

AMS 355 (31190), HIS 355N (39285)
Main Currents of American Culture to 1865

Fall 2018

instructor: Jeff Meikle (meikle@mail.utexas.edu; 512-232-2166)
class: Tues/Thurs 11:00-12:30, BUR 220
office hours: Tues 12:30-1:30; Wed 12:00-1:00; or by appt., BUR 424

This lecture-discussion course traces U.S. cultural history from the time of the Puritan migration of 1630 through the end of the Civil War in 1865. The basic premise of the course is that cultural history can best be understood by examining common themes that, at any given historical moment, cut across many fields of human activity—such as work, domestic life, politics, religion, philosophy, science, literature, art, architecture, and popular culture. The course will explore such ongoing questions as the attempt to define a “new, young America” against an “old, decaying Europe”; the struggle to define individual identities and rights against the force of a cohesive, organic community; the significance of the frontier, of slavery, and of race to the development of American society; the impact of evangelical Protestantism; the concept of an American “mission”; and the rise of regionalism and pluralism in opposition to the mainstream. The course will cultivate a sense of historical empathy as a means of understanding early Americans whose intentions and activities were utterly unlike ours but will also suggest ways in which we have inherited aspects of their social issues and cultural concerns.

The format of the course consists of lectures (with questions and discussion encouraged) and several designated discussion periods. Exams require knowledge of lectures and required readings. Students are expected to integrate material from all sources. Prior knowledge of basic U.S. history is recommended.

Required written work consists of two in-class exams (the first counts 20% of the course grade, the second 35%) and a cumulative final exam (45%). Exams contain essay questions and short identifications. Final grades are reported with pluses and minuses. No make-up exams are permitted except in cases of documented personal emergency.

Attendance will be taken by means of a daily sign-in sheet. It is your responsibility to sign in *before* you leave the classroom each day. A student who misses no more than two classes will have the earned final course grade increased by one degree (for example, C+ to B-). A student who misses four or more classes will have the earned final course grade decreased by one degree (for example, B- to C+). Excused absences are granted only for documented personal emergency or by prior approval for educational conferences, organized athletic competition, religious holidays, or similar reasons.

Use of phones, whether for calls, texting, or Internet access, is prohibited. Use of laptops and tablets for Internet access is distracting to other students and is prohibited. Anyone violating this policy will be asked to turn off the device, and at the second offense to leave class that day.

If you intend to miss a class or exam in order to observe a religious holiday, please notify me at least a week in advance and you will be given an opportunity to complete missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

You are expected to abide by the University Code of Conduct and the Student Honor Code, both stated here:

“The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.”

“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

If you are uncertain as to what constitutes cheating, see the official ten-point definition at <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>. Cheating will not be tolerated and will result in course failure.

The University provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 or <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/how-to-register-with-ssd/>. If you know you will be requesting an accommodation, submit a letter from SSD during the first two weeks of the semester. If you plan to register, please try to do so during the first two weeks of the semester.

Please attend to the following statement from the Office of Campus Safety and Security regarding emergencies: “Occupants of buildings on the UT campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.”

REQUIRED TEXTS

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*
 Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
 Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*
 Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias*
 Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul*
 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

SCHEDULE

Readings should be completed BEFORE the class meeting for which they are listed.
Dedicated discussion periods are indicated.

Aug. 30	Organization
Sept. 4	Looking at American Culture
Sept. 6	The Puritan Mind
Sept. 11	God's Controversy with New England
Sept. 13	Witchcraft and Social Change discuss: Boyer and Nissenbaum, <i>Salem Possessed</i>
Sept. 18	Virginia Planters and Slaves
Sept. 20	The Quaker Experiment in Pennsylvania
Sept. 25	The Enlightenment in America
Sept. 27	The Great Awakening
Oct. 2	Benjamin Franklin: Prototypical American discuss: Franklin, <i>The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin</i>
Oct. 4	EXAM
Oct. 9	The Ideology of the Revolution
Oct. 11	Jefferson, Hamilton, and the American Enlightenment
Oct. 16	Charles Willson Peale: Popularizing the Enlightenment
Oct. 18	Martha Ballard and Early American Labor discuss: Ulrich, <i>A Midwife's Tale</i>
Oct. 23	Jacksonian America
Oct. 25	The Second Great Awakening
Oct. 30	Visionary Religion discuss: Johnson and Wilentz, <i>The Kingdom of Matthias</i>

Nov. 1	Romanticism and the American Landscape
Nov. 6	Women's Rights and Roles
Nov. 8	Spiritualism and Reform read: Johnson, <i>Soul by Soul</i> , 1-77
Nov. 13	EXAM
Nov. 15	The Whig Party and National Development read: Johnson, <i>Soul by Soul</i> , 78-161
Nov. 20	The South: America's Minority read: Johnson, <i>Soul by Soul</i> , 162-220
Nov. 22	no class: Thanksgiving
Nov. 27	The Slave Trade discuss: Johnson, <i>Soul by Soul</i>
Nov. 29	An American Epic discuss: Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , chapters 1-21
Dec. 4	The Sentimental Critique of Slavery discuss: Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , chapters 22-45
Dec. 5	Brave New World: Implications of the Civil War
Dec. 15	FINAL EXAM: Saturday, 7-10 PM