SYLLABUS

Course Title: IDH 3006 Honors Seminar VI / IDH 4008 Honors Seminar VIII
section U05 - class no. 12259 / section U05 - class no. 18169

Semester: Spring 2009
Instructor: Stephen M. Fain
Office: Green Library 232B
Office Hours: Tuesday: 12 noon -1:00 pm by appointment
Wednesday 5:00 -6:00 pm by appointment
other times may also be arranged

All appointments should be made directly with Professor Fain

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Class Meetings: Wednesday 2-4:45 pm
Room: DM 223

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. This is evidenced by the popular radio talk shows and the news making panel shows that are now commonplace cable television.

During the fall semester the seminar read Common Sense, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and other materials; viewed several films; and visited the New Deal / Four Freedoms exhibit at the Wolfsonian FIU in an effort to better understand the evolution of the United States and its people. This semester we will focus on an analysis of more contemporary issues grounded in the foundations central to the academic work done in the Fall. The seminar will travel to Washington, D.C. for four days in February.

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

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1 This is a continuation of IDH 3005 and IDH 4007 Fall 2008
cause students to reflect on current issues and problems critically
- engender an appreciation of and for the fundamental principles unpinning the United States of America

Format

This course is offered as a seminar. 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, actively participate in discussions, act respectfully towards all seminar participants, and to complete all assignments on time. It should be understood that students who arrive at seminar meetings late and/or unprepared are by definition disrespectful to the entire seminar.

Because the seminar meets for 2 hours and 45 minutes there is plenty of time for discussion and the viewing of full length films.

Grading

95-100 = A  90-94 = A-
87- 89 = B+  84-86 = B  80-83 = B-
77- 79 = C+  74-76 = C  70-73 = C-
67- 69 = D+  64-66 = D  60-63 = D-
BELOW 60 = F

INCOMPLETE: The grade of IN (incomplete) will only be given when a student has successfully completed 2/3rds of all course work and has made contractual arrangements with the professor prior to the end of the semester.

Requirements

Class notes 15%
When indicated on the course calendar students will prepare a set of class notes not to exceed 2 pages in length that reflects that which she/he deems most significant in the assigned reading(s). The notes will end with two (2) questions demonstrating an understanding of the reading(s). Class notes are graded with an eye to insightfulness and the intellectual quality of each question. A minimum of four (4) sets of class notes must be submitted. If a student submits more than four (4) sets only for four (4) highest grades will be considered for grading.

Washington, DC Research Assignment 10%
Each student will be responsible for researching four (4) specific components of the seminar trip to Washington. The report should be written as an introduction to the specific component and not exceed 250 words.

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 two weeks to complete this task.

DC Reflections 20%
Students will develop a paper of no more than five pages reflecting on their experiences during the seminar trip to Washington, D.C. This paper should include at least three (3) connections linking the D.C. experience with fall class readings.

Final synthesis project: 20%
Each participant in the seminar will develop a response to the following question:

Our course has been developed around the theme of the American Character. After eight months of considering this idea respond the following challenge: Defend or refute the proposition that although the United States is a country of immigrants, contemporary America does have character that makes it unique among the nations.

Responses may not exceed ten (10) standard pages excluding front matter and reference pages attached.

Grading criteria:

- demonstration of an understanding of basic concepts upon which the paper is based
- accurate and effective blending of concepts to produce a new insight or understanding
- evidence of effort in the development of the project

University Citizenship: 10%
As students in the Honors College you are expected to be actively involved in seminars as well as being an active citizen in our University community. During the course of the semester each member of this seminar will provide evidence of participation in at least five (5) diverse University sanctioned activities.

Guideline for all written work

All papers and the mid-term examination will be submitted electronically. This work should be produced in accordance with the guidelines below.

- Work will be submitted no later than 2 pm on the date it is due. Work received after due dates and times will be marked down for lateness

- Work should be formatted as if on standard 81/2 x 11 paper, doubled spaced, with standard margins, and prepared using a standard 12 point font.
- All work done outside of the seminar will be proofread and corrected thoroughly.
- Students should follow a manual of style when preparing written. Any standard style is acceptable.
• Name and student number, as well as page numbers, should appear on the top of each page of all work.
• All work should have a title page. (not counted in page limits).
• Students should keep a copy of all written work submitted.
• 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.

Submission of written work

• All work should be sent electronically to fainhonors.08.09@gmail.com
• The subject line in the email address when submitting work should read as follows: Assignment title and date (e.g. Washington D.C., Research Assignment 28 January)

Policy on Academic Integrity

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


N.B. Other readings will be cited on the course calendar. Readings will either be provided as handouts or electronically.

RECOMMENDED READINGS FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN THOUGHTS ON THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICA AND AMERICAN IDEALS:


