

AMH 3931: History of the Culture Wars in the United States

Dr. Benjamin Wise
Keene-Flint 208
University of Florida
Tues 8:30 to 10:25 (Flint 111)
Thurs 9:35 to 10:25

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Office Hours:
Mon 3-5, Tues 10:30 to 11:30
& happily by app't

This course explores the history of the culture wars in the United States. Though it focuses specifically on culture wars surrounding Prohibition, Rock and Roll, Gay Rights, and Critical Race Theory, the course is more broadly about the historical 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. In doing so, we will test the theories we read, and 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.

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*
Robert Fieseler, *American Scare: Florida's Hidden Cold War on Black and Queer Lives*
Selected readings on Canvas, online, or handed out in class

Grading:

Over the course of the semester, there will be 10 pop 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.

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 class discussion:

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 unnecessary engagement with electronic devices in the classroom; and 2) you must be on time.

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 participation 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.

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

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.” On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [See the UF Conduct Code website for more information.](#) If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. [See the “Get Started With the DRC” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).

Teaching Statement

In this class we will be studying topics that are related to contemporary cultural conflict and political disagreement. Each person in the class—including the instructor—will doubtless have feelings, opinions, and beliefs on these topics. It is crucial that we commit to the utmost professionalism in our class discussions and remain focused on our purpose, which is to study history. In addition, students should know that their personal beliefs and opinions will have no bearing on their grades in the class; that they are not expected to share the beliefs or opinions of the instructor; and that this class welcomes viewpoint diversity, collegial debate, and intellectual disagreement.

As your instructor, I take as inspiration the following passage from the American Association of University Professor’s 1915 “Statement on Academic Freedom”:

“The university teacher, in giving instruction upon controversial matters, while he is under no obligation to hide his own opinion under a mountain of equivocal verbiage, should, if he is fit

for his position, be a person of a fair and judicial mind; he should, in dealing with such subjects, set forth justly, without suppression or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators; he should cause his students to become familiar with the best published expressions of the great historic types of doctrine upon the questions at issue; and he should, above all, remember that his business is not to provide his students with ready-made conclusions, but to train them to think for themselves, and to provide them access to those materials which they need if they are to think intelligently.”

Unit One: Theories of Morality and Culture

Week One

Thurs 8/21 CLASS: Course Introduction

Week Two

Tues 8/26 CLASS: Primary Documents
READ:

Kevin Roberts, “America Must Reclaim What the Left Has Attempted to Destroy,” (2023)

Tony Perkins to Benjamin Wise (Nov 30, 2012)

Patrick J. Buchanan, "The Cultural War for the Soul of America" (1992)

Hon. William Dannemayer, "Christianity Under Attack by 'New Bigotry'" (1990)

Hiram Evans, "The Klan and Americanism" (1926)

Whip, "Sodomites" (1842)

Lyman Beecher, "A Reformation..." and "The Perils..." (1812 and 1830)

Thurs 8/28 CLASS: Author Visit, Robert Fieseler
READ:

Florida Legislative Investigatory Committee, “Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida,” (1964)

Week Three

Tues 9/2 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ:

Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics"

Samuel P. Huntington, "Who Are We?"

Corey Robin, "Fear: The History of a Political Idea"

Thurs 9/4 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion
READ:

Ben-Yehuda, “Moral Panics”

Week Four

Tues 9/9 CLASS: Secondary Source Discussion, Test Review
Read:
Morone, *Hellfire Nation*, Introduction
Becker, “Outsiders”

Thurs 9/11 CLASS: Test #1

Unit Two: Prohibition

Week Five

Tues 9/16 CLASS: History of Temperance & Prohibition

Thurs 9/18 CLASS: History of Temperance & Prohibition, con’t
READ:
Morone, *Hellfire Nation*, Ch. 10

Week Six

Tues 9/23 CLASS: History of Temperance & Prohibition, con’t
READ:
Morone, *Hellfire Nation*, Ch. 11
Norman Clark, “Deliver us from Evil”

Thurs 9/25 CLASS: Library Visit—Microfilm

Unit Three: Rock 'n Roll

Week Seven

Tues 9/30 CLASS: History of Jazz, Blues, and Rhythm & Blues
READ:
Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, Ch’s 1 & 2
Wise, “Downfall Voyuerism”

Thurs 10/2 CLASS: History of Rock n’ Roll
READ:
Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, Ch’s 3 & 4

Week Eight

Tues 10/7 CLASS: History of Rock n' Roll
READ:
Finish Altschuler, *All Shook Up*

Thurs 10/9 CLASS: Test # 2

Unit Five: Homosexuality

Week Nine

Tues 10/14 CLASS: History of Gender & Sexuality, Part 1

Thurs 10/16 CLASS: History of Gender & Sexuality, Part 2
READ:
Fieseler, *American Scare*, Introduction and Part I

Week Ten

Tues 10/21 CLASS: The Johns Committee
READ:
Fieseler, *American Scare*, Parts 2 and 3

Thurs 10/23 CLASS: The Johns Committee
READ:
Fieseler, *American Scare*, Parts 4 and 5

Unit Six: Critical Race Theory

Week Eleven

Tues 10/28 CLASS: Critical Race Theory
READ:
Linda Alcoff, "Critical Philosophy of Race," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2021

Thurs 10/30 CLASS: Critical Race Theory
READ:

Christopher Rufo, "Critical Race Theory: What it is and How to Fight it," *Imprimis* (March 2021)
Heritage Foundation, "Reject Critical Race Theory"

Week Twelve

Tues 11/4 CLASS: Critical Race Theory
READ:
Robin D.G. Kelley, "The Long War on Black Studies," *New York Review of Books*, June 17, 2023
Benjamin Wallace-Wells, "How a Conservative Activist Invented the Conflict Over Critical Race Theory," *The New Yorker*, June 18, 2021

Thurs 11/6 CLASS: Test #3

Unit Seven: Final Essay

Week Thirteen

Tues 11/11 NO CLASS: Veterans Day

Thurs 11/13 CLASS: Final Essay Assignment and Discussion

Week Fourteen

Tues 11/18 CLASS: Writing Workshop

Thurs 11/20 NO CLASS: Individual Meetings

Week Fifteen NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

Week Sixteen

Tues 12/2 CLASS: Last Day of Class & Wrap Up

DUE: Final Essay