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.

Traditionally this seminar has taken a four day trip to Washington, D.C. during the Spring Term. During the Fall term the seminar will decide if they wish to continue this tradition.

FALL 2004: - 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 as 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

**Format**

As this course is offered in the seminar format it is expected that meetings will include regular and lively focused discussions. The course instructor has the responsibility for setting the themes, making assignments and respecting the contributions of well prepared seminar participants in all discussions. The participants have the responsibility to come to meetings prepared and on time, actively participate in discussions, act respectfully towards all seminar participants and to submit all assignments on time. It should be understood that students who arrive at seminar meetings unprepared are by definition disrespectful to the seminar.

Because the seminar meets for 2 hours and 45 minutes there is plenty of time for discussion. The seminar has been developed to facilitate the showing of films and accommodating guest speakers. Each meeting will conclude with a summary discussion in which all participants are expected to become involved.

In general the seminar will meet at the regular time and place. However, participants are expected to make arrangements to participate in an off-campus meeting in October (exact date TBA) when the seminar will meet in the University’s Wolfsonian Museum on Miami Beach.

**Requirements**

- **Reflective papers: 20%**
  At intervals noted on the seminar calendar students will submit reflective papers of no more than 3 pages. These papers will consider the seminar experiences to date in relation to the general topic *the formation of the American character*.

- **Group project: 15%**
  Participants will join a reading group and, after reading the selected novel, collectively prepare a paper of no more than 8 pages relating the story to the theme of *the formation of the American character*. Additionally, the group will make a presentation of approximately 30 minutes in length to the seminar and entertain questions.

- **Take home mid-term examination: 25%**
  Students will respond to 2 of 3 questions on a take home examination. These questions will be drawn from the experiences of the seminar up to the point of the examination. Students will have one week to complete this task.

- **Final synthesis project: 30%**
  Each participant in the seminar will be expected to develop and present a project with synthesizes the seminar experience. Students electing to develop a paper will be limited to a 15 pages of text. Students electing to develop a non-traditional project should discuss their project with the instructor and establish guideline acceptable to both parties.

- **Participation: 10%**
A seminar is only as good as the participants make it. Students will be graded for the quality of their participation in seminar activities. It should be understood that quality is significantly more noteworthy than quantity.

Grading

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>90-94</td>
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<td>64-66</td>
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Guideline for all written work.

- All written work should be submitted electronically (detailed instructions will be distributed at the first meeting of the seminar)
- The subject should read as follows: Your Name then Honors Assignment (provide name and number. For example: Reflective Paper #1)
- Use standard 10 or 12 point type.
- It is expected that all written work will be proofread and corrected thoroughly.
- Students should follow a manual of style when preparing written work. Any standard style is acceptable.
- Names and student numbers as well as page numbers should appear on each page of a written assignment.
- All work should have a title page. (not counted in page limits)
- Students should keep a copy of all written work submitted
- Work received after deadlines may be marked down for lateness
- ALL STUDENT WORK IS TO BE ORIGINAL. PROPER REFERENCES ARE REQUIRED WHEN USING THE WORK OF OTHERS IN YOUR PAPERS. VIOLATORS OF THIS POLICY MAY BE AWARDED A GRADE OF “F” FOR THE COURSE.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


GROUP PROJECT BOOKS (only one required):


Electronic Readings go to  http://www.fiu.edu/~honors/links.html

The Founding of the Nation

Thomas Paine; Common Sense
Second Treatise on Government; Chapter 2 - Of the State of Nature
Benjamin Franklin On the Federal Constitution
George Washington's Farewell Address
Last Will and Testament by George Washington

The Negroes and the Nation ...

The Emancipation Proclamation
A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand- 1858
The Avalon Project; Second Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln
Industrial Education for the Negro by Booker T. Washington
The Case of the Negro
The Talented Tenth by W.E.B. DuBois
Susan B. Anthony; Women's Right to Vote

An Emerging Nation Responds to Immigration

The New Colossus
Ancestors in the Americas; The Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act
United States Immigration Policy; Bill of Rights in Action
Chinese Evolution Act, 1882

The Spirit of a Nation at War

Franklin Delano Roosevelt; The Four Freedoms

Unique American Art forms

Casey at the Bat
Isadora Duncan and The Dance
Louis H. Sullivan, Architect; The Father of American Architecture