

American Obsessions

A History of the Culture Wars in the United States

Dr. Benjamin Wise
Keene-Flint 208
University of Florida
MWF 12:50 to 1:40 (Flint 105)

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Office Hours:
Mon 2-3, Wed 10:30-11:30
& happily by app't

This course explores the history of the culture wars in the United States. Though it focuses specifically on Prohibition, Rock and Roll, Abortion, and Gay Rights, the course is more broadly about the relationship between morality, culture, and politics in American history. We will begin by studying several theoretical and methodological approaches to questions of cultural history, social change, and morality, and then we will move to specific case studies of Prohibition, Rock and Roll, Abortion, and Gay Rights. In doing so, we will both test the theories we read, but perhaps also develop our own, about several central questions:

- How do democratic, pluralist, societies decide what is "right" and what is "wrong" on a given issue, and how are these beliefs enacted in public policy?
- Is America a Christian nation? How has Christianity affected American culture and politics, and vice versa?
- How are questions of morality related to economics, political power, social class, patriotism, race, and gender?
- How and when do certain moral questions (i.e., "Is it right or wrong to drink alcohol?") become political issues (i.e., "How can American institutions regulate the drinking of alcohol?"), and how and when (in some cases) do they cease to be political issues?

The object of studying history is to learn about the past, but also to develop skills in analysis, critical thinking, interpretation of evidence, and expository writing. These skills are not merely useful for the historian but for all who are engaged in trying to understand the world and their place in it. Thus, in this course students will be expected to learn significant information about history, but will also be asked to read critically, discuss thoughtfully, and write persuasively.

Over the course of the semester, there will be 10 quizzes, 3 tests, and one 6-8 page essay for which a longer assignment prompt will be handed out. To be successful in the course, students must complete all readings and participate in class discussions. All readings are listed on the syllabus for the day they are to be discussed in class.

Required Texts

Stacy Braukman, *Communists and Perverts Under the Palms*

James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation*

Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas?*

Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up*

Readings on e-learning, online, or handed out in class

Grading:

Participation: 20% (10% based on 10 in-class quizzes; 10% based on class discussion)

Test One—20%

Test Two—20%

Test Three—20%

Final Essay—20%

Here's a general rubric for how I grade discussion participation:

- A range This student has not only done the reading but has actively engaged with its main themes, completed homework thoughtfully, and participated in class discussion in such a way that demonstrates a command of the material.
- B range This student has completed the readings and the homework but may have done so cursorily; speaks in class occasionally in a way that demonstrates satisfactory but not excellent engagement with the material.
- C range This student may or may not have done the reading, and the homework does not reflect active engagement with the themes of the text; student does not speak in class, or occasionally does but does not demonstrate engagement with the material.
- D range This student demonstrated all the characteristics of a C range student, but may also have been disruptive to class and/or exhibited behavioral issues that compromised a constructive learning environment.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory for this class. There are two prerequisites for being counted present: 1) no laptops, cell phones, or other electronic devices in the classroom; and 2) you must be on time. If I notice you texting in class, you will be marked absent.

You may have two unexcused absences for the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a 1/3 letter-grade reduction on your final participation grade. Six or more unexcused absences will result in failing grade for the class. I will not contact students during the semester to apprise them of their attendance status; it is the responsibility of the students to keep a record of their absences.

Late Work and Make-up Policy

Late homework and quizzes will not be accepted. If you know you must have an excused absence, contact me beforehand to make arrangements to turn in work before class. Late essays will be accepted, but will be penalized one-third letter grade per day late.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

UF Grade Point Policy

Letter Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E	WF	I	NG	S-U
Grade Points	4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	.67	0	0	0	0	0

Grading Scale

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	65-69
F	0-64

Academic Honesty

Be aware of the University's policy on plagiarism. The Internet has made this situation more problematic but understand that plagiarists will be caught. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask. All plagiarism offenses will be reported on a Faculty Adjudication Form and forwarded to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. You may get more information on UF's Judicial Affairs process at:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>

Semester Schedule

Unit One: Theories of Morality and Culture

Week One

W 1/7 CLASS: Course intro; Is America a Christian Nation?

F 1/9 CLASS: Primary Documents
READ: Tony Perkins to Benjamin Wise, Nov 30, 2012
Patrick J. Buchanan, "The Cultural War for the Soul of America"

Hon. William Dannemayer, "Christianity Under Attack by 'New
Bigotry'"

Week Two

- M 1/12 CLASS: Primary Documents
READ: Hiram Evans, "The Klan and Americanism"
Lyman Beecher, "A Reformation..." and "The Perils..."
Whip, "Sodomites"
- W 1/14 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics"
- F 1/16 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Samuel P. Huntington, "Who Are We?"

Week Three

- M 1/19 NO CLASS—MLK Day
- W 1/21 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Corey Robin, "Fear: The History of a Political Idea"
- F 1/23 CLASS: Primary Source Research

Week Four

- M 1/26 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Hunter, et al, "Culture Wars"
- W 1/28 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Becker, "Outsiders"
- F 1/30 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics"

Week Five

- M 2/2 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: *Hellfire Nation*, Introduction
- W 2/4 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion and Test Review
READ: *Hellfire Nation*, Part 1
- F 2/6 CLASS: TEST #1

Unit Two: Prohibition

Week Six

M 2/9 CLASS: Lecture

W 2/11 CLASS: Lecture

F 2/13 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Gusfield, "Symbolic Crusade"

Week Seven

M 2/16 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Norman Clark, "Deliver Us From Evil"

W 2/18 CLASS: Lecture
READ: Morone, Ch. 10 "Temperance: Crucible of Race and Class"

F 2/20 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Morone, Ch. 11 "Prohibition and the Rise of Big Government"

Unit Three: Rock 'n Roll

Week Eight

M 2/23 CLASS: Lecture

W 2/25 CLASS: Lecture

F 2/27 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Altschuler, Ch's 1 to 3

March 2-6 NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

Week Nine

M 3/9 CLASS: Lecture

W 3/11 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion and Test Review
READ: Altschuler, Ch's 4 to 6, Epilogue

F 3/13 CLASS: Test #2

Unit Four: Abortion

Week Ten

M 3/16 CLASS: Lecture

W 3/18 CLASS: Lecture

F 3/20 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Leslie Reagan, "When Abortion Was Illegal"

Week Eleven

M 3/23 CLASS: Primary and Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Munson, "The Making of Pro-Life Activists"
Ronald Reagan, "Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation"
Gary Leber, "We Must Rescue Them"

W 3/25 CLASS: Primary and Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
Newton, "The Irrelevance of Religion in the Abortion Debate"
Weddington, "The Woman's Right of Privacy"

Unit Five: Homosexuality

Week Eleven (con't)

F 3/27 CLASS: Lecture

Week Twelve

M 3/30 CLASS: Lecture

W 4/1 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Braukman, Introduction and Ch's 1 & 2

F 4/3 CLASS: Lecture

Week Thirteen

M 4/6 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ: Finish Braukman

Unit 6: Where are we now?

Week Thirteen (con't)

W 4/8 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
 READ: Morone, Ch. 15 "Modern Morals" and Epilogue

F 4/10 CLASS: Primary Sources
 READ: Lindsey, "A Farewell to Culture Wars"

Week Fourteen

M 4/13 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
 READ: Frank, ch's 1-4

W 4/15 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
 READ: Frank, Ch's 5-8

F 4/17 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
 READ: Frank, Ch's 9-12, Epilogue

Week Fifteen

M 4/20 CLASS: Putting it all together; test review

W 4/22 CLASS: Test #3

**FINAL ESSAY DUE AT NOON WED April 29th IN MY OFFICE 208 KEENE
FLINT HALL**