

The Promised Land: U.S. Immigration History

“Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history.”
Oscar Handlin, Introduction to The Uprooted, 1951

This course takes the above quote seriously. It is designed to trace the story of American immigration through the chronological development of U.S. political, economic, and racial history. In doing so, we will explore the three interwoven aspects of the U.S. immigration story: federal policy toward immigration and immigrants, the attitudes of various American-born interest groups toward immigrants, and the immigrant experience itself.

Conceptually, the course pivots around ever-shifting tensions between, on the one hand, practical requirements for economic growth, American ideals of human equality, voluntary citizenship and, on the other hand, fears that American prosperity and democracy must be protected from too many workers, too much diversity, or the wrong kind of diversity. While tracing these tensions in the historical record, we will study the evolution of political, economic, and racial assumptions that shaped American debates about freedom, independence, and “fitness” for citizenship. We will also look at how those assumptions and tensions, in turn, shaped different immigrants’ experiences. Simultaneously, we will explore how immigrants have participated in the creation of American economic realities and political ideals and how they have influenced debates about inclusion of newcomers into the Promised Land.

The syllabus for this course does not pretend to cover all aspects of the “immigrant experience” because there was no single immigrant experience. Rather, the syllabus seeks to provide a coherent narrative on national immigration policy and to explore racial, ethnic, religious, and gender attitudes that aid in understanding the diversity of immigrant experiences. The syllabus aims to demonstrate that the story of immigration is entwined with every aspect of American history as well as to disrupt assumptions about immigrants as either helpless victims or self-determining agents.

Finally, the syllabus seeks to introduce students to the wealth of primary documents and secondary literature on U.S. immigration history, to sharpen students’ skills at reading, understanding, and interpreting both primary and secondary sources, and to develop students’ effectiveness at making well-supported

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Victoria Brown's Office Hours -- Spring, 2013:

be computed from a base of 90, however, which allows you to skip two, or to simply drop your two lowest scores.

Unless otherwise indicated on the syllabus, your writing assignments are due in class on the day of the assignment. One purpose of these assignments is to focus your reading and facilitate that day's discussion. Since you have the leeway to skip two of these assignments, I will not accept late assignments. Please do not ask for an exception to this rule.

2. **Textual analysis:** Using a pre-selected set of congressional speeches, each of you will write a 5-7 page analysis of the House debate on the 1924 bill to drastically limit immigration into the U.S. First version of your analysis is due the Friday before Spring Break; revision will be due two weeks after Spring Break.

3. **Take-home exams:** You will have two take-home essay exams. The first is due on Friday, February 22; the second is due on Thursday, December 15. You will receive the questions for each of these exams the week before they are due. You will write two essays, selecting from three prompts. See Class Contract for the extension policy on these exams. 100 points possible on each exam.

In all the writing you do for this class, you will be evaluated on the clarity of your argument, the logical organization of your points, the precision of your language, the effectiveness and accuracy of your use of evidence, and the “correctness” of your grammar and punctuation.

Evaluation Policy

Short writing assignments	=	90 points
Participation in Chinese Debate	=	10 points
1924 Debate analysis	=	100 points
2 take-home essay exams	=	200 points (100 points each)
Participation/contribution	=	<u>100 points</u> (20% of your grade)
Total points possible	=	500 total points possible

In my experience, those who earn 90% or more of these points will receive an A or A-; those who earn between 80% and 89% will receive some sort of B grade; and those who earn between 70% and 79% will receive a C grade. I do not mention the grades of D or F here because I do not expect anyone in this class to get into that situation. If I see you headed there, we will talk about how you can change direction.

Also, in my experience, students often focus on their points on exams and fail to appreciate the importance of the points they can continually amass with short writings and consistent contributions to class discussion.

If you do the math, you'll realize it's silly to fret over getting an “80” instead of an “85” on an exam and then miss the opportunity to get a “7” or an “8” on a short writing by simply not turning it in. If your final grade is important to you, then I strongly advise that you do the short writings and be a regular contributor to class discussion and debates. Attending to *that* part of the work will both prepare you to do well on exams and will give you a solid base of course points.

Take note: “class participation” amounts to 20% of your grade. That’s a hefty chunk of my assessment of your performance. What questions do I ask to evaluate your participation?

1. Did you adhere to the SIX points on the Class Contract, which you signed?
2. Did your presence in the class, over the course of the semester, improve the quality of our collective experience? Did you, on a

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND CLASS ACTIVITIES

Week One:

January 21: Charting Our Course

Reading: Richard Frethorne's Letters & Letter to William Pond; Wineburg, "Teaching the Mind Good Habits"

January 23: Richard Frethorne and the 3 Themes of Immigration History

Reading: Blackboard: Rose, "The Politics of Pathos"; Dahlberg, "Do Not Forget Me"

'Writing' assignment: Locate Rose's and Dahlberg's thesis. Come to class with a typed sheet on which you simply provide the page number & the first words of the paragraph in which you think each author best states the main point of her article. If you wish, you may type out the words from each paragraph that best captures each author's main point.

January 25: Migration in the 17th Century

Reading: Blackboard: VBrown, Chapter 1, *The Promised Land*. BrownDocs: Fogelman demographic tables, American colonies map, profile of Anthony Johnson, Rose collection of slave laws, graphs of slave demography

Week Two

January 28: The Transatlantic 18th Century

Reading: Blackboard: Beiler, "Caspar Wistar" essay from *The Human Tradition in America: Colonial Era to Reconstruction*; Klepp, et. al. Introduction to Souls for Sale and selection from John Frederick Whitehead's memoir; BrownDocs: Wistar recollection of leave-taking.

January 30: The Evolution of Race Ideology in 18th Century

Reading: Blackboard: Smedley, Chapters 5 & 7, Race in North America; class handout: excerpt from Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Writing assignment: One-paragraph (half-page, double-spaced) statement of Smedley's thesis in Chapter 7.

February 1: What Is an American? What is Americanability?

Reading: BrownDocs: from Benjamin Franklin, 1751, "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind" thru Franklin, 1782, "Information to Those Who Would Remove to America"

Week Three

Feb. 4: Immigration, Naturalization, and the Politics of the 1790's

Reading: Blackboard: Baseler, "Asylum for Mankind," Chapter 7 & 8 excerpts.

BrownDocs: Naturalization Debate excerpt and Naturalization laws, 1790-1802

Writing assignment: One-paragraph (half-page, double-spaced) statement of Baseler's thesis in Chapter 8.

Feb. 6: Immigrant Letters from Brits and Germans, 1827-1863

Reading: Blackboard: Gerber, Authors of Their Lives, Intro and Chapter 4 excerpts.
BrownDocs: Hollingworth and Seyffardt letters

Feb. 8: The Irish and the Know-Nothings

Reading: BrownDocs: Daniels, *Coming to America*, pp. 126-140; Blackboard: Jensen, “‘No Irish Need Apply’: a Myth of Victimization”; Kenny, “Race, Violence, and Anti-Irish Sentiment.” BrownDocs: Population figures and Electoral results; Know-Nothing Party documents & “America for the Americans”

Week Four

Feb. 11: The Irish and the Whiteness Debate

Reading: Blackboard: Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, Chapter 7, “Irish-American Workers and White Racial Formation”; Kolchin, “Whiteness Studies.”

BrownDocs: cartoons depicting the Irish, 1850’s – 1880’s

Writing assignment: One paragraph (half-page, double-spaced) statement of Roediger’s argument and one paragraph/half-page summary of Kolchin’s critique of Roediger.

Packet of materials for Feb. 18 Chinese Exclusion Debate will be ready on Blackboard. You will each have a reading assignment for your role in the debate.

Feb 13: The Chinese in 19th-Century America

Reading: BrownDocs: Daniels, *Coming to America*, pp. 238-250. Blackboard Lui, “Chinatown: A Contested Urban Space.” BrownDocs: “Chinese Immigrant Leaders Protest Discrimination”; Tape, “Is it a Disgrace?”; Riis, “Chinatown”

Viewing: *Ancestors in the Americas, Part 2, “Pioneers to the American West,”* 60 minutes long. On Reserve in A-V & a group viewing time will be arranged.

Prompts for take-home exam will be handed out in class. Exam is due in class on Friday, February 22.

Feb. 15: Lecture: Why a Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882?

Reading: BrownDocs: Introduction to Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, Chinese Exclusion Act Timeline, Chinese Immigration Figures, Presidential elections, 1872-1880 (bring the documents to class). Get started on your documents for Monday’s debate.

Week Five

Feb. 18: In-class Debate: Chinese Exclusion Renewal, 1893

Reading: Chinese Exclusion Debate Packet –distributed in class on Feb. 11.

Feb. 20: Uprooted or Transplanted?

Reading: Blackboard: Zeidel, "An Immigrant's Anguish: The Americanization of Johannes Johansen." BrownDocs: Handlin, *The Uprooted* excerpt; Bodnar, *The Transplanted* excerpt; Mary Antin Describes Life in Polotzk & Boston

Feb. 22: Lecture: Designing the Nation: Immigration in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920

Bring to class: Immigration History Overview & Demographics of U.S./charts from Day 1 and BrownDocs: set of charts, lists, and tables marked as Progressive Era Data

TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE AT THE START OF CLASS

Week Six

Weekend film viewing: "Hester Street" (90 minutes). On Reserve in A-V. We will organize a couple of group viewing times. This film is optional but highly recommended.

Feb. 25: Work, Culture, and Industrial Politics

Reading: Blackboard: Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up." BrownDocs: Warne, "Real Causes of the Miners' Strike"; "New World Lessons for Old World Peoples"; "The Experience of Becoming a Citizen"

Feb. 27: Interpreting Two Immigrant Memoirs about the Progressive Era

Reading: Blackboard: Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger* from Brown & Shannon, *Going to the Source*; BrownDocs: Bisno, *Union Pioneer* excerpts

March 1: The Men and Women We Want: Gender, Race, and the Progressive Era Literacy Test Debate

Reading: Petit, *The Men and Women We Want*, Introduction & Chapter 1; BrownDocs: National Council of Jewish Women, Report to the Senate Immigration Commission, 1910

Writing assignment: One-paragraph statement of Petit's overall thesis and one paragraph statement of how Chapter 1 thesis contributes to overall thesis. If you can accomplish both tasks in one paragraph, be my guest.

Guidelines for 5-page textual analysis of 1924 Congressional debate on immigration restriction bill will be handed out in class. Paper is due in class on Friday, March 15.

Week Seven

March 4: *The Men and Women We Want*

Reading, Petit, Chapters 2 & 3; BrownDocs: "What America Means," and "How It Feels to be a Problem"

March 6: *The Men and Women We Want*

Reading: Petit, Chapters 4-6

Writing assignment: Half-page statement of the connection you see between Petit's argument and the 1924 congressional speeches (yes, this requires that you visit Burling Reserves and start examining the speeches).

March 8: The 1924 Congressional Debate on Immigration Restriction

Reading: Brown Docs: Daniels, *Coming to America*, pp. 281-284; text of H.R. 7995: the 1924 "Act to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States."

Week Eight

March 11: Lecture: Ethnicity, International Politics, and World War I

Reading: Blackboard: Sterba, Epilogue from *Good Americans*

Writing assignment: Thesis statement for your analysis of 1924 speeches. Bring printed statement to class AND e-mail a copy to me at: brownv@grinnell.edu

March 13: Ethnic Soldiers in the U.S. Army: Victims & Agents

Reading: Blackboard: V. Brown, "Measuring Mental Fitness"

March 15: What Factors Determined Passage of 1924 Immigration Act?

Reading: BrownDocs: The Nation

Week Ten: REVISIONS WILL BE DUE THIS WEEK

Over the weekend, you all need to view “America and the Holocaust” (90 minutes). We will set up

Week Fourteen

May 6: Immigration & African Americans

Reading: Swain, Debating Immigration: Ch. 13, Swain, “The Congressional Black Caucus and the Impact of Immigration on African American Unemployment”; Ch. 14, Etzioni, “Hispanic and Asian Immigrants: *America’s Last Hope*”; Ch. 15, Tilove, “Strange Bedfellows, Unintended Consequences, and the Curious Contours of the Immigration Debate”

May 8: Immigration Policy Reforms

Reading: Swain, Debating Immigration: Schuck, Ch. 2, “The Disconnect Between Public Attitudes and Policy Outcomes”; Ch. 6, Bosniak, “Undocumented Immigrant”; Ch. 7, Pickus & Skerry, “Good Neighbors and Good Citizens”; Ch. 8, Smith, “Alien Rights, Citizen Rights”; Ch. 9, Massey, “Borderline Madness”; Ch. 12, Westoff, “Immigration and Future Population Change in America.” BrownDocs: Calavita, “Why Revive an Inhuman Program?” and Portes, “The Fence to Nowhere”

May 10: Immigration Ethics

Reading: Blackboard: Isbister, “Are Immigration Controls Ethical?” Swain, Debating Immigration: Ch. 5, Macedo, “The Moral Dilemma of U.S. Immigration Policy” BrownDocs: “I’m an American. And You?”; “Breathing While Undocumented”; “My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant”; “Coming Out Illegal”

Prompts for take-home final exam will be distributed in class; essays due on Wednesday, May 15 at 4:00 p.m. either via e-mail or in Mears Cottage.

Memo to: V. Brown Students
From: V. Brown
Re: Class Contract

On the back of this sheet you will find a copy of a Class Contract. If you decide to enroll in this course, you must sign the copy of the contract that will circulate in class next week. The purpose of this contract is twofold: (1) to make clear the expectations that each individual student must meet for successful completion of this course; (2) to emphasize that learning in a class setting is a community experience which bears community responsibilities. By enrolling in this course, you are not only making certain promises to yourself and to me about your performance, you are also — just as importantly — promising your fellow students that you will contribute to their learning by giving them your time, your thoughts, your questions, your interest, and your attention.

Implicit in this contract is my promise that I will come to class prepared and ready to focus solely on the material for this course, AND that I will:

—

CLASS CONTRACT: HISTORY 228

As a class member, I agree to:

1. Regular attendance at class meetings and at any special meetings held outside of class to prepare for class activities. In addition, I understand that it is **my** responsibility to get hold of any hand-outs, assignments, and/or notes missed due to absence from class.

2. Completion of the day's readings and sufficient review of those readings to allow for my active participation in discussion.

3. Consistent, responsible participation in class discussion.

I understand that successful class discussion depends on my participation, my willingness to jump in early, and my responsiveness to what others in the room are saying. I agree to play an active role in the classroom by asking as well as answering questions, by sharing thoughts I had while preparing for class, and by interacting with the readings/authors, Prof. Brown, and my fellow students — even if that means respectfully disagreeing in order to enhance our deliberations.

4. Respectful regard for others' viewpoints.

Out of respect for all those in the past who have been labeled, dismissed, and denigrated because of their opinions, I promise to listen to each member of the class, to work at understanding their views, and to practice ways of responding which invite dialogue.

5. Completion of written work by the due date.

I understand that short writing assignments are meant to enhance class discussion and that I have the freedom to skip three of them. I understand that handing them in for points, after class discussion, constitutes “getting the answers” from my classmates. I agree not to ask for “extensions” on daily assignments.

I understand that I have the unconditional right to ask for **one 48-hour extension** on one of the two take-home exams or on the first version or revised version of the 1924 paper. No reason for the extension need be offered, but if I wish to invoke my 48-hour extension, I must inform Prof. Brown of that fact, via e-mail, at least 24 hours before the due date. Failure to declare ahead of time that I am “invoking my extension option” will cost me 10 points for every day the work is late. (Note the language: you declare your intention to invoke; you do not ask my permission).

6. Careful attention to the quality and appearance of my written work.

Understanding that Prof. Brown will be devoting significant time and energy to addressing students' genuine writing problems, I realize it is crucial that she not waste any time correcting grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors that I know how to correct myself. Therefore, I agree to proofread my written work so that I do not misrepresent my command of mechanics. I understand that these types of errors will definitely lower my grades on written work.

7. Complete honesty in presenting only my work as my work. I understand that the purpose of writing assignments is for Prof. Brown to work with me on my writing, so if I turn in others' writing as my own, I am subverting the entire purpose of the student-professor relationship in addition to violating the college's standards of academic honesty.