AESTHETICS, VALUES AND AUTHORITY: CONFRONTING AMERICA

In recent years it has become commonplace for American citizens to look critically at the behavior of the nation and its people. The idea that it is a good thing for citizens to actively critique and criticize the government and the people is alive and well in the United States. Today there is a spirit in this nation that supports challenges to authority and individualism, and is often more taken with the frontier than with tradition. This spirit is protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The American experience is grounded in this spirit and the authority associated with citizenship empowers all to participate in the process of governing the nation. Evidence of this is obtained by considering the struggles and changes which mark the evolution of the nation from its inception. Beginning with a reading of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights we will examine personalities and phenomena which give America meaning. Utilizing selected readings, films, and other cultural artifacts, as well as through individual and group projects we will examine the character of America. The Fall term will focus on the foundations of the American character while the Spring term will focus on the analysis of contemporary issues identified by the participants.

FALL - THE AMERICAN CHARACTER

The seminar will begin by examining cultural artifacts, personalities and events that have shaped the character of the people of America form the founding of the nation to 1975. Recognizing that it is not possible to consider all of the forces that shaped the American character, specific themes have been identified which provide a basis for understanding. This understanding will serve as a base-line for the analysis of contemporary issues in American life during the spring semester.

Goals of the seminar are to:

- engage students in critical thought
- create and maintain a simulating intellectual experience for all seminar participants
- advance each seminar participant’s understanding of the importance of aesthetics, values and authority in establishing a national character.
- demonstrate the interrelationships linking aesthetics, values and authority in shaping a world view
- identify the issues which will serve as the central themes for the spring seminar

REQUIRED TEXTS:


COURSE PACKS and RESERVE MATERIAL

GROUP PROJECT BOOKS see possible examples below (only one is required; selections to be made during the first semester):


COURSE PACKS (only available at the FIU Bookstore)
Additional course readings. Volume 1
Additional course readings. Volume 2

GROUP PROJECT BOOKS (only one is required; selections to be made during the seminar):


RECOMMENDED CONTEMPORARY READING:


