

IDH 2930 (un)common read - Soul of America

Section 0242, Class #26461

Course Information

Meeting time: Wednesday, 5th period (11:45am-12:35pm)

Location: Hume 119

Instructor: Selman Hershfield, selman@ufl.edu, 2138 NPB, 352-392-9387

Office hours: Determined by a poll during the first class. Appointments can always be made for times outside of the regular office hours. Office hours will likely be held via Zoom.

Required Course Materials

Jon Meacham, "The Soul of America," Random House, New York, NY (2018). ISBN 978-0-399-589181-2 for hardback version. Any version of the book will be fine.

Course Description

While most would agree that our society is more inclusive than it was 200 years ago, the path to get to this point has not been uniformly upward. The book, "The Soul America – The Battle for Our Better Angels," chronicles the history of civil rights progress and setbacks in the United States. The book covers the reconstruction period after the civil war up to nearly the present with some earlier material to discuss the evolution of the presidency. By understanding the past we gain a greater understanding of the present. While there is no guarantee that Lincoln's "better angels of our nature" will triumph, seeing the dark times that the US has come through before can be a source of optimism.

Etiquette

In this course we will go through the book chapter by chapter with discussions being led by the students. We live in a time where the country is polarized politically and where political discourse frequently resorts to labelling and name calling. In this class you are encouraged to agree and disagree as you see fit, but the dialog should always be respectful of each other.

Assignments

Reading: Prior to the class meeting for each week you will read the chapter assigned for that week. The chapters are not long (20-40 pages), but I end up highlighting or commenting frequently. A schedule is listed in the next section. In class we will discuss questions and insights that you and I bring from the readings. Since I am not a historian, I intend to enter these discussions as an equal – except to make sure that the dialog is related to the book.

Discussion leader: Each week two students will be responsible for bringing to class several (3-5) questions or topics to guide the discussion. We will have a sign-up sheet during the first class to choose your weeks. The list of questions/topics is to be posted to a Google doc linked from Canvas on the Tuesday prior to class.

Participation: It should go without saying that participation is essential for a course like this; however, I would like you to focus on the discussions in class – not whether or not you have said enough during a particular class. If I feel that you have not entered into the dialog enough in class, I may call on you in

class or send you an e-mail to encourage more participation. You will not lose points on this part of the grade without prior notice, except if you are clearly not participating such as, for example, texting friends or playing games on your cell phone (!) or not showing up for class.

Presentations: After we finish reading and discussing each chapter, students give presentations individually or in small groups on particular aspect of the book that resonated with them in relation to what is happening today. The book does end close to the present day; however, there are many parallels between the past and today. Each presentation will be followed by a discussion. There will be class time devoted to allowing groups to work together in planning their presentation.

Schedule

Aug. 25	Course Overview
Sept. 1	Introduction – To Hope Rather Than to Fear
Sept. 8	Chapter 1 – The Confidence of the Whole People: Visions of the Presidency, the Ideas of Progress and Prosperity, and “We, the People”
Sept. 15	Chapter 2 – The Long Shadow of Appomattox: The Lost Cause, the Ku Klux Klan, and Reconstruction
Sept. 22	Chapter 3 – With Soul of Flame and Temper of Steel: “The Melting Pot,” TR and His “Bully Pulpit,” and the Progressive Promise
Sept. 29	Chapter 4 – A New and Good Thing in the World: The Triumph of Women’s Suffrage, the Red Scare, and a New Klan
Oct. 6	Chapter 5 – The Crisis of the Old Order: The Great Depression, Huey Long, the New Deal, and America First
Oct. 13	Chapter 6 – Have You No Sense of Decency? : “Making Everyone Middle Class,” the GI Bill, McCarthyism, and Modern Media
Oct. 20	Chapter 7 – What the Hell is the Presidency for? : “Segregation Forever,” King’s Crusade, and LBJ in the Crucible
Oct. 27	Conclusion – The First Duty of an American Citizen
Nov. 3	Planning for Presentations
Nov. 10	Student Presentations
Nov. 17	Student Presentations
Dec. 1	Student Presentations
Dec. 8	Course Evaluation and Party

Grading

This class uses the following point scheme and letter grade percentages. It is anticipated that everyone who does a good job on each of the above assignments will get an A in the course.

Participation (2 points per class)	30 points
Discussion Leader	25 + 25 = 50 points
Final presentation	20 points
Total	100 points

Final Grades will be assigned based on the following chart:

Points	Grade	Grade Points
93-100	A	4.00
90-93	A-	3.67
87-90	B+	3.33
83-87	B	3.00
80-83	B-	2.67
78-80	C+	2.33
73-77	C	2.00
70-73	C-	1.67
67-70	D+	1.33
63-67	D	1.00
60-63	D-	0.67
0-60	E	0.00

Grade points are assigned based on University of Florida policy:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> .

Class Attendance and Make-Up Policy

With present surge in the coronavirus, please do not come to class if you are sick or if you feel you may have contracted the coronavirus. We can move around discussion leader duties and presentations so you can make it up at a later date. Documentation will be required for an extended absence. If you need to miss a class for a UF sanctioned acceptable reason other than an illness, you should contact the instructor ahead of time to make arrangements. Requirements for class attendance and make-ups, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies specified at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> .

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students> . Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/> . Summaries are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/publicresults/> .

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conducthonor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Important Student Wellness Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu> , 392-1575

Student Health Care Center: 392-1161.

University Police Department: 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). <http://www.police.ufl.edu>

Important Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learningsupport@ufl.edu.
<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling.
<https://career.ufl.edu/>

Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> . Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu>

Writing Studio: 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio>

Student Complaints On-Campus: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code>