**THE AMERICAN CULTURE WARS: SOCIETY, MORALITY, AND POLITICS**

*\*PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE\**

Spring 2017

Wednesday 3:30-6:30

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Office Hours: 4-6PM Monday or by appointment

**Course Description**

Should statues of Confederate soldiers be taken down? Is it appropriate for football players to kneel during the national anthem? How should the United States treat refugees form predominantly Muslim nations? These questions are only the latest battlefields in the “culture wars,” the long-running conversation—or, more often, shouting match—about what the United States ought to stand for and how Americans ought to live. This seminar will explore how Americans have wrestled with questions of morality and national identity since the country’s founding. Two questions will drive our discussion. First, why have certain issues become the subject of fierce cultural conflict in American life? Second, do these conflicts enrich or undermine American democracy?

This seminar focuses on four issues: the establishment and disestablishment of religion in the early United States; debates over how many and what kind of immigrants to allow into the country; campaigns to control or prohibit dangerous substances, especially alcohol; and the gradual expansion of gay rights. For each topic, we will try to capture the worldviews and experiences of the Americans involved, drawing on primary sources that range from presidential speeches to congressional debates to popular novels to editorial cartoons. The goal: to understand how these cultural conflicts have shaped both public policy and individual behavior in the United States.

**Assignments**

Participation

Participation is essential to this seminar. You will be expected to engage not only with our primary and secondary source readings but also with your fellow students. The issues we will discuss are both important and controversial, and so it is especially important for you to listen carefully and speak respectfully—even in moments when you might disagree.

Reading Responses

Writing is an essential part of learning. You will write eight one-to-two paragraph reading responses over the course of the semester; this means writing a response, on average, every other week. Your response should link one primary source to one another or to one of the secondary sources.

Research Paper/Lecture

For the final project, you can choose to write EITHER a lecture that deals with the history of a “culture war” topic (such as polygamy, juvenile delinquency, or abortion) OR a research paper that focuses on a particular person, idea, or moment in the culture wars. In either case, your paper should be 15-20 pages. Students will regularly discuss their progress on these papers throughout the semester. Preliminary steps in completing this paper—including a proposal, a bibliography, and an outline—will be due at different points during the semester.

Grading

Participation: 30%

Reading Responses: 15%

Research Paper/Lecture Material: 15%

Research Paper/Lecture: 40%

**Course Readings and Schedule**

*\*All Readings Provisional\**

January 17: Introduction

Jonathan Haidt, “The Moral Foundations of Politics,” *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided By Politics and Religion* (2012)

James Davison Hunter, “Cultural Conflict in America” and “The Anatomy of Cultural Conflict,” *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991)

January 24: Providence and the Founding

Steven Waldman, *Founding Faith: Providence, Politics, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America* (2008)

Isaac Backus, “An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty” (1773)

James Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments” (1785)

January 31: Disestablishment

Sarah Barringer Gordon, “The First Disestablishment: Limits on Church Power and Property before the Civil War,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* (2014)

David Sehat, “The Moral Establishment,” *The Myth of American Religious Freedom* (2011)

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1840) (selections)

February 7: Immigration and Religion

Leo Ribuffo, “The Complexity of American Religious Prejudice,” *Right Center Left: Essays in American History* (1992)

Samuel F.B. Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States* (1835)(selections)

Maria Monk, *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk…of Five Years as a Novice and Two Years as a Black Nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal* (1836) (selections)

February 14: Immigration and Race

Mae Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924,” *Journal of American History* (1999)

Thomas A. Guglielmo, “Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in WWII Texas,” *Journal of American History* (2006)

E.A. Ross, *The Old World in the New* (1913) (selections)

“Popular Gullibility as Exhibited in the New White Slavery Hysteria,” *Current Opinion* (1914)

February 21: Multiculturalism

Jon Zimmerman, “Each ‘Race’ Could Have Its Heroes Sung”: Ethnicity and the History Wars in the 1920s,” *Journal of American History* (2000)

Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, “The Beginnings of Modern Bilingual Education” and “The Polarization of Bilingual Education,” *Classroom Wars: Language, Sex, and the Making of Modern Political Culture* (2015)

Horace Kallen, “Democracy versus the Melting Pot,” *The Nation* (1915)

Randolph Bourne, “Trans-national America,” *The Atlantic* (1916)

February 28: Temperance

Kyle G. Volk, “The Perils of ‘Pure Democracy’: Minority Rights, Liquor Politics, and Popular Sovereignty in Antebellum America,” *Journal of the Early Republic* (2009)

James Morone, “Temperance: Crucible of Race and Class,” *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (2003)

*Cyclopedia of Temperance and Prohibition* (1891) (selections)

Neal Dow, *The Reminiscences of Neal Dow* (1898) (selections)

March 14: Prohibition

Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (2010)

William Howard Taft, “Is Prohibition A Blow to Personal Liberty?” *Ladies Home Journal* (1919)

James Reed, “The Pestilence of Fanaticism,” *American Mercury* (1925)

Wickersham Commission Report on Alcohol Prohibition (1931)

March 21: RESEARCH WORKSHOP

March 28: Controlling Substances, Controlling People

Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, "‘The Attila the Hun Law’: New York’s Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Making of a Punitive State,” *Journal of Social History* (2010)

Donna Murch, “Crack in Los Angeles: Crisis, Militarization, and Black Response to the Late-Twentieth Century War on Drugs,” *Journal of American History* (2015)

Eric Schlosser, “Prison Industrial Complex,” *The Atlantic* (1998)

April 4: Policing Sexuality

David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Lesbians and Gays in the Federal Government* (2004)

Margot Canaday, “Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Social Citizenship under the 1944 G.I. Bill,” *Journal of American History* (2003)

April 11: Gay Rights

Robert Self, “A Process of Coming Out: From Liberation to Gay Politics,” *All in the Family: The Remaking of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (2012)

Frank Kameny, “We Throw Down the Gauntlet” (1969)

Carl Wittman, “Refugees From America” (1970)

Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* (1980) (selections)

April 18: Intersecting Identities

Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (2004)

Rogers Brubaker, “The Uproar Over ‘Transracialism,’” *New York Times* (2017)

April 25: Culture Wars in the Trump Era

TBA