History 160 Prof. Joan Shelley Rubin

Culture Wars in Modern America Fall, 2024

While many observers talk about the “culture wars” as a current phenomenon or date their beginning to the 1960s, this course takes a longer-term view, beginning at the turn of the twentieth century. It explores struggles over censorship, women’s rights, immigration restriction, religion in the public schools, sex education, jazz, and the behaviors of youth before turning to more recent debates about gender identities, race, abortion rights, and similar issues.

Most of the readings consist of primary sources available online and linked to this syllabus. A few longer sources, in book form, should be purchased:

Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America* (2nd ed., 2019)

Jonathan Zimmerman, *Whose America?: Culture Wars in the Public Schools*

David Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague*

Arlie Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*

To keep the workload manageable, each week students will prepare for the Tuesday class meeting by reading assignments on their own. On most Thursdays, we will read documents together during the class period. Please note the dates by which to complete reading Hajdu and Hochschild, which require more time than the usual weekly assignments.

Writing assignments:

1. Three short papers, 2-3 pages double-spaced, analyzing the assumptions and values underlying one of the assigned primary sources. These essays do not require any additional research. The first must be completed by September 30, the second by October 31, and the third by November 30. **Please write the paper in advance of the class discussion of the document so that your written analysis can enrich our conversation.**
2. A final essay of 8-12 pages double-spaced based on a single document or multiple documents that you find on your own pertaining to one or more of the topics covered in the course. Documents may include newspaper articles, opinion pieces, speeches, books, films, songs, and other materials. **Please turn in by email (**[**joan.rubin@rochester.edu**](mailto:joan.rubin@rochester.edu)**) a brief statement identifying the document or documents that you have chosen on November 1.** You may write about topics that we have not yet discussed by that date. The due date for the final essay, submitted in both hard copy and in digital form, is **December 16**, but the instructor encourages earlier submissions.

More guidance about these assignments will be provided in class.

Success in this course—defined as learning!—depends on four things:

1. Showing up
2. Doing the out-of-class reading before class
3. Participating actively in discussion
4. Taking care with writing assignments

Grades will be determined roughly as follows:

Short papers: 30 percent

Final essay: 30 percent

Class participation: 40 percent

**A special note:**

Some of the material we will read may provoke strong opinions from members of the class. It is essential for everyone to feel comfortable voicing their views and for respect to coexist with lively debate. The instructor may interrupt you if you engage in an inappropriate attack on anyone (including her!). She may also call on you to elicit your views if you are not adding to the conversation so that all engage as much as possible in interpreting course materials. No opinion is wrong if backed by evidence.

Please speak privately to the instructor if you have concerns about the content or atmosphere of the course. Office hours will be Tuesdays, 2-4 in 363 Rush Rhees and by appointment. You may also contact the instructor by email at any time: [joan.rubin@rochester.edu](mailto:joan.rubin@rochester.edu).

**College and university policies:**

Academic honesty: All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's [Academic Honesty Policy](http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/policy/index.html).

Disability: The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: [disability@rochester.edu;](mailto:disability@rochester.edu;) (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall; [www.rochester.edu/college/disability](https://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/index.html).

Please talk to the instructor ([joan.rubin@rochester.edu](mailto:joan.rubin@rochester.edu)) about any specific accommodations that you require.

Credit hours: This course follows the College credit hour policy for four-credit courses. This course meets twice weekly for 2 and a half academic hours per week. The course also includes  
independent out-of-class assignments for 8 academic hours per week.

**Tentative Schedule of Topics and Assignments:**

August 27 **Introduction**

August 29 **Unity and Division, Past and Present**

Reading: Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America* (2019), 1-7

September 3 **Sex and Censorship in the Progressive Era**

Reading: browse Annual Report of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ien.35556028483246&view=1up&seq=20>

Excerpts from US code: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/1461>

Victoria Woodhull, *A Speech on the Principles of Social Freedom* (1872)

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080475901&view=1up&seq=1>

*The Trial of William Sanger* (1915)

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044050973734&view=1up&seq=11>

5 **“New Women” and Their Opponents**

In-class documents: Frank Dumont, *The New Woman’s Husband* (1915)

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112045502314&view=1up&seq=7>

Orison Sweet Marden, *Woman and Ho*me (1915), Foreword and chapters I, IV, VI, and browse

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433067388185&view=1up&seq=15>

J. A. Haien, editor, *Anti-Suffrage Essays* *by Massachusetts Women* (1916), [24-30](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yv9_UO6K5zWALWIUfA5UXouK4xH-ZYhj/view?usp=sharing),

[38-42](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tg5o53rQKRFlKR0GRTuq_bNTxfrgjm2F/view?usp=sharing), [123-27](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Y-JiR0jsSQLlcl1N6oGnoG70a5SeFgc1/view?usp=sharing)

10 **In the Library: Book Banning and Free Speech**

Reading: <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/ulysses-and-obscenity>

<https://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/ulysses>

<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1900-1940/249us47>

Erwin Cherminsky, “Why Is Free Speech Important?” <https://ppe.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2021/02/ChemerinskyErwi_2017_TwoWhyIsFreeSpeechImp_FreeSpeechOnCampus1.pdf>

12 **The Armory Show and the Idea of the Modern**

In-class documents: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~museum/Armory/entrance.html>

<https://archive.artic.edu/armoryshow/> (Chicago)

<https://www.aaa.si.edu/collection-features/1913-armory-show>

17 **Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Immigration**

Reading: Theodore Roosevelt, *True Americanism* (1894), <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/true-americanism-the-forum-magazine/>

Horace Kallen, excerpt from “Democracy versus the Melting Pot” (1915)

<https://pluralism.org/the-right-to-be-different> (scroll down and click on link to

Kallen)

Jonathan Zimmerman, *Whose America?: Culture Wars in the Public*

*Schools*, Chapters 1-4

19 **Was Prohibition a Culture War?**

In class documents: <https://prohibition.osu.edu/>

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/?q=prohibition>

24 **Inheriting the Wind**

*Inherit the Wind*, film (1960)

26 **The Scopes Trial in Context**

Reading:Brenda Wineapple, *Keeping the Faith* (2024), excerpts

[**https://librarycollections.law.umn.edu/darrow/trials\_details.php?id=7**](https://librarycollections.law.umn.edu/darrow/trials_details.php?id=7)

October 1 **Music and Race: Meanings of Jazz and Rock ‘n Roll**

Linda Martin and Kerry Segrave, *Anti-Rock: The Opposition to Rock ‘n’ Roll* (1988),

[41-68](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SqEoP_9_8mWYK_jXpLen1SKMGmMyon2H/view?usp=sharing)

In-class documents:

<https://20thcenturyhistorysongbook.com/song-book/the-fifties/criticism-of-the-devils-music-rock-roll/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4qJcWOZH8I> (on jazz)

3 **No class**

8 **Youth Culture, Print Culture, and Moral Panic**

Reading: David Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague*

Note: this is a long assignment. Start early!

10 **The Sixties as Cultural Watershed**

Reading: Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, pp. 8-69.

17 **Dazed and Confused:** **“The Graduate”** (1967)

22 **Protest and Reaction**

Reading: *The Port Huron Statement* (1962), <https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/27-the-sixties/the-port-huron-statement-1962/>

The Black Panther Party Platform and Program, 1966 <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/Panther_platform.html>

“In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of the Viet Nam War” (on Robert McNamara, for viewing in class), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUpfh1-W3jc>

Richard Nixon’s “Silent Majority” speech, 1968 (for listening in class)

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/nixon-silent-majority/>

24 **Versions of the Counterculture**

Margaret Mead, “The Family Lifestyles of the Future” (film, 1971), YouTube

“The Sixties” miniseries: Episode 10 (“Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘ N Roll”)

29 **Feminism and Anti-Feminism in the 1960s and ‘70’s**

Reading: Hartman, 134-70

*NOW Bill of Rights* (1968), <https://350fem.blogs.brynmawr.edu/about/1968-bill-of-rights/>

Frances Beal, *Black Women’s Manifesto: Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and*

*Female*, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/wlmpc/wlmms01009>

Phyllis Schlafly, “What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?” <https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2016/02/02/whats-wrong-with-equal-rights-for-women-1972/>

31 **Gay Liberation**

In-class documents: Hartman, 155-64

*The Empty Closet* (Rochester newspaper online and at RBSCP)

<https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/EmptyCloset>

November 5 **“Family Values” and Evangelical Culture**

Reading: Hartman, 171-221

Zimmerman, 131-85

Jerry Falwell speech (1982), YouTube (in class), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpemBObQ3bw>

7 **The Culture Wars Permeate Politics**

In-class document: Pat Buchanan, 1992 speech at Republican National

Convention, YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2olwuAy3_og>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/30/us/politics/from-the-fringe-in-1992-patrick-j-buchanans-words-now-seem-mainstream.html>

12 **Race, Identity, and Multiculturalism**

Reading: Zimmerman, 107-29

Hartman, 102-33

Nikole Hannah-Jones, *The 1619 Project*, [8-36](https://drive.google.com/file/d/16I-6Z39hwgjhq2TQ3t_Bksuc6r6thfQ9/view?usp=sharing)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/03/us/university-of-chicago-whiteness-free-speech.html>

14 **Art and Censorship on College Campuses**

In-class document:<https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/one-mans-vulgarity-art-censorship-american-campuses>

21 **The Trump Era: Left Behind?**

Reading: Arlie Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning*

*on the American Right* (2018)

Note: we will read substantial excerpts. Start reading early!

26 **Comstock Still Lives: Abortion Rights after the Repeal of *Roe***

In-class documents: *Dobbs* decision <https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/supreme-court-case-library/dobbs-v-jackson-womens-health-organization>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/16/us/abortion-comstock-act.html>

<https://www.oah.org/tah/november-3/abolishing-abortion-the-history-of-the-pro-life-movement-in-america/>

<https://www.guttmacher.org/abortion-rights-supreme-court>

December 3 **Do Parents Have Rights?: The Divide Over Gender**

In class documents: Zimmerman, 186-211

<https://texaslawreview.org/education-is-speech-parental-free-speech-in-education/>

<https://pen.org/pen-america-v-escambia-county/>

<https://pen.org/issue/book-bans/>

5 **Where are We Now? Where are We Going: Victimhood Culture and the**

**Future of Social Change**

Reading: Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, *The Rise of Victimhood Culture: Microaggressions, Safe Spaces, and the New Culture Wars*, chapter 1