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History 330  
Spring 2010  
Rhode Island College

### **History of American Immigration**

“Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America.  
Then I discovered that the immigrants *were* American history.”  
--- Oscar Handlin, eminent historian of American history

The history of the United States is inextricably woven into that of the men and women who have immigrated to this country. This course examines immigration as a universal and individual process, and seeks to compare and contrast the experience of immigrants across chronology and geography. Issues addressed by this course include the causes of immigration, the role of immigrants in the development of the United States and the “American,” the development of nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment, the impact of immigration upon urban areas such as New York and Boston, the significance of race and ethnicity in immigration policy, the role U.S. international relations played in the immigrant story, and the development of ethnic communities and institutions.

#### **Course Format:**

Over the next semester, we will be meeting together to discuss readings, watch films and engage in other activities designed to illuminate the immigrant experience. As the professor, I will limit lecture time to provide for greater in-class investigation and analysis of the big issues which faced Americans in the past, but which are relevant to us today and in the future.

Many activities are therefore designed to help us forge links between the past and the present, and to understand the universal migrant experience.

#### **Assignments:**

Discussion Questions: Each class, participants should bring in one question inspired by the readings. Questions should be carefully crafted to spark the greatest in-class discussion. During class, each participant should be ready to begin discussion with his or her question.

Questions must also be posted on the course WebCT page, so that if we cannot get to everyone’s question during the class, participants can benefit from the ideas of others. Online discussion of the week’s questions can then ensue. Questions should only be submitted for classes attended, but everyone is welcome to participate in online debate or discussion.

News Clipping “Portfolio:” Participants are encouraged to read magazines and newspapers, and to watch news on TV, and bring in any interesting articles dealing with immigration, immigrants, or immigration history to discuss with the rest of the class. There will be a specific section of the course website devoted to links to news articles or relevant and interesting websites identified by class participants. If the article is in paper form, please bring in a copy of the article, which will be kept by the instructor in a news portfolio available to everyone.

Researching the New England Immigrant Experience: We are lucky to live in a region rich in immigration history, from the migrations of the Puritans to the recent arrivals of men and women from around the world. Each participant should choose a topic (to be approved by the professor) which sparks his or her interest. Topics might include a personal investigation into your own family’s immigration, an analysis of an immigrant group’s reception in the U.S., or an examination of the methods used by immigrants to “Americanize” or to maintain traditions from their old home. Because it is the personal stories and experiences of the past which electrify the work of all historians, each paper must include a hefty helping of

primary sources. One of the only topic limitations, therefore, is whether or not you can demonstrate sufficient availability of those sources.

PLEASE NOTE: Copying material *in part or in whole* from any other source (internet, encyclopedia, book, friend, etc.) without properly attributing that material to its actual author is *plagiarism*. Plagiarism robs the original author of his or her intellectual property, and cheats the plagiarer of the benefits derived from engaging in an intellectual pursuit him or herself. As a result, any plagiarism, or submission of work completed for another course, will result in failure.

**Assessment:**

Discussion Questions and News Portfolio	5%
Participation	5%
Mid-Term	20%
Precis of one chapter of <i>Silent Travelers</i>	15%

Note: Precis due at your leisure, before the end of the semester.

Final Exam	25%
Research Paper	30%

**Books To Be Read for Class Discussion:**

Roger Daniels, *Coming to America*

Jon Gjerde, *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History*

Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace"*

Additional articles and readings can be found on JSTOR or will be passed out in class.

**Course Meetings and Due Dates:**

January 27

**Course Introduction and Approaches to Immigration History**

Gjerde, Ch. 1

Daniels, Ch. 1



February 3

**"A New World:" Colonial Encounters, Migrations, and Immigrations**

Kraut, Ch. 1

Gjerde, 31-44.

Daniels, (Ch. 2-3, part of 4), 30-69, plus at least one of the passages focusing upon the Germans, Scotch Irish, Scots, Irish, Welsh, French, Spanish, Swedes, or Jews.

***Paper Goal:** Brainstorm ideas for research paper. Bring in a list of your five most interesting paper topic ideas to discuss with others in class.*

*Café Chats: Meet the Professor! Sign up to chat at the RJC Café!*

February 10

**Early Republic and Notions of Nationhood**

Gjerde, Ch. 3

Daniels, Ch. 5

**In-Class "1790 Town Hall Meeting to Debate Immigration and Naturalization"**

***Paper Goal:** Select one paper topic. Bring in a list of five secondary sources, and two primary source collections which will help you pursue your topic. Be prepared to discuss.*

February 17

**Immigration in the Early-Mid 1800s**

Kraut, Ch. 2

Gjerde, 96-112, and assigned Miller or Conzen article.  
Daniels, Ch. 6.

In-class Documentary: “*Out of Ireland*” 

February 24

**Immigration in an Industrial Age**

Kraut, Ch. 3  
Gjerde, 170-185, and one of the Cinel or Chan articles.  
Daniels, Ch. 7

**Paper Goal:** *Write a one page proposal for your research paper. In the proposal, identify why you find the topic fascinating, the main research question which will drive your research, and a little bit about the context of your topic. Attach to it a tentative bibliography of primary and secondary sources. Be prepared to exchange proposals with other class participants for feedback.*

March 3

**Becoming American at the Turn of the Century**

Kraut, Ch. 4  
Daniels, Ch. 8-9

**Midterm Examination**

In-class film “*Gangs of New York*” 

March 10

**Nativism**

Gjerde, Ch. 5  
Daniels, Ch. 10

**Paper Goal:** *Come prepared to discuss your work-in-progress.*

March 17

SPRING BREAK



March 24

**Immigrant Communities: Old-World Traditions and New-World Life**

Kraut, Ch. 5 and 6.

March 31

**Immigrant Communities: Family and Gendered Relationships**

Anzia Yezierska, “Hester Street,” from *Bread Givers*.  
Gjerde, Ch. 8

In-class film: “*Hester Street*”



April 7

**Immigrant Communities: Work and Politics**

Gjerde, Ch. 7  
Kraut, Ch. 7.

April 14

**Racialization of Immigration and Immigration Laws**

Mae M. Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (Jun., 1999), 67-92.

Gjerde, Ch. 9-10

**Paper Goal:** Bring in two copies of your rough draft of your research paper. One of those copies is to be provided to me, and the second will be peer reviewed by another course participant.

April 21

**International Politics and American Immigration**

Gjerde, Ch. 12  
Daniels, Ch. 11 and 13.

**Paper Goal:** Come to class having read, and constructively criticized, the rough draft of your peer review partner. You will meet with your partner during class to discuss possible revisions.

April 28

**Immigration in Post-Industrial World: The Role of Race and Ethnicity**

Anne Fadiman, "Birth," Ch. 1 from *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*  
Kraut, Ch. 10  
Daniels, Ch. 14

*In-class presentations of research discoveries and conclusions.*

May 5

**Construction of a Myth versus Construction of a Nationality?**

John Bodnar, "Symbols and Servants: Immigrant America and the Limits of Public History," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (June 1986), 137-151.  
Philip Gleason, "The Melting Pot: Symbol of Fusion or Confusion," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1964), 20-46.  
Gjerde, Ch. 14

*In-class presentations of research discoveries and conclusions (continued).*

**Paper Goal:** Final Papers due online.

**Festive Party Celebrating a Successful Semester!**



**Note: The Final Exam will likely occur May 12.**

This course fulfills learning outcomes: 1-9.