**The Making of American Society:  
Politics, Change, and Culture Wars**

PS (0859-003)

Spring 2011

Danielle K. Scherer Wednesdays 5:30-8pm  
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Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-2, Wednesday 3-4, or by appointment

This course is a branch of the Gen Ed program fulfilling the U.S. Society/American Culture requirement. In this course, we will ask how American society evolved into what it is today. We will explore readings and examples from a variety of disciplines as we investigate important structures and markers of American society and analyze the ways in which difference and heterogeneity have shaped the culture and society of the U.S.

**Readings**

Rather than using a traditional text book, we will be using a collection of texts throughout the semester. In order to minimize the expense for students and to alleviate confusion on what passages are required all of the selected readings for the semester have been placed on Blackboard. We will stick to the course schedule provided. Readings are arranged by week under the “my documents” tab of this course’s Blackboard page.

**Course Requirements**

*Attendance*It is in your best interest to be in class especially because we only meet once a week. If you are repeatedly late to or absent from class, your grade will suffer significantly and it may be in your best interest to drop the course. Arriving to class more than twenty minutes late will count as a missed class. However, if you do miss class you are responsible for the material covered on the day you missed. Attendance will count for 5% of your grade. Please make every effort to contact me ahead of time if you know that you have to be absent for a class. If you give me appropriate notice, I can generally be of some assistance; if I do not find out about a problem until after the fact, there is little I can do to help you.

*Participation*

You are expected to participate in every class. I believe very strongly that students (and professors) learn best when we learn from each other. 15% of your final grade will be determined according to your participation in class discussions. On this note, I expect that students treat each other in a courteous and respectful manner. While I understand we will be addressing some issues that you may feel strongly about, please tailor your arguments and comments so that they are classroom appropriate. Failure to act in a collegial sprit will result in a lowered participation grade. You can also earn participation points outside the classroom, if you wish. You can come to my office hours to discuss the readings or your thoughts on that week’s topic, send me an article that your found interesting and relevant to the course, or even suggest a film clip for the class to watch.

*Class Prep*

Most weeks, I will hand out a short writing assignment, usually based on a few questions to be completed as you read for the next class. This is not intended to overload you with written work, but to help you think critically about that week’s readings. Your written responses will serve as the jumping off point for our class discussions; at the end of each class, I will collect your written responses and add them to your participation grade for the day.

*Essays*

This class comprises mainly of writing assignments. I strongly recommend that you use the writing center at least once this semester. I am happy to look over drafts of any/all of your papers and will be willing to allow you to redo all of your papers with the exception of the long essay for some additional points. Guidelines for each essay will be given out in class and posted on blackboard for reference. When submitting your essay, it should be in a standard format – one inch margins, 11 or 12 pt. font, double spaced, etc. If you are looking for a good reference guide to writing academic papers, a good text you might want to reference (available through the library) is Writing inPolitical Science by Diane E. Schmidt (ISBN 9780321217356).

Grade Breakdown: Value

Attendance 5%

Participation 15%

Entrance Essay 5%

Short Essay 1 15%

Draft & Comments for Second Essay 10%

Short Essay 2 15%

TIB Statement 5%

Final in Class Essay 30%

*Late Work Policy*If extenuating circumstances arise, you may request an extension for written work, but will need to supply some sort of proof of the major, significant, or highly unusual nature of the situation. Simply asking for an extension does not guarentee you will be granted one. If you wish do to do, you must request an extension at lest 24 hours before the due date of the assignment. If you do not submit a paper on time, the grade on the paper will drop by one letter grade every 24 hours until it is turned in.

**University Policies***Plagiarism & Cheating*Academic dishonesty, i.e. plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Please remember that all work must conform to Temple University’s policy on academic honesty found in the Temple University Bulletin. All work that you submit must be the result of your own efforts. Any student that is found to be copying another student’s work, plagiarizing or any other violation of academic honesty will receive a grade of 0 for that assignment or exam. Under some circumstances, a course grade of 0 may be given and the matter may be referred to the University Dean. Do not cheat.

*Policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities*As an academic institution, Temple University exists for the transmission of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the development of students, and the general well-being of society. The University and the faculty have a responsibility to provide students with opportunities and protections that promote the learning process in all its aspects. Students similarly should exercise their freedom with responsibility. For more information on your Academic Rights, please see Temple’s full statement available at: <http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02>

*Disability Disclosure*This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Additionally, students should contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**Course Schedule**

**January 19th**

*Introduction: What is America? What is American Society?*

**January 26th**

*The Founders, the Contract, and Civil Society*

Reading: Selections from Locke

“Goodness Doesn’t Just Happen” – Rebecca West – essay from This I Believe

**February 2nd**

*Psychological Despotism and Other Neat Stuff*

Reading: Selections from DeTocqueville

“If I Were a Dictator” by Quentin Reynolds – essay from This I Believe

**February 9th**

*Race and Segregation*

Reading: Selections from American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass – Douglas

Massey and Nancy Denton

Eric Foner’s Expert Summary on Race in the United States

“The Only Way to Make a Friend” – Herbert H. Lehman -- This I Believe

**February 16th**

*The American Dream*

Readings: To “Be” or To “Do” – James Adams

“Entrepreneurs and Horatio Alger”

**February 23rd**

*Money, Money, Money: Capitalism, Horatio Alger, and the New Deal in Practice*

Readings: “The New Deal & the Legacy of Public Works” – Andy Sywak

Acres of Diamonds Speech

“For Richer” – Paul Krugman

NYT Superstars Article

**March 2nd**

*The Good-Life*

Readings: Selections from Playboy and the Making of the Good Life , 2009 Elizabeth Fraterrigo

Cosmo Girl: A Playboy Inversion ” from A World of Her Own: Writers and the Feminist Controversy. Ed. John N. Miller 1971

“Two Commandments” – Peggy Wood – essay from This I Believe

**March 9th**No Class -- Spring Break

**March 16th**

*Gender, the Family, Gay Rights, and Power*

Reading: “Homeward Bound” - Linda Hirschman

“The Year of Domesticity” – David Brooks

“Capitalism and Gay Identity” – John D’Emilio

**March 23rd**

*Suburbanization and Redlining*

Reading: “Insurance Redlining and the Transformation of an Urban Metropolis” Gregory D. Squires and

William Velez *Urban Affairs Review* 1987.

**March 30th**

*Consumption and Consumerism*

Reading: “Consumerism and the New Capitalism” - R. Cronk

Excerpts from Walmart: The Face of Twenty First Century Capitalism – Nelson Lichtenstein

**April 6th**

*Culture War? Perception and Media*

Readings: Selections from Fiorino’s Culture War

**April 13th**

*Modern Immigration*

Reading: “Flotsam, Jetsam, and Liberty” – James B. Carey – essay from This I Believe

“The Impact of Immigration on American Society” - C. Hirschman

**April 20th**

*Topic to be Determined*

**April 27th**

*Wrap Up*