American Intellectual History

History 2340: Readings in American Thought

This course will acquaint graduate students with selected primary sources and a range of classic and recent secondary works dealing with American intellectual history. Students will be expected to contribute actively to discussions in each meeting and to prepare two essays, the first 5-8 pages and the second, a more detailed analysis of a particular thinker or problem or an in-depth research paper, 15-25 pages. You should discuss the topics of both essays with me. The first essay must be completed before March 12, but you are encouraged to complete it earlier. The final paper is due May 14. Readings preceded by an asterisk will be available on reserve. Most of the journal articles should be available on the internet.

1. 1-25: Introductory meeting: What is intellectual history?

2. 2-1: Methods and Controversies in the Writing of History and Intellectual History


3. 2-8: Puritanism


4. 2-22: Revolution

Selections by Franklin, John Adams, Paine, and Jefferson in AIT, pp. 95-134.


*David Armitage, "The Declaration of Independence and International Law," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, 58 (Fall, 2001).

5. 3-1: Founding the Republic


6. 3-8: Understanding American Democracy


7. 3-22: Antebellum American Thought


8. 3-29: The Civil War and the Victorian Connection


9. 4-5: Progressivism and Pragmatism


*William James, "Robert Gould Shaw: An Oration" (1897) and "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" (1897)


10. 4-12: The Rise of the Social Sciences


11. 4-19: Political and Cultural Criticism in Atlantic Perspective

Selections from Greenberg, Chambers, Arendt, Bell, Friedman, and Kuhn, in *AIT*, pp. 247-259, 329-352, 361-367, 390-413.


12. 4-26: Gender, Race, and Multi-Culturalism


Recommended reading keyed to the topics in History 2340:

Miscellaneous general studies in American intellectual history:


Methods and Controversies:


Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, Telling the Truth about History (New York: Norton, 1994).


On American Studies and its particular methods:


**Puritans and Seventeenth-Century America:**


J. E. Crowley, This Sheba, Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).


**Revolution and Republic:**


**Antebellum Thought, the Civil War, & the Victorian Connection:**


Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

**Pragmatism, Progressivism, and Social Science:**


**Cultural Criticism in Comparative Perspective, and Gender, Race, Multi-culturalism:**


Werner Sollors, Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).


Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell, and Nancy Fraser, Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange (New York: Routledge, 1995).


David A. Hollinger, ed., The Humanities and the Dynamics of Inclusion since World War II (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).