Despite the common conception of American culture as both profoundly political and anti-intellectual, we will evaluate how thought and politics have indeed been forces in American society. Specifically, we will examine some of the different political, moral, and social persuasions and sensibilities that have played prominent roles in American public life over the course of the last century.

The course is designed for historians and students of other fields interested in exploring the life and politics of the mind in the twentieth-century United States. One aim is to investigate the contested meaning and place of the intellectual in a democratic, capitalist culture. Another no less important goal is to examine the production and dissemination of ideas in their political context. Finally, we must examine the role of political change itself, as it shaped, constrained, and otherwise interacted with ideas.

To this end, the course traces the history of the United States— from the end of Reconstruction to the War on Terror— through its ideas. How have American intellectuals and politicians understood, reacted to, or participated in such developments as the growth of the corporation, the rise and fall of European imperialism, the wars of the twentieth century, the United States’ rise to global prominence, and a diverse array of social, political, and economic movements? How has the role of intellectuals changed with the growth of the university, the rise of planners, and the emergence of novel sources of information? Where do politics and ideas come together in classic topics of pragmatism, populism, political economy, liberalism, imperialism, and race? What did prominent intellectuals and politicians believe about the major events of their era? Such questions and others will drive us forward this semester.
Requirements and Grading

By the end of the semester, students will have had ample practice writing about intellectual history. Each student is asked to turn in a 1-page review essay of the each week’s reading at the beginning of each class. The essay should provide a concise summary of the contents of the book, situate its argument in the context of existing scholarship, and offer a critical evaluation of its contribution. The page limit must be adhered to strictly by all participants. (You should find this a very useful strategy for synthesizing the reading and focusing your thoughts.) The professor will record comments on each essay each week. The reviews and your participation will comprise 20% of the final grade.

Each student will lead class three times during the semester. This is a relatively light sentence—in addition to the weekly summary, the student will circulate a minimum of 5 discussion questions via Blackboard by 5 p.m. the Tuesday before class. The same student will provide 5-10 minutes of introductory remarks at the beginning of class. Each round will comprise 10% of the final grade, for a total of 30%.

Each student will turn in a 15-20 page essay on a subject of their choice at the end of the semester. Students are encouraged to investigate any of the topics under consideration in the syllabus or investigate their own eclectic interests in minor fields, including science fiction, pedagogy, environmentalism, jazz, legal theory, etc. Topics will be discussed and assigned in individual meetings with the professor, who will help each student arrive at an individual reading list. The final paper will be worth 50% of the grade.

Readings

All books will be available for purchase at the Fordham bookstore. Article- and chapter-length readings for each week will be available on Blackboard, but must be printed for class.


Mark Atwood Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)


**Calendar of Classes**

**Week 1: Intellectual and Political History – The Search for Order**

**Week 2: Victorian Thought and its Discontents**

**Week 3: Pragmatism and Democracy**

**Week 4: Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism**

**Week 5: Populism, Traditional and New**

**Week 6: Liberalism, Elites, and Wealth**

**Week 7: Modernity and Anti-Modernism**

**Week 8: The Global Interwar Years**

**Week 9: World War and Political Thought**
- David Ciepley, Liberalism in the Shadow of Totalitarianism (Harvard University Press, 2006).

**Week 10: American Anti-Communism**
- David Oshinsky, A Conspiracy so Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy (Oxford University Press, 2005 [1982]).

**Week 11: Modern Economic Thought**

**Week 12: The Politics of Knowledge in the Cold War**

**Week 13: Revolutionary Nationalism and Civil Rights**

**Week 14: The Vietnam War and Dissent**

**Week 15: Historicizing the War on Terror**

**Week 16: Final Papers Due.**