from the readings with the key points. These quizzes will be elements of your class participation grade. To a certain degree, whether or not there will be quizzes will be dependent on the quality of class discussion and whether it appears from discussion that everyone is gleaning the key arguments from the readings.

The instructor understands that some students are shy and have difficulty with public speaking. Such shyness, however, does not excuse students from their responsibility to participate in class. Rather, participation can come in many forms— e-mailing questions or thoughts about the readings to the instructor in advance of class, participating in class discussion using twitter (we will sometimes use hashtags and have twitter discussions), disseminating relevant articles and some brief commentary linking them to the class themes to the class or the instructor, participating in smaller group activities, etc.

If you are shy and looking for an alternative means of participating in the seminar, come speak with me **early in the semester** so that we can work out an arrangement. Too often students wait until the end of the semester to inform an instructor about such shyness, at which point it is too late to help the student salvage his/her participation grade. Students should also be aware that I like to ask follow up questions during discussions. This practice should not intimidate anyone. It’s merely an attempt to push students to think critically about their views, as well as the course material. These questions do not reflect any judgment regarding your ideas, nor are they an attempt to intimidate students in any way.

One final note: class participation does not end when class ends. Students are encouraged and invited to circulate relevant materials that they may come across in the news, be they clips from the *Daily Show*, tweets, news stories, etc. While this is a history class, we will see themes that we discuss enter into the news, as well as continuations of trends that we’re discussing and parallel developments.

Reading: As a seminar, this class will require more reading and a different type of reading than a lecture class on the same topic might require. Recognizing that students increasingly prefer to have a variety of different assignments (and less reading than has been traditional in seminars) some weeks we will employ an element of crowd sourcing in which students will do primary source research to go with a more limited amount of secondary reading.

Films: In an attempt to broaden our source base, you will be asked to watch several movies and television episodes during the semester. These sources can be considered analogous to reading—you must have watched the movies before class begins in the assigned week. My inclination is not to schedule film screenings, given your busy

schedules and the numerous ways in which you can stream movies. If, however, there is interest in holding screenings, that may change.

Music: We will devote time in each class to listening to songs that relate to the period and topic that we are studying. Some weeks students will be asked to either come into class with a song that they think relates to the week's topic or to work in groups to select a song that exemplifies some theme or otherwise relates to our discussion.

Research Project: Students will complete one of two assignments:

Option 1: Write a research paper of no less than 4500 words and no more than 6000 words on some topic related to the class themes. Topics must be approved by the instructor either by email or in office hours no later than **March 6th**. Students must use a combination of primary and secondary sources and they must present an argument. **A fantastically written paper that is entirely summary and citations will earn no higher than a B+. The idea is to present an argument on a topic of interest and to utilize research findings to support that argument.** It behooves students to have a rough hypothesis as they start their research, but to be willing to adapt that hypothesis in accordance with what they find while researching. Students should make sure to have a clear thesis stated in the most specific terms possible before the end of the second page of their papers.

Appropriate citations are required, though the instructor does not care which citation style students use (i.e. Chicago Manual, APA, etc). I do not require students to use a minimum number of sources for the research paper. However, the research in the paper will be adjudicated along with the writing and the quality of the argument. Students must use a sufficient number of sources to adequately present and support their arguments. Failure to do so when there are readily available sources that would have improved the paper will factor into the grade.

Option 2: Increasingly, we are replacing written expression with multimedia alternatives. As such, I want to give those of you who are more inclined to be creative or who excel at video production, graphic design, etc, a chance to do a more modern research project. For this option, the written component of the project can be negotiated with me individually, but as a general rule, it will be no shorter than 2500 words (and if it will be shorter than 4500 words, there will be additional components to the project— **this option is not a way to avoid a substantive project**). Instead of a traditional research paper, however, the final product might be a documentary, a spin on the popular Comedy Central Drunk History series, a photo-essay, or a multi-media presentation. You might write a script for a podcast relating to your topic, you might record such an podcast, etc. **The standards and requirements for this second option remain the same as for option one. Your project MUST make an argument, and MUST reflect substantial and high quality research from a variety of primary and secondary sources. Additionally, all sources must be cited. Anyone who would like to select option two**

must meet with the instructor to have the format of their project approved before April 1st.

Academic Integrity: It goes without saying that students are required to comply with the university's academic integrity policies. All violations of these regulations will be reported to the relevant authorities. **If you have any questions as to what compliance entails—whether regarding citations in written work, referencing your own prior work, collaborating with peers, etc—ask the instructor in advance of completing an assignment.** Erring on the side of caution never hurt anyone, and I'm happy to answer any questions you might have about my expectations. The only students who run into problems are those who choose not to ask questions.

Note on Materials: Given its subject matter, the class will often wade into uncomfortable territory. The instructor believes that a good history class challenges our preconceived notions and provides exposure to a broad array of cultural perspectives, values, and ideas. Nonetheless, I am cognizant that some of the movies, television episodes, music, and other material in the class might make some students uncomfortable, depending on a student's background and personal experiences. If you have a problem or concern about any of the materials in the class, please come and talk to me.

Texts: Some of the following books are required for purchase, others are recommended. The recommended texts fall into two categories— One is a narrative history of the period that we are studying to provide guidance for any student who might feel lost about facts, dates, events, etc. The remainder are books from which I've assigned chapters, as I know some students prefer to own books. All books are available at the Penn Book Center, and are easily accessible on Amazon.com and half.com. Almost all of the books are also available as ebooks. You're welcome to acquire used books, ebooks, etc. as per your preference. I've tried my best to assign full chapters to make it easier to choose any version of a text.

Required Texts:

1. Andrew Hartmann, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), http://smile.amazon.com/War-Soul-America-History-Culture/dp/022625450X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1446094973&sr=8-1&keywords=andrew+hartman.
2. Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (Basic Books, 2015), http://smile.amazon.com/One-Nation-Under-God-Corporate/dp/0465049494/ref=pd_sim_14_2?ie=UTF8&dpID=51mloROC4bL&dpSrc=sims&preST=AC_UL160_SR105%2C160_&refRID=1M0CCBSG1VJ816VRRVT.

3. Robert Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (Hill and Wang, 2012), http://smile.amazon.com/All-Family-Realignment-American-Democracy-ebook/dp/B007TJ1C2A/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1446095068&sr=1-1&keywords=Robert+Self.
4. Lily Geismer, *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party (Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America)* (Princeton University Press, 2014), http://smile.amazon.com/Dont-Blame-Transformation-Democratic-Twentieth-Century/dp/0691157235/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1452150328&sr=8-1&keywords=lily+geismer.
5. Jason Sokol, *All Eyes Are Upon Us: Race and Politics from Boston to Brooklyn* (Basic Books, 2014), http://smile.amazon.com/All-Eyes-are-Upon-Us/dp/046502226X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1452150385&sr=8-1&keywords=jason+sokol.
6. Jennifer Carlson, *Citizen-Protectors: The Everyday Politics of Guns in An Age of Decline* (Oxford University Press, 2015), http://smile.amazon.com/Citizen-Protectors-Everyday-Politics-Guns-Decline/dp/0199347557/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1452150406&sr=8-1&keywords=jennifer+carlson.

Recommended:

1. James T. Patterson, *Restless Giant: The United States from Watergate to Bush v. Gore (Oxford History of the United States)* (Oxford University Press, 2007), http://smile.amazon.com/Restless-Giant-United-Watergate-History/dp/0195305221/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1452150438&sr=8-2&keywords=James+T+Patterson.
2. Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present* (Back Bay Books, 2010), http://smile.amazon.com/When-Everything-Changed-Amazing-American/dp/0316014044/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&coliid=I1Z0UFFWB5LWZP&colid=2D4Q1AKSH954&qid=&sr=.

Schedule:

Getting Up to Speed

Week 1: Introduction:

Reading:

1. Hartman, Introduction.

2. Pat Buchanan, "Speech to the 1992 Republican Convention," <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/buchanan-culture-war-speech-speech-text/>.

3. Thomas Lake, "Fear and Voting on the Christian Right," [CNN.com, http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2015/10/politics/fear-voting-christian-right/](http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2015/10/politics/fear-voting-christian-right/).

Activity: Cards Against Humanity Analysis

Week 2: Two Different Types of People?

Reading: Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, Chapters 7-9.

Week 3: One Nation Under God?

Reading:

1. Kruse, Introduction through Chapter 4.

Week 4: The Modern Left

Reading: Geismar, Introduction, Chapters 2, 3, 7, & 8 & Epilogue.

Unit 2 The Key Debates:

Week 5: Taking God Out of the Classroom

Reading:

1. Kruse, Chapters 6-8 & Epilogue

Week 6: The Classroom Wars

Audio:

1. Trey Kay, Deborah George, and Stan Bumgardner, "The Great Textbook Wars," American Radioworks, <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/textbooks/>.

Reading:

1. Adam Laats, *The Other School Reformers: Conservative Activism in American Education*, Chapter 5.
2. Jonathan Zimmerman, *Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education*, Chapter 4.
3. Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, *Classroom Wars: Language, Sex, and the Making of Modern Political Culture*, Chapter 7 & Conclusion.

Activity: School Board Decisions

Week 7: Busing & Race in late 20th and early 21st Century America

Reading:

1. Sokol, *All Eyes Are Upon Us: Race and Politics from Boston to Brooklyn*, Chapters, 6-10.
2. Christopher Shea, "Can We Say That?," *Princeton Alumni Magazine*, November 11, 2015, <http://paw.princeton.edu/issues/2015/11/11/pages/9412/index.xml>.
3. Nora Caplan Bricker, "The Yale Student Protests Are the Campus PC Wars at Their Best," *Slate XX Factor: What Women Really Think*, November 10, 2015, http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2015/11/10/yale_student_protests_why_they_are_the_campus_pc_wars_at_their_best.html?wpsrc=sh_all_dt_tw_top.
4. Conor Friedersdorf, "The New Intolerance of Student Activism," *The Atlantic*, November 9, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/the-new-intolerance-of-student-activism-at-yale/414810/>.

Video:

The New York Times "A Conversation with White People on Race," <http://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000003773643/a-conversation-with-white-people-on-race.html>.

Week 8: The Campus Wars & the Battle over Authority

Reading:

1. Hartman, Chapters 7 and 8.
2. Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, "The Coddling of the American Mind," *the Atlantic*, September 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>.

3. James Atlas, "The Battle of the Books," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1988, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/06/05/magazine/on-campus-the-battle-of-the-books.html?pagewanted=all>.
4. Katie Rogers, "Oberlin Students Take Culture War to the Dining Hall," *The New York Times*, December 21, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/22/us/oberlin-takes-culture-war-to-the-dining-hall.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur>.

Week 9: Women's Rights/the ERA

Reading:

1. Donald Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 2005), chapter 9 and chapter 10 from 243-253.
2. Self, Chapters 4, 10 and 11.
3. Geismer, Chapter 9.
4. Collins, TBD.

Video Clips:

1. Arkansas ERA Debate
2. Betty Ford on *60 Minutes*

Week 10: The Politics of Abortion

Reading:

1. Self, Chapter 5 and pages 366-378.
2. Kristen Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, Chapters 6 & 7.
3. David Courtwright, *No Right Turn*, 90-95.

Week 11: Gay Rights

Reading:

1. Self, Chapters 3, 8 and pages 383-398.
2. Chris Geidner, "Nancy Reagan Turned Down Rock Hudson's Plea For Help Nine Weeks Before He Died," *Buzzfeed*, February 2, 2015, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/chrisgeidner/nancy-reagan-turned-down-rock-hudsons-plea-for-help-seven-we#.vi7eyb87M>.

Film: Milk (2008)

Week 12: Music, movies, and television—who sets the standards?

Reading:

1. Hartman, Chapter 6.
2. John Fiske, “Murphy Brown, Dan Quayle and the Family Row of the Year,” in *Media Matters: Race and Gender in U.S. Politics*.

Video:

1. “Sex, Drugs, and Gore,” *The New York Times Retro Report*, October 25, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000003997885/sex-drugs-and-gore.html?playlistId=100000002148738®ion=video-grid&version=video-grid-headline&contentCollection=Retro+Report&contentPlacement=6&module=recent-videos&action=click&pgType=Multimedia&eventName=video-grid-click>.

Film: TBD, likely either *Private Parts* or *The People Against Larry Flynt*

Activity: If you had to select 1 song, television show, or movie that epitomized the debate over the different conceptions of American values at play during the 1980s and 1990s, what would it be and why?

Week 13: The Clintons and the Culture Wars during the 1990s and the 2000s

Reading:

1. Self, Epilogue.
2. Gil Troy, *Hillary Rodham Clinton: Polarizing First Lady*, Chapter 2.
3. Gil Troy, *The Age of Clinton*, Chapter 9.
4. Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present*, Chapters 13 and 14.

Activity: Watch one episode of a television show that sparked angst as part of the culture wars. Among the possibilities: *All in the Family*, *Maude*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, and *Sex and the City* (if you are unsure whether a series fits, just ask). Be prepared to answer the following questions about the episode that you have watched—why was the show provocative in the culture wars context? How would each side of culture warriors have perceived the show? What moments in the

episode that you watched meant have aroused the ire of either side (or generated cheers)? How did the episode reflect the cultural debates from the time period in which it aired?

Week 14: Arming America

1. Jennifer Carlson, *Citizen-Protectors: The Everyday Politics of Guns in an Age of Decline*, Chapters TBD.

Activity: Reimagining Gun Control