American Thought and Culture, 1776 to 1900

REQUIRED READING

James Fenimore Cooper, *The Prairie* (Penguin)
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Penguin)
Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Viking-Penguin)
Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware* (Viking-Penguin)

AIMS AND THEMES: History 305 and 306 investigate the history of ideas underlying religious, philosophical, scientific, artistic, political, and social practice in the United States. Both courses emphasize major thinkers and movements in their social and cultural contexts. Both also engage two historical questions: In light of America’s purportedly practical spirit and its broad diversity of identity groups, how can we talk about an American intellectual tradition? How does the study of reflective and expressive thought illuminate the larger culture of the United States?

The “long nineteenth century” in America, as in Europe, was an age of intellectual transformations. In History 373 we will examine the four arguably most far-reaching. One was that by political thinkers’ to assimilate the Founders’ liberal but elite-minded republicanism to the hitherto historically discredited language of “democracy.” Another was religious intellectuals’ equally strenuous struggles to meet European Enlightenment and Romantic threats to America’s supernatural Protestant Christianity. American writers effected another lasting paradigm shift in their literary constructions of an imagined national identity. “God,” “nature,” and “nation” fueled nationalist hubris but also inspired seminal myths and searing social critiques, especially of America’s racial and gender hierarchies. We will conclude by considering the conflicts and accommodations involved in pitting philosophical idealism and spiritual religion against literary realism and Darwinian science, setting the stage for the opening acts of a modern American intellectual culture.

READING: All required books are available at the BU Barnes and Noble bookstore. Links to electronic versions of articles from journals (e-journals) and essays from books (e-reserve) may be found on the BU Libraries website. Our password for e-reserve is our course number in lower-case (hi305). For an overview of American intellectual history in
this period, students might find it useful to consult the relevant volumes in Lewis Perry, General Editor, *Twayne's American Thought and Culture Series* (1991-2010).

**DISCUSSIONS AND QUESTIONS:** In order to make lectures optimally useful and discussions possible, it is essential that reading assignments be done before the date indicated. Class discussions will be emphasized on certain dates, but comments and questions will be encouraged throughout the term. There will also be a time at the end of most classes for students to ask questions about the reading and lecture.

**SHORT PAPERS:** Students will be required to write two 5-6 page papers. Each is an analysis and comparison of all or at least most of the reading assignments for a particular day. The object is not to just summarize or paraphrase the readings but to analyze them. This means picking out the main arguments or themes, evaluating how they’re supported logically and/or rhetorically, how they compare (in similarity or difference) with each other in these respects, and how they fit (or don’t fit) into the topics or movements we’ve discussed in the course. The first paper can be on any required reading assignment through that of **Oct. 10** and should be turned in no later than the beginning of class on the day the assignment will be discussed. The second short paper can be on any assignment from **Oct. 17** to **Nov. 26** and will likewise be due in class on the day it is assigned.

**TERM PAPER:** This paper is an essay of 10-12 pages on a single book by an American thinker. It should address the question, "What marks this book as a product of its intellectual time?" You may choose any book listed in the “Chronologies” sections of *AIT1 and AIT2* with three qualifications: 1.) The book must be by an American author. 2.) Its initial publication date should be roughly between 1776 and 1900. 3.) Preferably it should not be one that includes a selection from the required reading. 4.) Before selecting your book, you need to check with me either in person or by email about your selection. In making a preliminary assessment of possible books, you might find it helpful to consult a dictionary of American thinkers and ideas, such as Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg’s *Companion to American Thought* (1995). The focus of your paper should not be on your intellectual’s biography but on his or her ideas. You should not try to fit your book into the history of particular social and political events of its era, although you may allude to them. Rather you should select a central intellectual problem, question, theme, or movement alive at the time and position your book in relation to it, using evidence drawn from relevant documents in *AIT1 and AIT2*. Papers will be due the in class **Dec. 3**.

**CITATIONS:** Citation form should be consistent and generally follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. If you frequently cite the same text, you can place a shortened version of its author and title in parentheses at the end of a quotation or sentence and before the period and create a bibliography of full citations at the end of the paper.

**EXAMS:** There will be a quiz and a final.

**LATE WORK:** Make-ups will not be given nor will late papers be accepted except in the case of extraordinary emergencies, such as a severe illness or the death of a parent,
spouse, or partner. I need to be informed in advance unless the event’s suddenness makes that impossible. Generally, a makeup date will be scheduled within a week.

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is arguably the most serious ethical violation that a scholar or student can commit. Read the Academic Conduct Code to understand the college policy on plagiarism. All cases of its suspected perpetration, as well as all other acts of suspected academic misconduct, will be referred to the Dean’s Office. If found guilty, a student will receive the maximum punishment allowed at the university.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: Attendance at all classes is required and unexplained absences will lower a student’s final grade. Class participation in the form of questions and comments may raise it by as much as a half-grade.

ETIQUETTE: To preserve a classroom atmosphere conducive to collective learning, turn off cell phones and use laptop computers only for taking notes on the classroom lecture and discussion. Laptop use should not interfere with your ability to interact with the instructor and other students.

GRADE BREAKDOWN: 30% on the two short papers, 10% on the quiz, 30% on the term paper, and 30% on the final.

GRADUATE STUDENTS: HI 705 graduate students are required to do the recommended reading and to write an additional historiography paper on one of the topics in the course.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READING

Sept. 3  Intellectual History and the Themes of the Course

  Recommended:
  David A. Hollinger, “Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals,” in Hollinger’s In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas (1985), 130-51, 210-15

Sept. 5  Theories of Revolutionary Republicanism

  Reading:
  AIT, xi-xiv, 111-14
  John Adams, A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law, in AIT1, 128-38
  Thomas Paine, Selection from Common Sense, in AIT1, 139-46
  Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence, in AIT1, 147-50
  Judith Sargent Murray, “On the Equality of the Sexes,” in AIT1, 177-84

  Recommended:
  James T. Kloppenberg, “The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse,”
Sept. 10  **Debates over Republican Constitutionalism**  
*Reading:*  
“Brutus,” in *AIT1*, 157-67  
James Madison, *The Federalist*, “Number 10” and “Number 51” in *AIT1*, 168-76

Sept. 12  **John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and the Fate of the Republican Enlightenment**  
*Reading:*  
John Adams to Samuel Adams and to Thomas Jefferson, in *AIT1*, 185-94  
Thomas Jefferson, Selection from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, to Benjamin Rush, and to Thomas Law, in *AIT1*, 195-216  
*Recommended:*  

Sept. 17  **James Fenimore Cooper’s The Prairie and Romantic Literary Nationalism**  
*Reading:*  
James Fenimore Cooper, *The Prairie*  
*Recommended:*  

Sept. 19  **William Ellery Channing, Nathaniel Taylor, and Charles Finney and the Reawakening of Protestant Theology**  
*Reading:*  
*AIT1*, 3-5, 219-22  
William Ellery Channing, “Unitarian Christianity,” in *AIT1*, 223-235  
Nathaniel William Taylor, *Concio ad Clerum*, in *AIT1*, 236-50  
*Recommended:*  

Sept. 24  **Evangelical Perfectionism and Critiques of Race and Gender in John**
Humphrey Noyes, William Lloyd Garrison, and Sarah Grimké

Reading:
John Humphrey Noyes, Selection from The Berean, in AIT1, 262-69
William Lloyd Garrison, Selection from Thoughts on Colonization, in AIT1, 270-83
Sarah Grimké, Selection from Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman, in AIT1, 284-97

Sept. 26  George Bancroft, Orestes Brownson, and the Problem of “The People” in Democratic Ideology

Reading:
George Bancroft, “The Office of the People in Art, Government, and Religion,” in AIT1, 298-307
Orestes Brownson, “The Laboring Classes,” in AIT1, 308-23

Oct. 1  Harmony and Hierarchy in Whig Social Thought of Catharine Beecher and Henry C. Carey

Reading:
Catharine Beecher, Selection from A Treatise on Domestic Economy, in AIT1, 324-37
Henry C. Carey, Selection from Harmony of Interests, in AIT1, 338-48

Oct. 3  Ralph Waldo Emerson and Transcendentalist Philosophy

Reading:
AIT1, 351-53
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Divinity School Address” and “Self-Reliance,” AIT1, 354-80
Recommended:

Oct. 8  Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, and Transcendentalist Politics

Reading:
Margaret Fuller, Selection from Woman in the Nineteenth Century, in AIT1, 396-414
Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government,” in AIT1, 415-28
Recommended:
John L. Thomas, “Romantic Reform in America,” American Quarterly (Winter 1965), 656-81

Oct. 10  Romanticism and Socialism in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Blithedale Romance

Reading:
Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance
Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, “A Glimpse of Christ’s Idea of Society” and
“Plan of the West Roxbury Community,” *AIT1*, 381-95

**LAST DAY TO TURN IN FIRST SHORT PAPER**

Oct. 15  **No Class (Follow Monday Schedule)**

Oct. 17  **Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and the Two Souls of Democratic Romanticism**

*Reading:*
- Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” in *AIT1*, 439-49

Oct. 22  **Horace Bushnell, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Humanitarian Protestant Christianity**

*Reading:*
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

Oct. 24  **Slavery and the Making of Southern Conservatism in John C. Calhoun, Louisa McCord, and George Fitzhugh**

*Reading:*
- *AIT1*, 453-55
- John C. Calhoun, Selection from *A Disquisition on Government*, in *AIT1*, 456-66
- Louisa McCord, “Enfranchisement of Woman,” in *AIT1*, 467-79
- George Fitzhugh, Selection from *Sociology for the South*, in *AIT1*, 480-90

*Recommended:*

Oct. 29  **Racial Constructs and the Politicization of Antislavery in Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln**

*Reading:*
- Martin Delany, Selection from *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, in *AIT1*, 491-507
- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” in *AIT1*, 508-21

Oct. 31  **Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* and the Ironies of Literary Realism**
Reading:

*AIT*, 3-5
- William Dean Howells, “Pernicious Fiction,” in *AIT2*, 51-54
- Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Recommended:

Nov. 5  **The Concept of Culture and the Rise of the Research University**
Reading:

Recommended:

Nov. 7  **Charles Peirce’s Pragmatism and the Idea of Science**
Reading:
- Charles Peirce, “The Fixation of Belief,” in *AIT2*, 16-26

Nov. 12  **The Darwinian Controversies**
Reading:

Nov. 14  **Biblical Criticism and the Dilemmas of Liberal Protestantism**
Reading:
- Charles Augustus Briggs, Selection from *Biblical Study*, in *AIT2*, 37-41

Recommended:

Nov. 19  **Josiah Royce, William James, and the Problem of Liberal Belief**
Reading:
- William James, “The Will to Believe,” in *AIT2*, 69-82
- Josiah Royce, “The Problem of Job,” in *AIT2*, 83-95

Recommended:

Nov. 21  **Harold Fredric’s *The Damnation of Theron Ware* and End of Protestant Innocence**
Reading:
- Harold Frederic, The Damnation of Theron Ware

Nov. 26  **Social Science and “Social Darwinism” in William Graham Sumner, Lester Frank Ward, and Thorstein Veblen**
Reading:
  William Graham Sumner, “Sociology,” in AIT2, 27-36
  Lester Frank Ward, “Mind as a Social Factor,” in AIT2, 42-50
  Thorstein Veblen, Selection from The Theory of the Leisure Class in AIT, 132-46

LAST DAY TO TURN IN SECOND SHORT PAPER

Nov. 27-Dec. 1  Thanksgiving Recess

Dec. 3  Gender Science and the Self in the “First Wave” Feminism of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman
  Reading:
    Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Solitude of Self” and Selection from The Woman’s Bible, in AIT2, 55-59
    Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Selection from Women and Economics, in AIT2, 96-102

TERM PAPERS DUE

Dec. 5  Henry Adams, George Santayana, and the Revolt against the Nineteenth Century
  Reading:
    Henry Adams, “The Dynamo and the Virgin,” in AIT2, 103-07

Dec. 10  Review
  GRADUATE HISTORIOGRAPHY PAPERS DUE: by 9:30 AM in my box in the history department.

Dec. 17  FINAL (9-11 AM)