

History 177  
Spring 2014  
TTh 2:45-4:00, Hum. 105

Professor Liss  
Hum. 214, x73541  
OH: Tues. 4:15-5:30; Wed. 11-12

### Fords, Flappers & Fundamentalists: The U.S. in the 1920s

This course will explore the tumultuous period between the Great War and the Great Depression when the United States emerged as a modern society. Although World War I did not, in and of itself, transform the U.S., it did crystallize social and cultural changes that had been on-going for a generation. Many observers have argued that the 20<sup>th</sup> century really began in 1914 or 1919. One objective of this course is to complicate students' understanding of this period known as "the Jazz Age" or "the Roaring Twenties." The course will be divided into two sections: the shape of modernity and the struggle over modernity: race, nation and community. Among the questions we will consider will be: What were the relationships among capitalism, consumerism, leisure and pleasure? How were personal autonomy and the experience and structure of community affected by the organization and bureaucratization of power? How was the ethic of individualism affected by the constraints of a modern, corporate order? How did political and religious fundamentalisms respond to and interact with the expansion of urban society and ethnic and racial pluralism? As these questions suggest, the triumphs, celebrations, divisions and reactionary impulses that accompanied these changes set the patterns for the emergence of our own time. Course materials will include historical monographs and primary sources such as novels, films, and writings by participants in and observers of the events of the 1920s.

The following are available at Huntley Bookstore and on two-hour reserve at Honnold Library:

Kevin Boyle, The Arc of Justice  
Edward Larson, Summer for the Gods  
Michael Lerner, Dry Manhattan  
Nancy MacLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry  
Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt  
Anzia Yezierska, Bread Givers

Other readings (marked with an asterisk\*) are available in the Resources folder on Sakai.  
Two films will be screened outside of class: "The Jazz Singer" and "It"

Course learning objectives:

- To become acquainted with the cultural and social dynamics and conflicts of the decade of the 1920s in the U.S.
- To understand and critique historical arguments (class participation, written work)
- To understand and interpret primary sources (class participation, written work, document analysis)
- To articulate historical arguments in a group discussion (class participation and Sakai postings)
- To develop clear, analytical writing—about an issue raised in several readings in the course (paper #1), by evaluating a scholarly work (paper #2), and by using primary and secondary sources in an independent essay (paper #3).
- To develop historical research skills (paper #3)

Course requirements and grading policy are on the next page.

**Course requirements and grades:**

Participation, incl. attendance and in-class writing:	20%
Sakai postings	10%
Document analysis (due date varies; instructions below)	10%
Paper #1 (due Friday, March 14):	15%
Paper #2 (due date varies; instructions below):	15%
Paper #3 (due May 12; graduating seniors May 8):	30%

Students must complete all assignments in order to pass this course.

Participation: The course will be run as a seminar. This means that each class will consist of a discussion of the readings. Students are expected to come to class having completed the assignment for the day as indicated on the syllabus and prepared to participate in the discussion. In order to help us achieve these goals, there will be periodic (unannounced) in-class writing assignments; laptops and other electronic devices are also not permitted, except in the case of individual academic accommodations (in which case, please speak to me). Students should bring assigned readings to class, including Sakai materials that will need to be printed out.

Sakai postings: Every student is required to post questions, comments, or responses to the readings by 9 a.m. of each class meeting in the appropriate discussion thread in the forums tool on Sakai. These postings should be both informal and interesting: the purpose is to provide members of the class a space to share views and queries and to help focus our discussion by engaging the reading and articulating an issue that you want to pursue.

Document analysis: A 2-page analysis of one of the written primary documents (not a film or novel), due no later than 4 p.m. of the Friday of the assignment (weeks 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14). Late papers will not be accepted.

Paper #1: A 5-page essay based on readings for weeks 1-8, due by 4 p.m. on Friday, March 14. Late papers will be penalized.

Paper #2: A 5-page critical analysis of a secondary source, due as follows (choose one). Late papers will be penalized.

Lerner: due February 7 by 4 p.m.

MacLean: due April 11 by 4 p.m.

Larson: due April 18 by 4 p.m.

Paper #3: A 10-page research paper on a topic of the student's choice. Papers require additional research, must include primary source(s) and must use course material. History majors completing this assignment for the research paper requirement should let me know. Paper proposals are due Friday, April 4 by noon. Final papers are due May 12 by noon; graduating seniors' papers are due by noon on May 8. Late papers will not be accepted.

Expectations regarding academic honesty: It should go without saying that students are expected to adhere to the norms and rules regarding academic honesty. This means that all work must be your own, fully cited according to the standards of academic scholarship and produced for this class. Academic dishonesty is grounds for failure on the assignment and/or the course.

### **Weeks I-III: Introduction: The End of American Innocence and the Myth of the 1920s**

- Jan. 21:** Introduction to the course: 1919
- Jan. 23:** \*W.E.B. Du Bois, "Returning Soldiers" (1919)  
\*Warren G. Harding, Inaugural Address (1921)  
\*F. Scott Fitzgerald, "May Day" (1922)  
\* Ernest Hemingway, "Soldier's Home" (1924)
- Jan. 28:** Kevin Boyle, Arc of Justice, Prologue, ch. 1-7
- Jan. 30:** Boyle, Arc of Justice, ch. 8-10, Epilogue
- Feb. 4:** Michael Lerner, Dry Manhattan, Introduction, ch. 1-7
- Feb. 6:** Lerner, Dry Manhattan, ch. 8-12

### **The Shape of Modernity**

#### **Week IV: Consumerism and Mass Culture: The Roaring Twenties?**

- Feb. 11:** \*Robert McElvaine, "Who Was Roaring in the Twenties?"  
\*Herbert Hoover, American Individualism, selections (1922)
- Feb. 13:** \*Lizbeth Cohen, "Encountering Mass Culture at the Grassroots"  
\*George Sanchez, Becoming Mexican American, selections

#### **Week V: Intimacy and Rebellion: Incarnations of Jazz in the Jazz Age**

- Feb. 18:** \*Hazel Carby, "It Jus Be's Dat Way Sometime"  
\*Timothy Taylor, "Music and the Rise of Radio in 1920s America"
- Feb. 20:** **Film: "The Jazz Singer," dir. Alan Crosland, 89 min. (1927)** (arrangements tba)  
\*Michael Rogin, "Blackface/White Noise"

#### **Week VI-VII: The New Woman, Youth Culture, and Sexuality**

- Feb. 25:** \*Nancy Cott, "Feminist Politics in the 1920s"  
\*Rebecca Davis, "'Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry"  
\*Elsie Hill and Florence Kelley, "Shall Women Be Equal Before the Law?" (1922)
- Feb. 27:** **Film: "It," dir. Clarence Badger, 72 min. (1927)** (arrangements tba)  
\*George Chauncey, "'Pansies on Parade'"
- Mar. 4 :** Anzia Yezierska, Bread Givers (1925), Books I and II
- Mar. 6:** Yezierska, Bread Givers, Book III

#### **Week VIII: "The New Negro" and the Quest for Identity**

- Mar. 11:** \*Marcus Garvey, "The Negro's Greatest Enemy" (1923)  
\*Alain Locke, "The New Negro" & James Weldon Johnson, "Harlem" (1925)  
\*Harlem Renaissance poems
- Mar. 13:** \*George Schuyler, "The Negro-Art Hokum" (1926)  
\*Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926)  
\*Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to be Colored Me" (1928)

**Paper #1 due Friday, Mar. 14 by 4 p.m. →→ SPRING BREAK**

## The Struggle Over Modernity: Race, Nation, and Community

### Week IX: The Tribal Twenties

- Mar. 25:** \*John Higham, “The Tribal Twenties”  
\*Lisa Dorr, “Arm in Arm: Gender, Eugenics, and Virginia’s Racial Integrity Acts”
- Mar. 27:** \*Mae M. Ngai, Impossible Subjects, selections  
\*Ozawa v. U.S. (1922) and U.S. v. Thind (1923)

### Week X: Anti-Radicalism and Nativism in a New Key

- Apr. 1:** **Film: “Sacco and Vanzetti,” dir. Peter Miller, 82 min. (2006)** to be screened in class  
\*A. Mitchell Palmer, “The Case Against the ‘Reds’” (1920)  
\*Felix Frankfurter, “The Case of Sacco and Vanzetti” (1927)
- Apr 3:** \*Lisa McGirr, “The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti: A Global History”
- Apr. 4:** **Final paper proposals due by noon**

### Week XI: The Second Klan

- Apr 8:** Nancy MacLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry, Intro., Pt. I  
\*Hiram Wesley Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism” (1926)
- Apr 10:** MacLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry, Pt. II and III

### Week XII: The Scopes Trial and Religious Fundamentalism

- Apr. 15:** Edward Larson, Summer for the Gods, Intro., ch. 1-5  
\*John Dewey, “The American Intellectual Frontier” (1922)
- Apr. 17:** Larson, Summer for the Gods, ch. 6-10, Afterword

### Week XIII: Middle-Class Culture and Its Critique

- Apr. 22:** Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt (1922), ch. 1-15
- Apr. 24:** Lewis, Babbitt, ch. 16-end  
\*Reviews of Babbitt

### Week XIV: Social Science as Social Critique

- Apr. 29:** \*Franz Boas, Anthropology and Modern Life (1928), selections  
\*Margaret Mead, Coming of Age in Samoa (1928), selections
- May 1:** \*Robert and Helen Lynd, Middletown (1929), selections

### Week XV: An Epitaph for an Age: “History’s Most Expensive Orgy”

- May 6:** \*F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Echoes of the Jazz Age” (1931)
- May 12:** **Paper #3 due by noon (graduating seniors’ papers are due by noon on May 8)**