Course Description

During the twentieth century, the United States established a corporate model of industrial capitalism that propelled it to the rank of superpower. Some writers have even called the twentieth century the “American Century.” Celebrations of American power, the extension of that power internationally, the creation of previously unimaginable economic affluence, and the development of a consumerist model of citizenship, however, often allowed Americans to overlook significant national problems. Some of the ongoing costs of the American Century were economic inequality and exploitation, racism, sexism, and nativism. Throughout the twentieth century there were always people who tried to solve these problems, demanding that the United States more fully embrace our founding ideals of freedom, democracy, justice, and equality. The twentieth century also saw a burgeoning American culture in the form of new mass entertainments, such as film, recorded music, radio, professional sports, and, finally, television. As we shall see, the contested values that helped to shape
the United States during this time were often reflected in these new cultural forms. This course will examine how the intertwined voices of celebration and dissent shaped the events of the “American Century” as the nation attempted to “secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”

Reading Materials

The following books are required for this course and are available for purchase at the campus bookstore located in the Events and Athletics Center, 420 Western Avenue.


Assignments and Due Dates

Evaluation in this course will consist of two quizzes, a midterm exam, a final exam, and consistently participating in class discussions. Quizzes and exams will consist of several types of questions designed to sharpen analytical and critical thinking skills, as well as assess content mastery. These could include identification questions, short and long essays, multiple-choice and true-false questions, as well as placing historical events in chronological order. Students’ regular attendance and active participation in class discussions is mandatory. A few extra credit assignments will be offered during the semester.

Quizzes: September 27 and November 8

Midterm Exam: October 18

Final Exam: December 13
Grade Breakdown

10% – Quiz 1
15% – Quiz 2
30% – Midterm Exam
30% – Final Exam
15% – Participation and attendance

Academic Integrity

Students at The College of Saint Rose are expected to be honest in every aspect of their academic work. Plagiarism, cheating, academic misconduct, or any other submission of another's work as one's own is unacceptable. Students working in groups are each individually responsible for the academic integrity of the entire group project. In a situation where the course instructor determines that, more likely than not, a breach of academic integrity has occurred, the incident will be reported according to the College’s Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity.

Disability Accommodations

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations please register with Lynn Cantwell, the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, located in the Academic Support Center on the 2nd floor of St. Joseph Hall (campus extension 2335 or 337-2335, off campus) for disability verification and for determination of recommended reasonable academic accommodations. After you have made arrangements with that office, please see me to discuss your accommodations. Please remember that timely notice will help avoid a delay in your receipt of accommodations.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Readings must be completed for the day they are assigned (Except for class one’s assignments, which should be completed during the first week.). Please check the Blackboard site for course announcements, as well as the occasional supplementary reading. It is not uncommon for me to make slight changes to the course syllabus during the semester. Be sure to consistently check your email and visit the Blackboard site during the semester to make yourself aware of any changes.
1) August 30: The Problems and Promises of the New Century
   The United States Emerges as a World Power

Read: *Give Me Liberty!* 556-636.
Read: *Voices of Freedom*, 30-81.
View: *Savage Acts: Wars, Fairs, and Empire*

What economic, political, and social crises did the United States face during the last decades of the nineteenth century? How would these crises shape the first decades of the twentieth century?

Additional Resources:
C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (1951)

(Friday, September 3 – Last day to add/drop classes)

September 6: Labor Day – No Class Meeting

2) September 13: The Progressive Era

Read: *Give Me Liberty!* 637-677.
Read: *Voices of Freedom*, 82-116.
View: *A Lively Affair* (ca. 1912)
View: *On to Washington* (1913)
View: *Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl*
View: *Woodrow Wilson* (Excerpts)

What seem to have been the features of Progressivism shared by most progressive reformers? Explain the motivations of the progressives – are there any ideas about progressivism that appear more persuasive than others? In what ways did the Progressive era ultimately give rise to a new American state?

Additional Resources:
Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (1960)
Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906)
Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (1900)

(Tuesday, September 14 – Last Day to apply to take a course pass/fail)

3) September 20: The Great War, Internationalism, and Domestic Upheaval

Read: *Give Me Liberty!* 678-718.
Read: *Voices of Freedom*, 117-146.
View: *Woodrow Wilson* (Excerpts)
View: *100% American* (1918)
View: *Up South: African-American Migration in the Era of the Great War*

In what ways did the United States’ participation in World War I change domestic culture and politics in the U.S.? How did the war influence the United States’ role in international affairs?

Additional Resources:
Thomas Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (1992)
4) September 27: Cultural Divisions and the Contradictory Decade
Race, Rights, and Radicalism

Read: Give Me Liberty! 719-755.
Read: Voices of Freedom, 147-176.
View: Marcus Garvey: Look for Me in the Whirlwind (excerpts)

Quiz 1

What signs emerged at the beginning of the 1920s that signaled the end of Progressivism? What replaced politics as the focus of public concern? Why? What did this development mean for the idea of citizenship in the United States?

Additional Resources:
Robert S. Lynd & Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture (1929)
Peter J. Ling, America and the Automobile: Technology, Reform, and Social Change, 1893-1923 (1990)
Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt (1922)
Susan Porter Benson, Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940 (1986)
Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture (1976)
Melvyn Dubofsky, We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World (1969)
William H. Harris, The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War (1982)
James Weinstein, The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925 (1967)
5) October 4: Hard Times and the New Deal

Read: Give Me Liberty! 756-795.
Read: Voices of Freedom, 177-206.
View: Franklin Delano Roosevelt (excerpts)

Some historians have argued that the New Deal was the culmination of populist and progressive aspirations and policies, while others have looked to the nation’s experience in World War I as a blueprint for the New Deal. What is your take on this debate? How did Roosevelt portray the government’s response to the Great Depression? How would you sum up the legacy of the New Deal?

Additional Resources:
Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (1983)

Listen: [Oral Interviews from Hard Times](#)
October 11: Columbus Day – No Class Meeting

6) October 18: Midterm Exam

7) October 25: The “Good War” and New Visions of Freedom

Read: *Give Me Liberty!* 796-837.
Read: *Voices of Freedom*, 207-227.
View: *The Perilous Fight: America’s World War II in Color* (excerpts)
View: *The House I Live In* (1944)

Despite the sense of finality of the Allied victory, it seems that World War II raised many more questions than it managed to answer. What were these questions and choices and how would they generally influence the big issues that Americans faced for the rest of the twentieth century?

Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II* (1987)
8) November 1: The Cold War: An Age of Affluence and Anxiety

Read: Give Me Liberty! 838-899.
Read: Voices of Freedom, 228-277.
View: Make Mine Freedom (1948)
View: The Hollywood Ten (1950)

The pluralistic vision of the war years dissipated during the late-1940s. Why? What did those who were directly affected by this development do about it?

Additional Resources:
H. W. Brands, The Devil We Knew: Americans and the Cold War (1993)
Tom Engelhardt, The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation (1998)
Ellen Schrecker, The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents (1994)
Daniel Horowitz, Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism (1998)
9) November 8: Civil Rights and the Great Society

Read: *Give Me Liberty!* 899-943.
Read: *Voices of Freedom*, 277-303.
View: *Eyes on the Prize* (excerpts)

**Quiz 2**

Did Lyndon Baines Johnson’s Great Society change the meaning of citizenship in the United States?

Additional Resources:

10) November 15: Black Power and the Rights Revolution

Read: *Give Me Liberty!* 843-956.
Read: *Voices of Freedom*, 303-311.
Read: *Negroes With Guns*, vii-86.
Why did Robert Williams find himself at odds with Roy Wilkins and the national leadership of the NAACP? How did Williams justify his policy of self-defense?


**11) November 22: The Humbling Decade and the Conservative Ascendancy**

Read: *Give Me Liberty!* 957-995.
Read: *Voices of Freedom*, 312-335.
View: *Ronald Reagan* (excerpts)

Although Ronald Reagan insisted that his economic policies – massive tax cuts, deregulation, and significant increases in military spending – would ultimately result in a balanced budget, this did not even come close to happening. What were some of the results of Reagan’s economic policies? Were these merely short-term results? Explain.

Additional Resources:
Susan J. Tolchin and Martin Tolchin, *Dismantling America: The Rush to Deregulate* (1985)
12) November 29: Clintonism and the New Internationalism

Read: *Give Me Liberty!* 996-1037.

The 1990s witness the reemergence of various issues that exacerbated social and cultural divisions within the United States that bore striking similarities with the cultural battles of the 1920s. Why did these cultural divisions reemerge during the 1990s? How would you ultimately describe and assess the 1990s?

13) December 6: An Empire in the Making?: The Next American Century

Read: *Give Me Liberty!* 1038-1070.
Read: *Voices of Freedom*, 356-737.

The policy of preemptive war was a new one for the United States. Explain both the pros and cons of this shift in international policy.

14) December 13: Final Exam