This course offers an introductory exploration of the origins and evolution of American democracy and the "republican experiment." The course focuses on major conflicts and themes from the sixteenth century to the present as they affected the pluralistic variety of ethnic, racial and religious groups that ultimately produced something we call "Americans" today.

American civic culture cherishes both liberty and equality, individual freedom and social justice. These impulses, frequently in conflict with each other, pervade political, economic, and social life in the United States. This course provides an introduction to the history of these tensions as they shaped the American polity. Since much of this history remains unknown, forgotten, or shrouded in mythology, the course provides a framework to understand and critique American democracy. Many of the revolutionary generation believed the study of history was a prerequisite to citizenship, for a civilization with little knowledge of its past has little chance of comprehending its own identity. Consequently, this course attempts to answer fundamental questions regarding the United States. Is there an American culture? How are racial, ethnic and other identities formed? How have they changed over time? What were and are the standards for citizenship? Has citizenship and freedom been equally available to all Americans? Has the meaning of "freedom" changed over time? These questions are not only "political" because they ultimately raise very personal and ethical questions about ourselves: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? How do I lead a good and honest life? How did Americans in the past answer these questions?

This is a writing intensive course. The course requirements and their percentage of the final grade are: 1) three 5-6 page analytical essays on any of the required readings (25% each), and 2) participation and class discussion (25%). Each essay
should summarize the main thesis or hypothesis of the author in one page and then critique or analyze the text in the remaining four to five pages. Students should ask questions similar to those found in the critical reading section below. Assume that I have read the text; I am interested in learning what you think and how you defend your thinking and criticism. Most importantly, the critical review is NOT a book report, so students should avoid a simple summary of a text.

For each essay assignment, students may write on any of the required readings, but the essay must be completed and turned in by the day of the class discussion on that reading. In the volumes edited by Weber, Ellis and Etulain, students are encouraged to analyze only one of the historians excerpted. Students who complete the essay on time have the option to rewrite the paper upon its evaluation (remember - the only good writing is good rewriting). Students have three weeks to rewrite the essay. Those who elect to rewrite the essay should also include the corrected first draft.

A primary responsibility of students is to complete the weekly reading before the date of the scheduled class and contribute their thoughtful, reflective opinions in class discussion. Students should allocate enough time to complete the required reading, approximately 90 pages per week. The readings can be interpreted in a variety of ways and students should formulate some initial positions and questions to offer in the class discussion. For every article or book, students should be prepared to answer all of the questions found in the "Critical Reading" section of the syllabus below. All required readings may be purchased at Barnes and Noble Bookstore in the Granada Center on Sheridan Road.

Students who are disabled or impaired should meet with the professor within the first two weeks of the semester to discuss the need for any special arrangements.

The required readings include the following:

Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845); and Harriet Jacobs (Linda Brent), Incidents in the

Henry David Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience" (1849), any edition.


William Riordan, Plunkitt of Tammany Hall, introduction by Terrence McDonald (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1992), orig. 1905.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Why We Can't Wait (New York: Mentor, 1963).


Students who attend class will receive lecture notes via GroupWise electronic mail at the end of every class. The notes serve as the "textbook" for class and eliminate the need to engage in frantic note-taking. Students can more carefully listen and contemplate the arguments and ideas discussed in each lecture. Students are encouraged to take some notes during class, especially if note-taking helps them to remain active and alert. Upon accessing the notes, students should transfer the notes to a disk and print a "hard" copy. To receive the notes, students must attend the class. No attendance, no notes.

CLASS MEETING DATES AND ASSIGNMENTS

25, 27, 29 Aug.: Indians, Puritans, Quakers and Cavaliers: Civilization or Invasion?


5 & 8 Sept.: The American Revolution and Creation of the Republic

10 Sept.: Discussion of Ellis, What Did the Declaration Declare?

11 Sept.: Midnight Bike Ride
12 Sept.: NO CLASS if Midnight Bike Ride takes place on 11 Sept.

15 & 17 Sept.: Slavery

19 Sept.: What Was Jacksonian Democracy?

22 Sept.: The Rise of an Immigrant Nation

24 Sept.: Discussion of Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience"

26 & 29 Sept.: Slavery and the Rise of the American South

1 Oct.: Discussion of Douglas, Narrative

3 Oct.: Abolition and Reform

6 Oct.: Field trip to Chicago Historical Society. Meet in lobby of C.H.S., 1601 N. Clark Street.

8 Oct.: Discussion of Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Reminder: all History Majors should see their academic advisor before registering for Spring Semester classes.

10, 13, 15 Oct.: The Civil War

17 Oct.: Reconstruction

20 Oct.: Discussion of Etulain, Frontier Experience, pp. 1-104.

22 & 24 Oct.: Immigration and the Creation of an Urban Society

27 Oct.: Discussion of Plunkitt of Tammany Hall

29 Oct.: Populism

31 Oct.: The Birth of Feminism

3 & 5 Nov.: SEMESTER BREAK - NO CLASS

7 Nov.: The New Consumer Society

10 Nov.: The Depression and the New Deal
12 & 14 Nov.: Civil Rights and Racial Change
17 Nov.: Discussion of King, Jr., Why We Can't Wait
19 Nov.: Making a Great Society
24 Nov.: The Rise of a Consumer State
26 Nov. The Newest Immigrants
28 Nov.: THANKSGIVING VACATION
1 Dec.: What is American Pluralism?

All rewritten essays due.

DISCUSSIONS AND CRITICAL READING

Discussion and class participation are very important parts of your grade (25 percent). Incisive, imaginative and thoughtful comments that generate and facilitate discussion are weighed heavily in final grades. Asking questions, responding to student questions and contributing to an ongoing discussion are a necessary part of the learning experience. Failure to speak in class will only lower a student's final grade. Discussions are scheduled for 9 class periods, each worth 3 "points." Students will receive 1 point for attendance, 2 points for minimal participation, and 3 or more points for active participation. Students who raise questions that generate discussion in other classes will earn extra points.

The best ways to prepare for and contribute to class discussion are: 1) complete the reading on time, and 2) critically analyze the reading. The primary goal of critical reading is to find the author's interpretation and what evidence and influences led to that conclusion. Never assume a "passive" position when reading a text. If students ask and attempt to answer the following questions, they will more fully comprehend and understand any reading.

1. What is the thesis of the author?
2. Does the author have a particular stated or unstated point of view? How does the author construct their argument? Are the author's goals, viewpoints, or agendas revealed in the introduction or preface? Does the author provide evidence to support the argument? Is it the right evidence? In the final analysis, do you think the author proves the argument or does the author rely on preconceived views or personal ideology? Why do you think that?

3. Does the author have a moral or political posture? Is it made explicit or implicit in the way the story is told? What is the author's view of human nature? Does change come from human agency and "free will" or broad socio-economic forces?

4. What assumptions does the author hold about society? Does the author see society as hierarchical, pluralistic, democratic or elitist? Does the author present convincing evidence to support this view?

5. How is the narrative constructed or organized? Does the author present the story from the viewpoint of a certain character or group? Why does the author begin and end at certain points? Is the story one of progress or decline? Why does the author write this way?

6. What issues and events does the author ignore? Why? Can you think of alternative interpretations or stories that might present a different interpretation? Why does the author ignore certain events or facts?

**STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism will result in a final grade of F for the course as well a letter, detailing the event, to be placed in the offending student’s permanent file in the Dean’s office. The definition of plagiarism is:

You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else’s words or ideas but fail to credit that person. You plagiarize even when you do credit the author but use his [or her] exact words without so indicating with quotation marks or block indentation. You also plagiarize when you use words so close to those in your source, that if your work were placed next to the source, it would be obvious that you could
not have written what you did with the sources at your elbow.

To avoid plagiarism, take notes carefully, putting all real quotes within quotation marks, while summarizing other parts in your own language. This is difficult; if you do not do it correctly, it is better to have all your notes in quotes. The worst thing is to alter a few words from the source, use no quotation marks, and treat the notes as a genuine summary. You will likely copy it out as written on your notecard, and thus inadvertently commit plagiarism. Changing around a word, a phrase, or a clause is still plagiarism if it follows the thought sequence or pattern in the original. On the other had, do not avoid plagiarism by making your paper a string of quotations. This results in poor writing, although it is not criminal.

In any case, do not let this prevent you from quoting your primary sources. As they are the “evidence’ on which you build your argument, you will need to quote them at necessary points. Just be sure to put quotation marks around them, or double indent them as in the example above, and follow the quote with a proper foot or endnote. The university has developed a helpful website that you may find useful in preparing your syllabi or in discussing these issues with your class. See:
http://www.luc.edu/is/cease/ai.shtml