

## A History of the Culture Wars in the United States

**Dr. Benjamin Wise**  
**Keene-Flint 208**  
**University of Florida**  
**Tues 8:30 to 10:25 (Matherly 0004)**  
**Thurs 9:35 to 10:25**

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**Office Hours:**  
**Mon 4-5, Tues 10:30 to 12:30**  
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This course explores the history of the culture wars in the United States. Though it focuses specifically on Prohibition, Rock and Roll, 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 historical case studies of Prohibition, Rock and Roll, 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**

James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History*  
Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'n Roll Changed America*  
Readings on Canvas, 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 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 1/3 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 and artificial intelligence have made this situation more problematic but understand that turning in any work that is not wholly your own is an honor code violation. 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>

## Unit One: Theories of Morality and Culture

### Week One

Thurs 8/24 CLASS: Course introduction

### Week Two

Tues 8/29 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'"  
Hiram Evans, "The Klan and Americanism"  
Lyman Beecher, "A Reformation..." and "The Perils..."  
*Whip*, "Sodomites"

Thurs 8/31 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion  
READ: Corey Robin, "Fear: The History of a Political Idea"  
Becker, "Outsiders"

### **Week Three**

Tues 9/5 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion  
READ: Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics"  
Samuel P. Huntington, "Who Are We?"  
William Bennett: *America: The Last Best Hope*

Thurs 9/7 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion  
READ: Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics"

### **Week Four**

Tues 9/12 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion, Test Review  
Read: Morone, *Hellfire Nation*, Introduction

Thurs 9/14 CLASS: Test #1

## **Unit Two: Prohibition**

### **Week Five**

Tues 9/19 CLASS: History of Temperance & Prohibition

Thurs 9/21 CLASS: History of Temperance & Prohibition, con't  
READ: Morone, *Hellfire Nation*, Ch. 10

### **Week Six**

Tues 9/26 CLASS: History of Temperance & Prohibition, con't  
READ: Morone, *Hellfire Nation*, Ch. 11  
Norman Clark, "Deliver us from Evil"

Thurs 9/28 CLASS: Primary Source Hunt

## **Unit Three: Rock 'n Roll**

### **Week Seven**

Tues 10/3 CLASS: History of Jazz, Blues, and Rhythm & Blues  
READ: Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, Ch's 1 & 2

Thurs 10/5 CLASS: History of Rock n' Roll

READ: Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, Ch's 3 & 4

### **Week Eight**

Tues 10/10 CLASS: History of Rock n' Roll, con't  
READ: Finish Altschuler, *All Shook Up*

Thurs 10/12 CLASS: Test # 2

## **Unit Five: Homosexuality**

### **Week Nine**

Tues 10/17 CLASS: History of Gender & Sexuality, Part 1

Thurs 10/19 CLASS: History of Gender & Sexuality, Part 2

### **Week Ten**

Tues 10/24 CLASS: The Johns Committee  
READ: "Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida"  
Braukman, *Communists and Perverts Under the Palms*, Introduction

Thurs 10/26 CLASS: TBD

## **Unit Six: Where are we now?**

### **Week Eleven**

Tues 10/31 CLASS: The New Right  
READ: Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, Intro, Ch. 1, Epilogue

Thurs 11/2 CLASS: The New Right, con't  
READ: Robert Self, *All in the Family*, Introduction

### **Week Twelve**

Tues 11/7 CLASS: 1980—Present: A Conservative Era?  
READ: Morone, ch. 15  
Lindsey, "A Farewell to Culture Wars"

Thurs 11/9 CLASS: Test #3

### **Week Thirteen**

Tues 11/14 CLASS: Putting it all together; essay prep

Thurs 11/16 CLASS: History of Birth Control, Contraception, Abortion, Sex Education

### **Week Fourteen**

Tues 11/21 CLASS: History of Birth Control, Contraception, Abortion, Sex Education,  
Con't

### **Week Fifteen**

Tues 11/28 CLASS: Writing Workshop  
DUE: Essay draft

Thurs 11/30 NO CLASS—Individual Meetings

### **Week Sixteen**

Tues 12/5 CLASS: Last Day of Class  
DUE: Final Essays