

HI 863
Spring 2017
HIS, Rm. 304
M, 6:30-9:15

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F, 11-12:30

Exceptional, National, Transnational: Comparativist Approaches to American History

For over two generations now politicians and pundits as well as critics and scholars have cherished the label “American Exceptionalism.” But what does it mean? Over the twentieth century it has functioned as a mind-bogglingly protean category evoking variously holy commonwealth, national distinctiveness, cultural parochialism, socialist critique, global capitalism, universal human rights, imperial designs, and a myriad of other supposedly American configurations and impulses. In recent years, other scholars have seized on the concepts of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism not only to jettison the idea of American Exceptionalism but also to diminish the importance of the entire category of national identity. Meanwhile, revising the revisionists, historians and other scholars have challenged this transnational project by reintroducing the nation and the nation state as vital players in global contests for identity and power.

In this graduate seminar we will take up some theories of nationality and national identity put forward by historians as well as by scholars in American Studies, political theory, social science, and literature and religious studies. Our main approach, though, will be historical, paying particular attention to change over time through reading classic and recent works produced by historians. Likewise, although questions of foreign policy will receive due attention, our primary emphasis will be on the broader thinking and culture that have underlain it.

Topics will include transatlantic revolutions, international Romanticism, transnational abolitionism and women’s rights, European and American democracy, Europe and the American Civil War, Anglo-American liberalism, transatlantic social reform, Mexican-American pragmatism, American empires, exilic intellectuals, Jewish cosmopolitanism, global Christianity, racial hybridity, American and Soviet modernizers, universal human rights, global community development, Indian nationalism and the Civil Rights Movement, transatlantic free-market conservatism, and worldwide countercultural revolt.

The agenda of each seminar will be as follows. In the first part, a student will give an oral presentation on one “presentation” book listed for that week. In the second part we will discuss the articles required for that week. The last part of the seminar will be devoted to a discussion of that week’s required book.

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

Discussions, Presentation, and Book Evaluation

Discussions: Seminar members should be prepared to discuss the required reading as well as from to time other relevant works and topics that help deepen or broaden these conversations. Since much of what we learn will depend on these exchange of ideas in class, an important part of the grade will depend on the quantity and quality of oral contributions.

Book Evaluations: To help organize and focus one's thoughts about the reading, each week students will submit short (2-3 page) responses to the central book, which will be due in class on the day it is discussed. The paper should provide a fair statement of the book's primary themes and arguments as well as a brief evaluation of how well the historian establishes them. This assignment may be omitted once in the semester.

Presentations: Usually at each class one student will turn in a 5-6 page paper on a "Presentation" book for that week, identifying its main themes, arguments, and methods and an appraisal of how well the author succeeds in marshaling them as well as a brief indication of how these ideas can be connected with the required book assigned to the class. On the same day the student will also give an oral critique of approximately fifteen minutes based on his/her paper. Each seminar member will do this assignment twice during the semester. On the day of the student's presentation, he/she is excused from turning in the short response paper for that week (not counting the one-time omission also allowed).

Historiography Paper

An 18-20-page essay on the place of the nation in Americanist historical scholarship based on the course's readings and discussions will be due at the end of the semester. The texts can be taken from either the required or the presentation readings listed each week in the syllabus. Although the paper can reference an array of such works, at least three or four should be analyzed sufficiently to expose some of their driving constituents (e.g., controlling concepts, assumptions, implications, and connections to similar or contrasting texts discussed in the essay). For examples of this sort of paper, one might find it helpful to consult "state of the field" essays that appear in journals such as the *American Historical Review*, *Journal of American History*, *Reviews in American History*, and *Modern Intellectual History*.

GRADE BREAKDOWN: Discussions 40%, Response and Presentation Papers and Reports 30%, Term Paper 30%

READINGS: Required books are available at BU's Barnes and Noble bookstore or may be ordered from various online book sellers. When they are not included in a required book, essays and chapters may be accessed in digitalized form at Mugar's e-books or e-reserve sites. Articles from journals are on J-Stor.

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

PLAGIARISM: Read the Academic Conduct Code to understand the college policy on plagiarism. All cases of its suspected perpetration will be referred to the Dean's Office. If found guilty, a student will receive the maximum punishment allowed at the university.

TOPICS AND READING SCHEDULE

Jan. 23 **Toward a Post-National Synthesis**

Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History* (2006)

Jan. 30 **The Providential Nation**

Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (2007)

Perry Miller, "Errand into the Wilderness," in Miller's *Errand into the Wilderness* (1952)

Henry F. May, "The Decline of Providence?" (1976), in May's *Ideas, Faiths, and Feelings: Essays on American Intellectual and Religious History, 1952-1982* (1985), 130-46

John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," in David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds., *The American Intellectual Tradition*, 2 vols., Seventh Edition (2016), 1, 6-15 [hereafter *AIT1* and *AIT2*]

Presentation: Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (1978); or Carla Gardina Pestna, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (2009)

Feb. 6 **Global Revolutions and American Enlightenments**

David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (2008)

Henry F. May, "After the Enlightenment: A Prospectus," in May's *The Divided Heart: Essays on Protestantism and the Enlightenment in America* (1991), 179-96, 210-13

David A. Hollinger, "The Accommodation of Protestant Christianity with the Enlightenment: An Old Drama Still Being Enacted," in Hollinger's *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (2013), 1-17

Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence, in *AIT1*, 148-51

Thomas Jefferson, Selection from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in *AIT1*, 197-208

James Madison, *The Federalist*, “Number 10” and “Number 51,” in *AIT1*, 169-78

Presentation: R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America* (1959); Karriann Akemi Yokata, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (2014); or Caroline Winterer, *American Enlightenments: Pursuing Happiness in the Age of Reason* (2016)

Feb. 13 **The Exceptionalist Conceit I: Expansion**

Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (1955)

Dorothy Ross, “An Historian’s View of American Social Science,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Science*, 29 (April 1993), 99-112

Daniel T. Rodgers, “American Exceptionalism Revisited,” *Raritan Review*, 24 (Fall 2004), 21-47

Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” 532-45

Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address” (1863) and “Second Inaugural,” (1865). *AIT1*, 559-61

Francis Lieber, “Nationalism and Internationalism” (1868), *AIT1*, 562-74

Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *AIT2*, 55-63

Presentation: Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950); Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (1953); David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (1954)

Feb. 20 **Presidents Holiday**

Feb. 21 **The Democratic Moment**

James Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy*, (2016)

Robert Wiebe, “Framing U.S. History: Democracy, Nationalism, and Socialism” in Thomas Bender’s *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, (2002) [hereafter Bender, *Rethinking*]

George Bancroft, “The Office of the People in Art, Government and Religion” (1835), in *AIT1*, 314-323

Orestes Brownson, “The Laboring Classes” (1840), in *AIT1*, 324-339

Catharine Beecher, Selection from *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841) in *AIT1*, 341-353

Henry C. Carey, Selection from *The Harmony of Interests* (1851) in *AIT1*, 355-366

Presentation: John Dunn, *Breaking Democracy's Spell* (2013) or W. Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (2013)

Feb. 27 European Revolution and American Romantic Mentalités

Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life, Vol. 2: The Public Years* (2010)

Perry Miller, "New England's Transcendentalism: Native or Imported?" (1964) [in *Emerson's Prose and Poetry: Authoritative Texts, Contexts, Criticism* (2001), on reserve in Mugar]

John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," *American Quarterly*, 17 (Winter 1965), 656-81

Margaret Fuller, Selection from *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) in *AIT1*, 421-439

Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (1849) in *AIT1*, 441-453

Presentation: Timothy Mason Roberts, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism* (2009) or Marek Paryz, *The Postcolonial and Imperial Experience in American Transcendentalism* (2012)

Mar. 13 The Euro-American Black Atlantic

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (1995)

Robin D.G. Kelly, "How the West Was One: The African Diaspora and the Re-Mapping of U.S. History" in Bender, *Rethinking*, 123-147

Martin Delaney, Selection from *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852) in *AIT1*, 517-531

Presentations: Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism* (1988) or Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy* (1989) or Ross Posnock, *Color & Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (200)

Mar. 20 Transatlantic Social Liberalism and Borderlands Reform

Ruben Flores, *Backroads Pragmatists: Mexico's Melting Pot and Civil Rights in the United States* (2015)

Dan T. Rodgers, "An Age of Social Politics" in Bender, *Rethinking*, 250-273

Randolph Bourne, "Trans-National America" in *AIT2*, 185-194

Presentation: James Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought 1870-1920* (1988) or Dan T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (2000) or John Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (1980)

Mar 27 Exceptionalist Conceit II: Empires

Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (2000)

Marilyn B. Young, "The Age of Global Power" in Bender, *Rethinking*, 274--293

Rob Kroes, "American Empire and Cultural Imperialism: A View from the Receiving End" in Bender, *Rethinking*, 295-314

Woodrow Wilson, "The Ideals of America" (1902) in AIT2, 149-156

Randolph Bourne "Twilight of Idols (1917) in AIT2, 195-201

Presentation: Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (2009) or Perry Anderson, *American Foreign Policy and Its Thinkers* (2015)

Apr. 3 International Relations, Human Rights, and the Struggle for Christian Universalism

Michael Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United State between the Great War and the Cold War (The United States in the World)* (2015)

David A. Hollinger, "After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Ecumenical Protestantism and the Modern American Encounter with Diversity," *Journal of American History*, 98 (June, 2011), 21-48

Reinhold Niebuhr, Selection from *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (1944) in AIT2, 296-301

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Christianity's Third Great Challenge" (1960) in AIT2, 466-470

Harold John Ockenga, "Resurgent Evangelical Leadership" (1960) in AIT2, 473-477

Presentation: William Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (1987) or Joseph Kosek, *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* (2009)

Apr. 10 Exile Scholars and Transnational Modernism

H Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930-1965* (1975)

Winfried Fluck, "The Modernity of America and the Practice of Scholarship" in Bender, *Rethinking*, 343-366

Francois Weil, "Do American Historical Narratives Travel?" in Bender, *Rethinking* 317-342

Dorothy Ross, "American Modernities, Past and Present," *American Historical Review*, 116 (June 2011), 702-714

Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939) in AIT2, 271-279

Herbert Marcuse, Selection from *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) in AIT2, 522-530

Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation" (1964) AIT2, 515-520

Presentation: Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles* (1985), or Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan* (1996), or Brooke Blower, *Becoming Americans in Paris* (2011)

Apr. 17 Patriots Day**Apr. 24 Natives and Modernizers**

Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (2015)

W. W. Rostow, Selection from *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960), in *AIT2*, 423-30

Edward W. Said, Selection from *Orientalism* (1978) in *AIT2*, 552-62

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Selection from “Under Western Skies: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (1984), in *AIT2*, 589-98

Presentation: David Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (2003) or Peter Mandler, *Return of the Natives: How Margaret Mead Won the Second World War and Lost the Cold War* (2013) or Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression* (2015)

May 1 Racial Cosmopolitanism and a Reassessment of Method

Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (2011)

Prasenjit Duara, “Transnationalism and the Challenge to National Histories” in Bender, *Rethinking*, 25-46

Ian Tyrell, “Beyond the View from Euro-America: Environment, Settler Societies, and the Internationalization of American History” in Bender, *Rethinking*, 168-192

Ron Robin, “The Exhaustion of Enclosures: A Critique of Internationalization” in Bender, *Rethinking*, 367-380

David A. Hollinger, “The Historian’s Use of the United States and Vice Versa” in Bender, *Rethinking*, 381-395

Richard Rodriguez, Selection from *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*, in *AIT2*, 577-88