

LIBERAL AMERICA, 1929-1973

History 166
MWF 11.50-12.40
Wegmans 1009
Fall 2017



Robert Westbrook
RR 440/X59349
Office Hrs: WF 9-10
robert.westbrook@
rochester.edu

The problems of our time—which now include the problem of man's very nature—cannot be stated adequately without consistent practice of the view that history is the shank of social study.

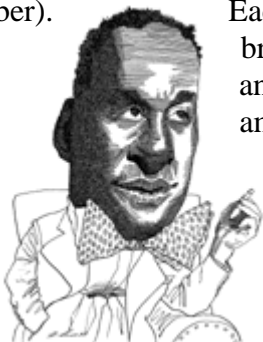
-C Wright Mills (1959)

This course is an examination of the development of American politics, society, and culture between the onset of the Great Depression and the Watergate scandal. It focuses on the creation and consolidation of the "New Deal order"—a liberal political economy centered on a constrained corporate capitalism, a modest welfare state, and a national security apparatus designed to wage the Cold War and extend American power abroad.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Meetings: Students are expected to attend every class, having done the reading for each session, and to participate actively in discussions of that reading. Each student will also submit a brief commentary on one of the documents assigned each week. These commentaries are required but will not be graded.

Examinations: Two in-class, hour examinations (20 October and 20 November) and a final examination (18 December).



Each hour examination will consist of some brief identification/short answer questions and an essay to be prepared prior to the examination. The essay will consider either one of the following books or documentary films. Exam 1: Robert McElvaine, ed., Down and Out in the Great Depression, Richard Wright, Black Boy, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Farewell to Manzanar, The Dust Bowl, Huey Long, or America and the Holocaust. Exam 2: Lillian Hellman, Scoundrel Time, James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time, Michael Herr, Dispatches, The Atomic Cafe, Primary, or The Fog of War.



Over the course of the two exams, each student must write one examination essay on a book and one on a film. Questions for all these essays will be made available well before the examination dates. The final will consist of identification/short answer questions and an essay on a novel to be prepared prior to the examination (see "The Novel as History").

The Novel as History: Students will choose one of four selected novels and write a paper (2000 words or so) describing and assessing the view of the recent American past it offers. These novels are: Sinclair Lewis, It Can't Happen Here (1935); Joseph Heller, Catch-22 (1961); Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (1955); or Thomas Mallon, Watergate (2012). This paper is due at the final examination on 18 December. Further details on this assignment will be forthcoming, but students should choose and begin reading their novel posthaste.



GRADING

The course grade will be determined as follows: Each hour examination—25%; final examination—30%; class participation—20%.



ACADEMIC HONESTY

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at:

www.rochester.edu/college/honesty.

BOOKS

Two books are required: David Kennedy, Freedom from Fear; and James Patterson, Great Expectations. They are available at the University Bookstore and on reserve in Rush Rhees Library. The short documents and other brief readings for class discussion (*) are available on Blackboard via the syllabus posted there. I have also streamed on-line some recorded speeches (■) as documents.

I have not ordered copies of the books for exam essays. They are readily available from on-line booksellers such as Amazon.com, often at considerable discounts. A copy is also on reserve in Rush Rhees Library. The documentary films for the course are on reserve in the Art Library, and also available on-line for DVD purchase or streaming. For some class meetings, I have also streamed on-line some relevant popular songs (♪). You are not required to listen to these, but I highly recommend that you do.

COURSE MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

30 AUGUST ON RECENT AMERICAN HISTORY

Nikal Saval, "Off Center"*

HARD TIMES

No one is actually starving. The hoboes, for example, are better fed than they have ever been.
-Herbert Hoover (1931).

1 SEPTEMBER BOOM AND BUST

David Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, pp. 10-69.

♪Rudy Vallee, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime" (1932)

4 SEPTEMBER LABOR DAY. NO CLASS.



6 SEPTEMBER HERBERT HOOVER AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, pp. 70-103.

♪Ted Lewis and His Band, "Headin' for Better Times" (1931).



8 SEPTEMBER THE AGONY OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 160-177, 190-196.

♪Victoria Spivey and the Chicago Four, "Detroit Moan" (1936).

11 SEPTEMBER NEW DEAL

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 103-159, 197-217.
Documents: Franklin Roosevelt, "Commonwealth Club Speech" (1932) and "First Inaugural Address" (1933) (or
■Franklin Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address")*

♪Bill Cox, "NRA Blues" (1933).



13 SEPTEMBER RADICAL VISIONS

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 218-247.

♪Randy Newman, "Everyman a King" and "Kingfish" (1974).

15 SEPTEMBER AMERICAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

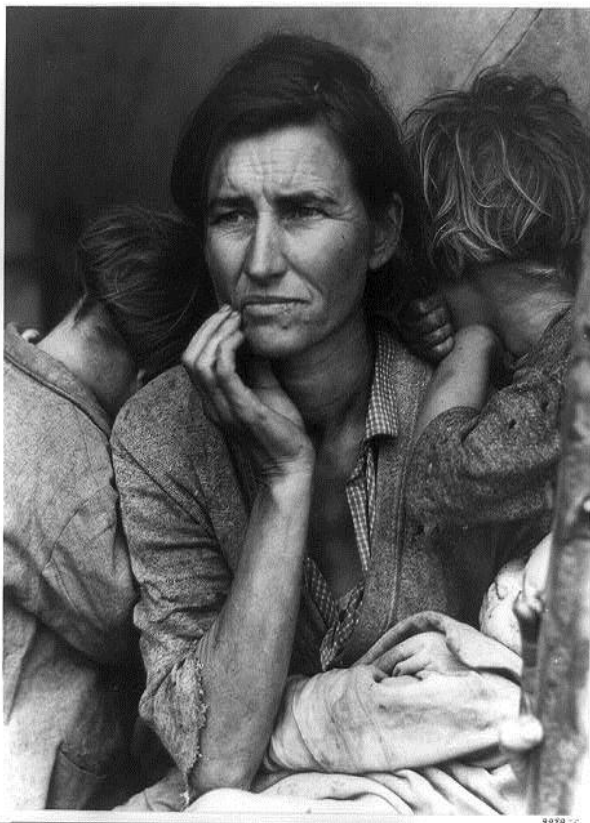
Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, pp. 249-287.

18 SEPTEMBER THE RISE OF THE CIO

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 288-322.
Documents: "Social Security Acts" (1935); "National Labor Relations Act" (1935)*

**20 SEPTEMBER THE WANING OF THE NEW DEAL**

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 323-362.

**22 SEPTEMBER ASSESSING THE NEW DEAL**

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 363-380.
Barton J. Bernstein, "The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform"*
Robert Westbrook, "Tragic Deal"*

25 SEPTEMBER DEPRESSION CULTURE

Lawrence Levine, "American Culture and the Great Depression"*
Warren Susman, "The Culture of the Thirties"*
Document: Dorothea Lange, "Migrant Mother"
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/-fsa/item/fsa1998021539/PP/>).

♪Woody Guthrie, "This Land Is Your Land" (1940); Aaron Copland, "Fanfare for the Common Man" (1942).

THE "GOOD WAR"

No man can honestly say that as a pure matter of defense--defense of our homeland--it is necessary to get into or be in this war. . . . The question before us then is not primarily one of necessity and survival. It is a question of choice and calculation. The true questions are: Do we want to be in this war? Do we prefer to be in it? And, if so, for what?

-Henry Luce, "The American Century" (1941).

27 SEPTEMBER DISTANT SHORES

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 381-464.

29 SEPTEMBER QUASI-WAR

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 465-515.

Document: Henry Luce, "The American Century" (1941)*



2 OCTOBER THE PACIFIC FRONT

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 516-564, 609-610, 809-835.

Document: ■Franklin Roosevelt, "Declaration of War Against Japan" (1941).

6 OCTOBER GRAND ALLIANCE

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 572-591, 611-614, 669-708, 798-809.

Document: "The Atlantic Charter" (1941)*

9 OCTOBER NO CLASS. FALL BREAK.

11 OCTOBER THE ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 615-655.

13 OCTOBER THE EUROPEAN FRONT

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 565-572, 591-609, 709-745.

16 OCTOBER THE BOMB

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 655-668, 835-858.

Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-WnLNLe3sk>



18 OCTOBER THE HOME FRONT

Kennedy, Freedom from Fear, 746-797.

Robert Westbrook, "Fighting for the American Family"*

20 OCTOBER HOUR EXAMINATION**POSTWAR LIBERALISM**

What is at stake in our economic decisions today is not some grand warfare of rival ideologies which will sweep the country with passion but the practical management of a modern economy. What we need is not labels and clichés but more basic discussion of the sophisticated and technical questions involved in keeping a great economic machinery moving ahead.

-John F. Kennedy (1962).

**23 OCTOBER AFFLUENT SOCIETY**

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 10-38, 61-81, 311-326.

Document: "Levittown Homeowner's Guide"

25 OCTOBER FAIR DEAL

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 39-60, 137-164.

Document: ■Harry S. Truman, "Inaugural Address" (1949).

27 OCTOBER MODERN REPUBLICANISM

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 243-260, 270-275.

**30 OCTOBER LONELY CROWD**

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 343-374.

Document: David Riesman, "The Other-Directed Round of Life" (1950)*

1 NOVEMBER NEW FRONTIER AND GREAT SOCIETY

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 433-441, 458-468, 517-542, 557-579.

Document: ■John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address" (1961).

EMPIRE AS A WAY OF LIFE

The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this nation.

-Harry Truman (1947).

3 NOVEMBER COLD WAR

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 82-136.

Document: George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" (1947)*

6 NOVEMBER REDS

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 165-205, 261-270.

Document: ■ Joseph McCarthy, "Address to the Chicago Irish Fellowship Club" (1954).

8 NOVEMBER KOREA

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 206-242.

10 NOVEMBER BRINKMANSHIP

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 276-291, 299-310, 416-428, 486-509.

Document: Dwight Eisenhower, "Farewell Address" (1961) or ■ Dwight Eisenhower, "Farewell Address")*

13 NOVEMBER VIETNAM

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 291-299, 428-430, 509-517.

17 NOVEMBER QUAGMIRE

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 593-619, 629-636, 678-685, 749-758, 763-770.

Documents: J. William Fulbright, The Arrogance of Power (excerpt)*

■ Lyndon B. Johnson, "Address to the Nation" (1968); Spiro Agnew, "Address on Vietnam War Protests" (1970); Richard Nixon, "End of the Vietnam War" (1973).

20 NOVEMBER HOUR EXAMINATION



22 NOVEMBER**THANKSGIVING. NO CLASS.****THE DEMOCRATIC DISTEMPER**

This chrome-plated consumers' paradise would have us grow up to be well-behaved children. But an important minority of men and women coming to the front today have shown that they will die rather than be standardized, replaceable, and irrelevant.

-Mario Savio (1964).

**27 NOVEMBER****AMERICAN DILEMMA**

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 375-406, 410-416.

29 NOVEMBER**FREEDOM STRUGGLE**

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 430-433, 468-485, 542-557, 579-592.

Documents: ■Lyndon B. Johnson, "On Signing of the Civil Rights Bill" (1964); Robert F. Kennedy, "Presidential Campaign Address" (1968).

♪Aretha Franklin, "Respect" (1967) and "A Change is Gonna Come" (1967); Bruce Springsteen, "We Shall Overcome" (1998).

1 DECEMBER**BLACK POWER**

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 652-668.

Documents: "Malcolm X on Black Separatism" (1962); Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, "Black Power: Its Need and Substance" (1967)*

■Malcolm X, "On Black Power" (1964).

♪Marvin Gaye, "What's Going On" (1971).

4 DECEMBER**REVOLT AND BACKLASH**

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 442-457, 620-629, 637-642, 648-652, 685-709, 716-717.

♪Bob Dylan, "Masters of War" (1963) and "With God on Our Side" (1964); John Lennon, "Give Peace a Chance" (1969).

6 DECEMBER**COUNTERCULTURE**

Marshall Berman, "Sympathy for the Devil"*



♪Beatles, "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" (1967); Jefferson Airplane, "White Rabbit" (1967); Rolling Stones, "Sympathy for the Devil" (1968).



8 DECEMBER **SISTERHOOD**

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 643-648, 714-716.
Documents: "NOW Bill of Rights" (1967); "SCUM Manifesto" (1968); "Redstockings Manifesto" (1970)*

11 DECEMBER **NIXONLAND**

James Patterson, Grand Expectations,
718-749, 758-765.

13 DECEMBER **WATERGATE**
AND WATERSHED

James Patterson, Grand Expectations, 771-790.

18 DECEMBER **FINAL EXAMINATION**

