Course Description
Some (mostly citizens of the United States, of course) have called the last 100 years, the "American Century." The rise of the nation in global power over the course of the 20th century is clear and dramatic. However, the title "American Century" can be perceived as conveying a cohesiveness that obscures the profound expressions of dissent in the 20th century United States. Rather than simple consensus, this was a century of debate and division. From the Anarchists to the KKK, the Fundamentalists to the Feminists, the Labor Unionists to the Libertarians, the Militia Movements to the Yippies, this "American Century" was also marked by economic struggle, racial unrest, and "culture wars."

In this course, we will be examining such expressions of dissent in 20th century American political thought. We will be focusing on three main areas of dissent and division: Capitalism, Labor and (anti-) Communism; Race and Racism; and Sex, Gender, and Sexuality. We will be addressing these inter-related areas of dissent from both the left and the right. We will also strive to remain cognizant of the normative beliefs and contexts from which these forces and texts are dissenting.

Course Readings
The following texts are required and can be purchased at the WU Bookstore:

Many of the readings for this course are available on reserve at the Hatfield Library. In addition, I will be distributing some readings as attachments through the course e-mail list. Finally, I want to note that there will be additional readings assigned that are not yet on the syllabus; these readings will be announced in class.

Course Requirements
Above all, this course requires time, effort, and critical thinking. I expect to see evidence of your commitment, insight and creativity in your written work and in our discussions in class.

Writing Assignments:
There are three writing assignments in this course, each quite different in nature and scope.

1. The first writing assignment is an interpretive essay (8 pages) asking you to critically evaluate the answers Tocqueville, Mencken, and Walzer give to the question: "What does it mean to be an American?" This assignment will be due on February 4, 2008.

2. The semester will conclude with the composition and presentation of substantial research projects. Our reading throughout the semester will focus on themes of class, race and sex/gender, but of course expressions of dissent in American politics exceed these three themes (and moreover our treatment of these themes will not be comprehensive). For the major writing assignment in this course, each student will choose and examine an expression of
political dissent that is outside the scope of the reading assignments listed in the syllabus. One could, for example, conduct a research project on anti-war movements, PETA, the Free Speech movement, Operation Rescue, Earth Liberation Front, or the Minutemen. Each research project should seek to make connections with the style, mode of operation, organizational structure or other aspect of expressions of political dissent that we will be discussing throughout the semester. I want you to start thinking about your final projects now; I will be giving you a series of deadlines to meet for different steps of your research. The last five days of class will be dedicated to students’ presentation of their research.

3. The third writing assignment will be the composition of short (1 page) response papers. These papers will be assessed as part of the class participation grade (see below).

Class Participation:
This is a seminar class not a lecture course. As you can see below, class participation represents a very significant portion of your final grade. The first element here, of course, is attendance. Attendance is mandatory; unexcused absences from class will detrimentally affect your final grade. All reading assignments should be completed prior to class and you should be prepared to discuss the day’s assignment in a thoughtful and detailed manner. Moreover, class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates.

As I mention above, you will be responsible for writing a series of one-page reaction papers throughout the semester. I will be breaking you up into four groups. These groups will cycle throughout the semester. Each day the students in one group will be responsible for writing and distributing one-page papers reacting to the assigned texts. These papers should be informal (but by no means sloppy or careless). The aim of these papers is not to summarize the material, but to respond to the texts in a manner that will shape our collective analysis of these texts. The papers are required to be posted on the Blackboard course platform by 9:00 PM the night before the given class meeting. To be clear, these short essays are a vehicle for participating in class discussions and will be assessed as part of your class participation grade. Submitting thoughtful reaction papers, but rarely speaking in class is not sufficient for receiving high marks for class participation. Likewise, speaking often in class, but submitting careless reaction papers is also not sufficient for high marks for class participation.

** Note: A penalty of 1/3 grade per day will be imposed on assignments submitted late (one day’s lateness would reduce a B+ to a B). I generally do not grant extensions, but if extraordinary circumstances arise, please consult with me as soon as possible -- and certainly prior to the due date of the paper.

**** Of Special Note: I take plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism takes many forms, but the common denominator is presenting someone else’s words or ideas as your own. “Plagiarism and cheating are offenses against the integrity of the courses in which they occur and against the college community as a whole. Plagiarism and cheating involve intellectual dishonesty, deception and fraud, which inhibit the honest exchange of ideas... Plagiarism and cheating may be grounds for dismissal from the college.” (Willamette University, Plagiarism and Cheating Policy.) Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero for the assignment.

*** Another note: I fully appreciate that students like fast and thorough comments on their writing assignments. Unfortunately, “fast” and “thorough” do not often go together well. I will strive to return your final papers in a timely fashion. As a general rule, you should receive your papers back within two weeks of turning them in.
Statement Concerning Disabilities:
Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible and no later than the first week of the term.

Grading
Class Participation == 25%
Essay On Being an American== 25%
Final Project == 50% (35% paper/15% presentation)
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Total == 100%

Schedule of Events
- This schedule is subject to change – especially with the addition of relevant readings.
- Many of the items below have links; if the links become broken, please let me know.
- **Items in bold** will be available through the Reserves at the Hatfield library.
- **Items in italics** will be sent via email as word.doc attachments.
- Items followed by (BAE) can be found in The Best American Essays of the Century.

**ON BEING AN AMERICAN: Conformity and Individualism**

M 1/14: Introduction
Walt Whitman, “Song of the Open Road,” 1852.
http://www.bartleby.com/142/82.html

W 1/16: Alexis de Tocqueville, excerpts from Democracy in America, 1848.
Vol. 1, Ch. 15, “Unlimited Power Of The Majority In The United States, And Its Consequences.” http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/1_ch15.htm
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch2_01.htm
Vol. 2, Ch. 2, “Of Individualism in Democratic Countries.”
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETO/ch2_2.htm

Mark Twain, “Corn-Pone Opinions” 1901, (BAE).
Michael Walzer, “What Does it Mean to be an American?”

**LABOR AND POWER, CAPITALISM AND (ANTI-) COMMUNISM**

http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/D/1876-1900/reform/carnegie.htm
Eugene Debs, Anti-war speech at Canton, OH, 1918: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1918/canton.htm>
IWW "Historical catechism" of American unionism: <http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/unions/iww/1923/catechism.htm>


***FIRST ESSAY DUE***


Senator Margaret Chase Smith, Declaration Of Conscience, June 1, 1950 http://gos.sbc.edu/s/chasesmith.html


RACE AND RACISM: “The problem of the 20th Century is problem of the color line.”


Billie Holiday/Abel Meeropol, "Strange Fruit," 1939


M 3/3: Film: *Freedom on My Mind.*

*Letters From Mississippi and other writings from Freedom Summer, 1964.*

*Jinny Glass, Diary from Freedom Summer, 1964.*


Ku Klux Klan, “The Ideology of White Supremacy.”

Knights Party Platform, [http://www.kkk.bz/program.htm](http://www.kkk.bz/program.htm)


[http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/malcolmxballotorbullet.htm](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/malcolmxballotorbullet.htm)


[http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111bppp.html](http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111bppp.html)


**SEX AND GENDER: Changing Roles, Changing Morality:**


[http://billysunday.org/sermons/booze.php3](http://billysunday.org/sermons/booze.php3)


[http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/Writings/Anarchism/hypocrisy.html](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/Writings/Anarchism/hypocrisy.html)

W 3/19: **Readings TBA**

Film: *Rosie the Riveter.*

M 3/24: *Spring Break*

W 3/26: *Spring Break*
http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111now.html
The Redstocking Manifesto, 1969.


Katha Pollitt, “Feminism at the Millennium” Subject to Debate, 2000.

W 4/9: Presentations
M 4/14: Presentations
W 4/16: SSRD
M 4/21: Presentations
W 4/23: Presentations
M 4/28: Presentations