

**History 709-02 (Spring 2005)**  
**Introductory Seminar in US History**  
**“Public Culture and American Democracy”**

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McIver 228  
Wednesday, 7-9:50

This seminar is designed to advance your ability to identify compelling and researchable problems in the history of American political culture and public life. It will also help you sharpen your research skills. The class will be collaborative, practical and responsive to your particular interests. I also expect you to develop new interests and to widen your repertoire of methods for gathering and analyzing evidence. I am going to ask each of you to choose a specific literature or historical conversation around which you will deepen your knowledge. This should be something new, not something you have researched before or about which you have written a large historiographical paper. Then I will ask you to immerse yourself in a body of evidence that we know is readily and quickly available locally. This empirical exercise may or may not mesh perfectly with the historiographical problem you wrote about. In other words, I am less concerned about your completion of one coherent research paper than I am with really improving your abilities to identify where the “action” is in a field, and then with honing your skills at rendering varieties of evidence intelligible to readers.

We will explore the concept of “public culture” offered by Thomas Bender (and contested by his detractors) as a unifying theme for bridging sub-disciplines of US history. We will begin with Eric Foner’s attempt at a synthetic work that analyzes the meanings and actions that a multiplicity of Americans gave to the key word “freedom.” Foner tried to draw together the threads of a diverse, contentious society and polity sharing a national culture but expressing the key words and symbols of that culture in ways that reflected deep cleavages of region, race, class, gender, ethnicity and political ideology. He tried to synthesize insights from the “new” history, especially political, legal, intellectual, cultural, and social history. (He explores social history only as it relates to social movements and the changing social bases of politics and power). Out of this reading, I hope you will identify an historical problem that captures your imagination. You will have some weeks to ponder and investigate the two kinds of sources that we will explore.

We will have a series of 5 discussions about historiography and method, reading 2-4 articles a week and talking about how they use a range of sources: political rhetoric and essays, official and popular correspondence, organizational and official records, social surveys, oral histories, images, private manuscript collections, news sources and quantitative opinion research. These discussions will probably last 90 minutes, after which we will discuss particular research strategies. We will also take class time to hone our skills of searching the databases and Jackson Library.

I am most competent to guide you in the fields of African American history, women’s history, urban history since the 1870s, the history of social policy and welfare since Progressivism, and all aspects of history from the 1940s through the 1980s, including foreign relations. I hope we come together around a common concern with how symbols, language, key concepts and contested meanings can powerfully illuminate politics, culture and society: the aspirations and experiences, the interactions and power relations among different social groups in the “public” arena.

I will make available most of the "Major Problems in United States History" series, either in the history office or library reserves. Scholars have brought together the most interesting interpretations (often conflicting) in their fields of competence: women's history, US Since 1945, Vietnam War, etc. But I strongly urge you to select a problem that I can help you explore. The first requirement (the historiographical essay with problems for research) does not have to mesh perfectly with the second (conclusions from your immersion on a variety of primary sources). But I URGE you to pick from among the suggested topics list and to make sure that your research is well grounded in materials available through Jackson library. This may well lead to further research in a subsequent seminar. But the main idea of this course is to stretch and exercise your muscles of question framing, discovery and analysis, using equipment you have not used, or using familiar equipment in new ways.

I think each of you is going to need different things to advance your professional research abilities, so I would like a conference with each of you very soon. Also, please submit to me your best research paper, so I can see how you think and write and where you might need to go.

**Contacting Me:**

**Preference: After class, or 10 minutes before class, or**

**Office hours: T, 1:30-2:30; Th, 12:30-1:30, and W, by Appointment**

**tjackson@uncg.edu**

**(Email me with brief questions requiring little typing, or specify a time I can call you. T, W, Th afternoons or Monday evenings are best.)**

**Office: 334-5709 (I answer and check infrequently, since we have to share these lines).**

**Main office for message in urgent cases: 334-5992.**

**Home: 574-2010 (emergencies, brief questions or setting up conferences only).**

**Readings:**

Foner, Eric. *The Story of American Freedom*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.

Available for purchase through Amazon and the two campus bookstores.

Electronic reserves, acrobat reader files on the blackboard site, articles from JSTOR and from Academic Search Elite. **Check the Blackboard site for any changes in assigned readings. Substitutions are welcome if they are germane to the topic at hand.**

**Of Interest:**

Thomas Bender, "Wholes and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History," *Journal of American History* 73 (June 1986): 120-36; Bender, et al., "A Round Table: Synthesis in American History," *Journal of American History* 74 (June 1987): 107-30, especially or only Rozensweig. Note the caustic exchange with Nell Painter.

**Requirements:**

**Participation and Collaboration: 20%**

This is a seminar, a collaborative enterprise. More than one unexcused absence and your grade suffers. This grade is based on your substantive contribution to discussion, your sharing of insights into the historiography and the research process, and the critical value and helpfulness of your peer reviews.

**Reaction papers to common readings along the way. 20%.** Four 3 page commentaries on 4 of the "Historiography and Method" sessions below. I may ask you to share ongoing research assessments of the various types of primary sources you are working with.

**10-15 page historiography paper (30%)** on how various historians (or related academics) have addressed a common problem, in terms of their conclusions, sources and methods. I would like a concluding section on the challenges for further research in this area. You might also comment on methodological innovations or techniques you might find useful, including how the authors use basic concepts in subtle or clumsy ways.

**10-15 page primary research paper (30%)** on your conclusions from immersion in a coherent body of research materials available locally. I require that this be empirically rich, reliant on several different kinds of sources, focused, and informed by concepts and methods that historians recognize as useful and illuminating. This need not directly address the issues of the historiography paper, since not all interesting questions can be answered locally, but we surely have interesting sources in abundance around here.

### **Schedule of Classes, Assignments, Due Dates**

**Codes: ER = ereserves. BB = Blackboard site for this class.**

#### **1/12: Introductions – Basic Research Tools (Trip to CITI if time permits).**

Methods of searching sources. Secondary. Primary.  
What kind of history inspires you and why?

#### **1/19: Freedom and American Political Culture**

Foner, *Story of American Freedom*, first half, through Progressivism.  
From social history to constitutional history, Foner tries to make sense of US history in terms of radical, liberal and conservative definitions of freedom. **Exercises:** Make a list of issues you might like to explore further. Go find at least one source that Foner cites in his footnotes and see how well he used it. Did he miss anything that might not conform to his overall thesis? Bring in the source if possible. What *is* his thesis anyway?

#### **1/26: Freedom and American Political Culture**

Foner, *Story of American Freedom*, finish. The abolitionists and labor activists stretched the meaning of freedom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> we find a multiplicity of groups expanding their rights consciousness by demanding certain changes in "the social conditions of freedom" or resisting such demands as too radical. Again, find a cited source (secondary if your last was primary, and vice versa) and analyze it more fully (you needn't be thorough, but should be able to find a dimension of the story that expands on Foner or is in tension with his thesis. Is the discourse of freedom the best way to understand the main ideology or actions of the figures he cites?

#### **2/2: New Work on Woman Suffrage and Political Ideology**

Brown, Victoria Bissell. "Jane Addams, Progressivism, and Woman Suffrage: An Introduction to 'Why Women Should Vote' (and Text by Jane Addams)." In *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, 179-202. Troutdale, OR: New Sage Press, 1995. **ER=ereserves. [maybe BB if I get to it]**

DuBois, Ellen Carol. "Working Women, Class Relations, and Suffrage Militance: Harriot Stanton Blach and the New York Woman Suffrage Movement, 1894-1909." In *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, 221-44. Troutdale, OR: New Sage Press, 1995. **ER**

Thurner, Manuela. "'Better Citizens without the Ballot': American Anti-Suffrage Women and Their Rationale During the Progressive Era." In *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering*

*the Woman Suffrage Movement*, edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, 203-20. Troutdale, OR: New Sage Press, 1995. **ER**

**General Questions in this Historiography:** Is Carl Degler right that radical individualism (the idea that women were equal citizens) among the suffragists was a major obstacle to winning the majority for woman suffrage, that women had to enter the public sphere as women in less threatening ways? Or are older feminist scholars right to lament the loss of a broad critique of women's oppression, since the single issue focus on voting led to very little change in women's subordination in the family or workplace, and they ended up pretty much voting in similar ways as men? Why did it take 70 years to win the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment and what concessions to the dominant ideology of "separate spheres" did the suffragists make?

**Recommended: Women and social movements in the US. Website (under 'Databases')**

**2/9: Relief, Security, and Popular Consciousness in the New Deal**

Kennedy, David M. *Freedom from Fear*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 160-177. **ER**  
David M. Kennedy, "The Changing Image of the New Deal" a book review of *The Great*

*Depression*, by Robert McElvaine, *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1985. 90-94. **ER.**

Bremer, William W. "Along the 'American Way': The New Deal's Work Relief Programs for the Unemployed." *Journal of American History* 62, no. 3 (1975), 636-52. **JSTOR**

Lowitt and Beasley, eds., *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression*. Sample letters on pp. 24-28, 35-37, 44- 51, 151-155, 237-43 (especially Appalachia, New York, Georgia, Arizona, Ohio. **ER**

Robert S. McElvaine, ed., *Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983). Read Introduction, pp. 1-17. **ER.** And Sample Letters # 6, 11, 25, 37, 43, 54, 56, 81, 83, 104, 107, 108, 140, 143. **BB**

Sources: Letters from ordinary Americans and from social worker Lorena Hickock, official discourse. Did the American people in fact come to expect "security" from government during the Depression? (Foner, p. 205). Was American political culture thereby less individualistic, more willing to accommodate institutions and policies that had collectivist assumptions? Or was the Jeffersonian small government self-reliance tradition hardly "dented?" (Kennedy). Is Kennedy right to think McElvaine saw precious little "moral values" in the letters, other than envy and resentment? How did Kennedy use Hickok?

**I would like a decision on your historiographical problem, a one page statement and bibliography.**

**2/16: No class – conferences -- work on historiography papers.**

**2/23: Race and the City, 1940-1975: Workplaces, Ballrooms, Neighborhoods and Schools**

Thomas J. Sugrue, "Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964," *Journal of American History* (September, 1995): 551-578.

Robin D.G. Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics During World War II" in *Race Rebels* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 161-181.

Kevin Boyle, "The Kiss: Racial and Gender Conflict in a 1950s Automobile Factory," *Journal of American History* 84, 2 (September 1997), 496-523.

Theoharis, Jeanne. "'I'd Rather Go to School in the South': How Boston's School Desegregation Complicates the Civil Rights Paradigm." In *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, edited by Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, 125-151. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Sources: Manuscripts, Memoirs and Social Surveys

Questions: Examine the sources each one uses. What ongoing historiographic conversations are they addressing? How does each capture the political consciousness of ordinary people, and how does each use the concepts of race, class, gender and culture?

**3/2: Desperate Housewives? The Strange History of the Feminine Mystique**

Horowitz, Daniel. "Rethinking Betty Friedan and *the Feminine Mystique* : Labor Radicalism and Feminism in Cold War America." *American Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1996).

Meyerowitz, Joanne. "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958." *Journal of American History* 79, no. 4 (1993): pp. 1455-82.

Sources: Archival manuscript collections, magazines, a famous book.

A shorter class. Questions: We have a text that became a famous, some think hugely influential, book in early second wave feminism. How does what we know about the women's magazines, and about Betty Friedan's life in the 1940s challenge the accepted conclusions that historians have reached about the origins of second wave feminism in the widely-shared sense of claustrophobia experienced by middle-class 1950s housewives?

**3/15: Historiography Paper is due to your peer reviewer and me (early is nice).**

**3/16: Discussion of results and peer reviews. Discussion of primary source research strategies.**

**3/23: Race and Poverty in the Great Society: Presidential Leadership, Policymaking and Implementation**

Brauer, Carl M. "Kennedy, Johnson, and the War on Poverty," *Journal of American History* 69 (June 1982 ) (1982): 98-119.

Friedman, Lawrence. "The Social and Political Context of the War on Poverty: An Overview." "Comments" by Nick Kotz. In *Federal Antipoverty Programs*, edited by Robert H. Haveman, 21-47, 1977. ER.

Quadagno, Jill S. "Fostering Political Participation," Introduction and ch. 2 in *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 33-59.

**Recommended:** Lipsitz, George. *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988, middle chapters.

Sources: Executive branch archival materials, oral histories, local sources, oral history.

**Questions:** What were John Kennedy's and Lyndon Johnson's assumptions about race and poverty when they decided a "war on poverty" would be a good policy initiative? How much must we credit the civil rights movement for raising the salience of the issue? What kind of policy professionals designed the programs, and what assumptions did they bring? How did presidential (and executive branch) *assumptions* shape the programs and their reach? How did racial politics affect the noble goals of the war on poverty? Was the failure of the war on poverty ultimately political or fatally ideological from the start? Primary sources now include presidential tapes from [www.whitehousetapes.org](http://www.whitehousetapes.org).

**3/30: News, Race and Welfare**

**Two page statement of problem and bibliography for the primary research paper is due.**

Lisa Levenstein, "From Innocent Children to Unwanted Migrants and Unwed Moms: Two Chapters in the Public Discourse on Welfare in the United States, 1960-1961," *Journal of Women's History* 11.4 (2000) 10-33.

Gilens, Martin. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999., ch. 5, "The News Media and the Racialization of Poverty," pp. 102-132.

Walker, Jenny. "A Media-Made Movement? Black Violence and Nonviolence in the Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement." In *Media, Culture and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle*, edited by Brian Ward, 41-66. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001.

Robert E. Anderson, Jr., "Welfare in Mississippi: 'Tradition' vs. Title VI," *New South*, Spring 1967 rep. *Reporting Civil Rights*, v. 2 (Library of America, 2003), 533-544. ER and HCR.

**Sources:** Newspaper coverage of specific episodes and trends in coverage of welfare, comparative coverage of northern and southern violence in the civil rights movement, movement-based journalism.

**Questions:** When did the image of the black undeserving welfare queen enter the political culture? Is news coverage a reliable index to changes in the political culture? How should historians use news sources as a source of historical data and a barometer of different opinions held by different "publics"?

**4/6: No class –conferences on your research.**

#### **4/13: Vietnam and the Anti-War Movement**

Godfrey Hodgson, "War, Peace and Two Americas," in *America in Our Time* (NY: Norton, 1976), 384-98.

Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War*, pp. 6-25, 28-43, 266-71, 298-310. Focus on those parts that talk about the composition of the military, the attitudes of the soldiers and their working class families, and the opinion research that dispels a number of myths.

**Sources:** News Analysis, Quantitative Research and Oral History

#### **Recommended:**

Chester J. Patch, Jr., "And That's the Way It Was: The Vietnam War on the Network Nightly News," in David Farber, ed., *The Sixties* (Chapel Hill, 1994), pp. 90-118.

Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching*

**Questions:** What impact did the war have on American political culture? How does each author use quantitative evidence to support an analytical argument about working-class cultural ambivalence toward the war and anti-war movement? Does this evidence challenge any preconceptions or myths you might have held? How can we reliably detect biases in opinion research and historical method?

**4/20: No class –conferences on your research.**

**4/26: Primary Research Paper is due.**

**4/27: Discussions and peer reviews.**

Random Suggestions for Historiographical Investigation:

### **The Freedman's Bureau, Free Labor Ideology and Land-Labor Relations**

Was the Freedman's Bureau really the "freedman's friend"? What kind of protection could the agents offer, and what was the net effect of their "free labor" assumptions on the kinds of deals landless ex-slaves could make with slaveless landowners?

Eric Foner and Leon Litwak and others.

The Origins of De Jure Jim Crow

Defending Southern Womanhood: Gender and Jim Crow and Radical Racism

Progressivism and World War I: Wilson and the Intellectuals

Imperialists and Anti-imperialists

### **Women, Maternalism and the Origins of the Welfare State Maternalism, Gender and Welfare Work**

How bound by traditional "family wage" assumptions were the early women contributors to the first welfare state structures: workmen's compensation; mothers' pensions; factory regulation; wages and hours limitation. What racial and gender and class assumptions did they make about women's work? Linda Gordon; Kathryn Sklar; Molly Ladd-Taylor.

The KKK in the 1920s

The Social Security Act: Compromises with the South?

Women at War with America: Rosie the Riveter Goes Home

**Race and Resistance in Wartime:** Japanese Internment; Matsumoto and Okhiro;

Dower on racist culture, Japanese and US

**Liberalism Transformed: the Strange Death of Social Democracy**

Civil Rights Unionism: NAACP and trade unionism in the 1940s

**Cold War Civil Rights**

Did the cold war help the civil rights movement by making racism an international embarrassment? Did McCarthyism delay the civil rights movement by 10 years, as Manning Marable argues? How did the cold war and the era of decolonization affect the way civil rights issues were framed? Did the cold war effectively narrow the focus of the civil rights movement to "civil rights" issues (as distinguished from labor or welfare or economic rights)?

Scholars: Mary Dudziak, Gerald Horne, Thomas Borstelmann, Ellen Schrecker, Amanda Plummer, Manning Marable.

**Women and Gender in the Civil Rights Movement**

Beyond the question of recognition for their contributions, what does close attention to women's activism in civil rights struggles change our appreciation of the goals and achievements of the black freedom movement? Did black women develop a feminist (or womanist) consciousness in the 1960s, or was the racial struggle almost universally take precedence? Tom Jackson on Septima Clark, Jaqueline Rouse, et. al., Belinda Robnett, Dorothy Height

**Brown vs. Board of Education and Desegregated Education**

Was the net effect of Brown to stimulate the black struggle for equality or to divert the movement from more important, achievable goals? Michael Klarman on importance of Brown provoking a backlash. Other critics and defenders of Brown.

**Historians and social science.** Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown*, St. Claire Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, Michael Harrington, *The Other America*.