

Department of History
University of Wisconsin--Madison
Semester I, 1987-88

History 901
Immigration and Ethnicity in American History

Tuesday, 10-12

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The Field

Immigration and Ethnicity is a broad field. Within American history, its chronology stretches from the beginning to the present day, and its span of importance is equally as long for a number of other nations. Among all the areas of interest to historians, I&E is one whose relevance for the present is unquestionably clear. Moreover, the field incorporates issues from every other historical specialty and includes a host of topics that are also of great concern to specialists in the other social sciences and in the behavioral sciences.

For a long time, immigration and ethnicity was a "poor cousin" in the family of historical fields. By and large, the specialty was deemed parochial, and the number of historians who built desirable reputations exclusively on the basis of work on I&E was small. For weal or woe, however, the field has gained attention in recent years. The literature pertaining to it is burgeoning, and some of the work is as good as any one sees in the discipline.

The Approach

This course eschews the strategy of examining the story of the immigrants and of their assimilation into the receiving society on an ethnic group by ethnic group basis. Although the strategy of focusing on a single nationality or people is reasonable for many research projects, thinking of the whole field in those terms is sterile, because it discourages the search for generalization. Without the existence of such generalizations, the field of immigration and ethnicity has no intellectual standing. Without knowledge of them, the scholar cannot identify what unique elements in the experience of an individual group makes its history interesting or informative.

If their specialty is to be more than antiquarianism, scholars of immigration and ethnicity must assume that the status of being an immigrant or ethnic has an independent, substantive impact on a person's experience. What happens to that person and how he or she thinks and behaves cannot be explained equally

well in terms of his or her income, education, occupation, age, sex, religion, or other such characteristic, alone or in combination. There is a difference between studying immigrants who are also poor and poor people who happen to be immigrants; likewise, the same analytical difference exists between studying immigrants who are also women and women who happen to be immigrants.

What the preceding paragraph insists is that I&E, if it is to be intellectually viable, must give evidence of having analytically distinguishable effects. For that matter, the same can be said about any other factor deemed important enough to serve as the foundation for a field. Nothing in the statement, however, argues that any or all of the factors other than immigrant or ethnic status must be without effect. Each of them may also have an independent, substantive impact. Indeed, for a particular phenomenon, the effects created by one or more of them may be greater than that attributable to I&E. Moreover, immigration and ethnicity and another variable, such as income, may also have a special joint effect in addition to their individual impacts.

The organization of this course reflects the opinions outlined above. Some of meetings will examine immigration and ethnicity as processes experienced generally by a number of groups, each of which may also have had special experiences of interest. Others will analyze how I&E combined with other factors to shape the lives of Americans of the past and present. At all times, the course will strive for sensitivity to matters of peculiar importance to historians. It will be attentive to evidence of change over time, and it will scrutinize the intellectual premises from which research has been and is being conducted.

This seminar is not a course in quantitative social science history (QUASSH to its friends), but it will try to provide you with the tools for understanding the literature of that approach and of its parallels in related disciplines. You will quickly gain an appreciation of, or develop a loathing for, quantification and the social science orientation. If you are truly interested in immigration and ethnicity, the former is the prudent alternative. If you do not learn how to read and evaluate analyses based on quantitative methods, you will be cut off from much of the most important research in this intensively interdisciplinary specialty.

Omitted Topics

It is impossible, in a semester of weekly meetings, to get more than a bare-boned introduction to I&E. This course can only introduce you to the critical issues in the field. The readings chosen are seminal in conception, indicative of recent scholarship, impressive in methodology, or some combination of those traits. Other readings -- sometimes upward of a score -- stand behind each one on the list. Another instructor -- or I, on a different day -- might have assigned one or more of them, instead of those selected. The readings should get you off to a good start, but, if you want mastery, you will eventually have to go beyond them.

Likewise, this course does not cover all the topics that might be included under the rubric of I&E. Time limits are the general reason behind the omissions. Because of those constraints, I have truncated the course both at the beginning and at the end. There is relatively little coverage of the colonial era, despite my belief that patterns of ethnic stratification established then appeared were a framework for later developments. Likewise, the course barely touches on the large literature concerning contemporary immigration, and it therefore cannot examine adequately the insights that historical scholarship and today's policy-oriented analyses might offer each other.

In addition to the lack of time, other reasons have affected the selection of topics. Politics, education, religion, and foreign policy have all received less attention than I would like to afford them, but I have made my decisions based on the following criteria. To give politics more coverage would risk letting it come to dominate the seminar, especially if issues of method were extensively examined. Immigrant schooling is a topic well covered elsewhere in the department and university, and it is not a particular interest of mine. On the other hand, while I am curious about the adaptation of religious groups, I recognize that many students of I&E are not. Finally, the literature for some subjects, like the ethnic impact on foreign policy, is simple enough that students can teach themselves.

Before leaving the issue of neglected topics, I feel the responsibility to call your attention to one more slighted issue. This seminar will not deal directly with the subject of "ethnic character," and, to some extent, that is like studying *Hamlet* without making reference to that Danish prince. The omission bothers me very much, but I have multiple reasons for it. Most important, the literature is inchoate and disproportionately divided among the various ethnic groups that make up the American population. Read piecemeal in a seminar, the literature might promote the stereotyping of ethnic cultures rather than the comparative analysis of them. The field, however, is ripe. Critical examinations of the intellectual and methodological bases of existing works are needed and, after them, substantive research to clarify the issues identified. Scholars who undertake such an endeavor, however, will risk political flaying by those disturbed with the potential for negative cultural judgments inherent in such studies. And, if they execute that difficult research any way but flawlessly, those scholars will deserve that fate.

To compensate for the course's omissions, I shall attempt to provide additional readings on topics covered either inadequately or not at all. I also invite students who want to work on those neglected areas to speak with me individually and to consider working on them for their assigned projects. And, if you choose to handle a sensitive topic, I shall not flay you for mishandling it. I shall simply make you redo it.

Bibliographic Aids

Students seeking bibliographies larger than the ones provided below and as supplements to individual meetings should consult:

- Cordasco, F. *The Immigrant Woman in North America: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected References* (1985)
- Brye, David L. ed., *European Immigration and Ethnicity in the United States and Canada: A Historical Bibliography* (1983)
- John D. Buenker and Nicholas C. Burckel, eds., *Immigration and Ethnicity: A Guide to Information Sources* (1977)
- Wayne C. Miller, ed., *A Comprehensive Bibliography for the Study of American Minorities*, 2 vols. (1976)

They may also find valuable Stephan Thernstrom's *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980)

I shall evaluate student performance on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Classroom participation -- 30%

The success of any seminar depends on the willingness of students to share ideas. In any group there may be some who know a lot and talk but little. I shall try to be an effective moderator and to draw out such students, but ultimately being involved and making yourself heard are your responsibilities. At some point, I must assume that silence signals lack of preparation or intellectual disengagement. Neither trait bodes well for one aspiring to an academic career.

2. Reading reports -- 30%

I expect each student to turn in during the course of the semester three brief papers on the week-to-week readings. Each paper should be approximately 1000 words long. The student may pick the weeks about whose assignments he or she wishes to write. I would suggest, however, that she or he spread the assignments through the semester both to distribute the work load and to be able to extract maximum benefit from my critiques of the papers. In writing a paper the student should attempt to identify a major theme covered in the readings for the week and to discuss how the pertinent chapters and articles contribute to an analysis of it.

3. Major paper -- 40%

Each student will be required to write one major paper for the course. It should be 20 to 25 pages long, and it should examine in depth the assumptions, methods, and findings of the body of literature on a topic relevant to the course. I use the abused word "relevant" to indicate that the student may select a topic formally assigned for classroom discussion or one that is of concern to them but has been to some degree neglected in the seminar. Whatever topic the student chooses, he or she should be willing to read deeply in the literature that backs up the modest samples read for class.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week 1: September 8 Introduction

This first week will be devoted to outlining the course of American immigrant and ethnic history and to identifying the critical issues in the field. History is a discipline accessible to the literate. You should learn what you can by reading on your own. The classroom is the place to discuss ideas and to learn techniques requiring some personal instruction.

Thomas Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History*

Week 2: September 15 Theories of Immigration

Before examining specific instances of migration, we must try to think broadly about the process of migration. The readings will expose you to several important theoretical frameworks. Don't be intimidated by those portions of the assignment that you may understand; just get what you can from them. I shall try to clarify the technical points in class. (This same point holds through for many of the readings assigned throughout the course).

Frank Thistlethwaite, "Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Herbert Moller, ed., *Population Movements in Early European History*, pp. 73-92

Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach, *Latin Journey*, ch. 1

Sune Akerman, "Theories and Methods of Migration Research," in Harald Runblom and Hans Norman, eds., *From Sweden to America*, pp. 19-75

R. Paul Shaw, *Migration: Theory and Fact*, chs. I & VII

Week 3: September 22 Sample Migrations

This week's readings concentrate on four distinct immigrant flows. The rush of immigration from Britain to America in the final years before the Revolution is the subject of Bernard Bailyn's magisterial new book. The Irish immigration, which became a flood in the 1840s, was the first mass influx of aliens since the late colonial era. The stream of Jews arriving at the end of the nineteenth century was an important element of what became known, for a variety of reasons, as the "New Immigration." Finally, their Asian origins made the Japanese, although not especially numerous, loom large in the American consciousness.

Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, chs. 4-6

Patrick J. Blessing, "Irish Emigration to the United States, 1800-1920: An Overview" and "Deirdre M. Mageean, "Nineteenth Century Irish Emigration: A Case Study Using Passenger Lists," in P.J. Drudy, ed., *The Irish in America: Emigration, Assimilation and Impact*, pp. 11-37 and 39-61, respectively

Simon Kuznets, "Immigration of Russian Jews to the United States: Background and Structure," *Perspectives in American History*, 9 (1975), 35-124

Yasuo Wakatsuki, "Japanese Emigration to the United States, 1866-1924: A Monograph," *Ibid.*, 12 (1979), 387-516

Week 4: September 29

Return Migration

Americans tend to think of immigration as a one-way flow -- people coming from "there" to here. Historians believe, however, that a third or more of the people who emigrated to the United States returned to their original homes. What can be learned from that remigration?

- Dino Cinel, "Land Tenure Systems, Return Migration and Militancy in Italy," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 12 (1984), 55-74
- J.D. Gould, "European Inter-Continental Remigration. The Road Home: Return Migration from the United States," *Journal of European Economic History*, 9 (1980), 41-111
- Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*, ch. 7
- George Gmelch, "Return Migration," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 9 (1980), 135-59

Week 5: October 6

Immigration Restriction

After World War I the United States decided to limit sharply the volume of immigration into this nation. Moreover, the quotas that were made available were allocated to the disadvantage of the New Immigrants. The readings for this meeting focus on the historical origins of that policy decision.

- L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, ch. 5
- Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, pp. 192-233
- Oscar Handlin, *Race and Nationality in American Life*, ch. 5
- John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, chs. 8-9
- Yuji Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Response to the 1920 California Alien Land Law," *Agricultural History*, 58 (1984), 157-78
- Alan Kraut *et al.*, "The State Department, the Labor Department, and German Jewish Immigration, 1930-1940," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 3 (1984), 5-38

Week 6: October 13

Labor Issues

Most immigrants who have come to the United States have entered the economy as unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Historians have been interested in the process of mutual adjustment that took place between the newcomers and the work environments in which they found themselves. Some researchers have also looked to the immigrants as conveyors of radical attitudes from Europe. The issues constitute a political mine field, in which ideology often drives interpretation.

- Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach, *Latin Journey*, ch. 2
- Herbert G. Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America," *American Historical Review*, 78 (1973), 531-88
- I. Cohen, "American Management and British Labor: Lancashire Immigrant Spinners in Industrial New England," *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, 27 (1985), 608-50

- David Montgomery, "Immigrant Workers and Managerial Reform," in Richard L. Ehrlich, ed., *Immigrants in Industrial America*, pp. 96-110
- Paul F. McGouldrick and Michael B. Tanner, "Did American Manufacturers Discriminate against Immigrants before 1914," *Journal of Economic History*, 37 (1977), 723-46

Week 7: October 20

Uprooted or Transplanted

Oscar Handlin's famous book, *The Uprooted*, emphasized the toll America exacted on immigrant cultures. John Bodnar's recent work, *The Transplanted*, summarized the scholarship that has sharply modified Handlin's thesis over the past thirty years. To what extent immigrants abandoned old ways, adopted American values, or managed to establish a mixture of both is still a matter of serious scholarly disagreement. The dispute runs parallel to another historiographic debate, in which the issue is the extent of slavery's immediate and long-term destructive effects on Black life.

- Rudolph Vecoli, "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of the Uprooted," *Journal of American History*, 51 (1964), 404-17
- Howard I. Kushner, "Immigrant Suicide in the United States: Toward a Psycho-Social History," *Journal of Social History*, 18 (1984), 3-24
- Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand, Norway to the Upper Middle West*, ch. 8
- Donna Gabaccia, "Kinship, Culture, and Migration: A Sicilian Example," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 3 (1984), 39-53
- Michael P. Weber and Ewa Morawska, "East Europeans in Steel Towns: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Urban History*, 11 (1985), 280-313
- A. Swidler, "Culture in Action," *American Sociological Review*, 51 (1986), 273-86

Week 8: October 27

Women as Immigrants

Examining the experiences of women immigrants promises insights into I&E and into the history of women. Why were women numerically well-represented among some immigrant groups but not among others? Did the challenge to old ways encountered in the New World change the cultural definitions of women's appropriate sphere among the arriving groups? Most important, did the fact that an immigrant was a woman change the essence as well as the accidents of the immigrant experience for her? (Note also how some of the readings in this section run against my disinclination to become involved with "ethnic character." It seems inescapable in the existing literature on this topic. Why?).

- Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, ch. 4, 7
- Lucie Cheng, "Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America," in Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich, eds., *Labor Immigration under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States before World War II*, pp. 402-34
- Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "A Flexible Tradition: South Italian Immigrants Confront a New Work Experience," in Richard L. Ehrlich, *Immigrants in Industrial America*, pp. 67-95

- J. Vincenza Scarpaci, "La Contadina: The Plaything of the Middle Class Woman Historian," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 9 (1982), 21-38
- N. Dunkas and A. Nikelly, "The Persephone Syndrome," *Social Psychiatry*, 7 (1978), 211-16
- Elsa Chaney, "Women in Migration: Colombian Migration to the U.S.," *Migration Today*, 10 (1982), 8-13

Week 9: November 3 **Segregation**

The existence of immigrant and ethnic neighborhoods is a well-recognized phenomenon. Historians, however, must wonder how such concentrations came into existence and how characteristic they were of immigrant and ethnic residence patterns. Likewise, they must related such physical separation with other forms of social distances. The issues to be analyzed involve some tricky conceptual and measurement problems.

- Stephanie H. Greenberg, "Industrial Location and Ethnic Residential Patterns in an Industrializing City: Philadelphia, 1880," in Theodore Hershberg, ed., *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group Experience in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 204-29
- Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Immigrant, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity: Historical Issues," *Journal of American History*, 66 (1979), 603-15
- Stanley Lieberman, "Suburbs and Ethnic Residential Segregation," *American Journal of Sociology*, 67 (1962), 673-81
- Avery M. Guest and James A. Weed, "Ethnic Residential Segregation: Patterns of Change," *American Journal of Sociology*, 81 (1976), 1088-1111
- C. Owen et al., "A Half-Century of Social Distance Research: National Replication of the Bogardus Studies," *Sociology and Social Research*, 66 (1981), 80-98

Week 10: November 10 **Economic Mobility**

How did the immigrants and their descendants fare economically? That question summarizes a set of the most difficult interpretative problems facing historians of I&E. How does the researcher distinguish discrimination against newcomers from the disadvantages immigrants suffer from their lack of skills? What impact do the cultures and values brought by the immigrants have on their access to mobility? Do some ethnic groups enjoy faster success than others? Do the latter ever catch up?

- James Henretta, "The Study of Social Mobility: Ideological Assumptions and Conceptual Bias," *Labor History*, 18 (1977),
- Olivier Zunz, "American History and the Changing Meaning of Assimilation," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 4 (1985), 53-84
- Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970*, ch. 7
- Gary D. Bouma, "Beyond Lenski: A Critical Review of Recent 'Protestant Ethic' Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 12 (1973), 141-55

David L. Featherman, "The Socioeconomic Achievement of White Religio-Ethnic Groups: Social and Psychological Explanations," *American Sociological Review*, 36 (1971), 207-22

Week 11: November 17

Ethnic Politics

It is impossible to do justice in a week to this topic, which could by itself absorb as semester. The focus, therefore, will be on a discussion of the "ethnocultural model" of electoral behavior. The model is controversial, because it is at least partly incompatible with other interpretations that point to ideology and class as the key sources of political divisions. Note also how the ethnocultural model melds the roles of immigrant, ethnic, religious, and other cultural factors in defining voter allegiances.

William E. Gienapp, "Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority in the North before the Civil War," *Journal of American History*, 72 (1985), 529-59

Richard P. McCormick, "Ethno-Cultural Interpretations of Nineteenth-Century American Voting Behavior," *Political Science Quarterly*, 89 (1974), 393-416

Allan J. Lichtman, "Political Realignment and 'Ethnocultural' Voting in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of Social History*, 16 (1983), 55-82

Jerome M. Clubb and Howard W. Allen, "The Cities and the Election of 1928: Partisan Realignment," *American Historical Review*, 74 (1969), 1205-20

Ithiel DeSola Pool, Robert B. Abelson, and Samuel L. Popkin, "Voter Responses to Candidates, Issues, and Strategies in the 1960 Presidential Election," in their *Candidates, Issues, and Strategies*

Week 12 November 24

Acculturation and Assimilation

Many of the sessions to this point have been dealing with topics related to acculturation and assimilation. At this point, it should be possible to consider various theoretical frameworks for understanding those issues. The readings touch on matters of definition, and they draw attention to several paradigms of assimilation that draw together ethnicity with the variables of class, religion, and generation.

Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, ch. 2

Harry S. Stout, "Ethnicity: The Vital Center of Religion in America," *Ethnicity*, 2 (1975), 204-24

Harold J. Abrahamson, "Ethnic Diversity within Catholicism: A Comparative Analysis of Contemporary and Historical Religion," *Journal of Social History*, 4 (1971), 359-88

C.A. Price and J. Zubrycki, "The Use of Inter-Marriage Statistics as an Index of Assimilation," *Population Studies*, 16 (1962), 58-69

Andrew M. Greeley, "Religious Inter-marriage in a Denominational Society," *American Journal of Sociology*, 75 (1970), 949-52

Thomas J. Archdeacon, "Hansen's Hypothesis as a Model of Immigrant Assimilation," in Dag Blanck and Peter Kivisto, eds., *The Third Generation Immigrant Revisited* (forthcoming)

Week 13 December 1

Ethnics and Blacks

Have the experiences of immigrants to the United States and of black Americans been at least partly similar, or have the histories of voluntary and involuntary migration been so dissimilar that attempts at comparison are mischievous, at best? One's instinctive answers to those questions can be a statement of ideological commitment or political temperament. A serious consideration of them, however, is a necessary part of understanding the histories of both groups.

- John Bodnar, "The Impact of the 'New Immigration' on the Black Worker: Steelton, Pennsylvania, 1880-1920," *Labor History*, 17 (1976), 214-29
- John Appel, "American Negro and Immigrant Experience: Similarities and Differences," *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), 95-103
- Peter L. van den Berghe, "Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1 (1978), 401-11
- Wade C. Roof, "'The Negro as an Immigrant Group' -- A Research Note on Chicago's Racial Trends," *Ibid.*, 1 (1978), 452-64
- David L. Lewis, "Parallels and Divergences: Assimilationist Strategies of Afro-American and Jewish Elites from 1910 to the Early 1930s," *Journal of American History*, 71 (1984), 543-64
- William J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race*, chs. 7, 8

Week 14 December 8

Current Controversies

For the past twenty years the theme of "cultural pluralism" has been dominant in I&E. As Milton Gordon has indicated, the term itself is a misnomer, but it serves as a loose description of an attitude that emphasizes not only the resilience of ethnic heritages but also the benefits of social diversity. There are signs, however, of a growing challenge to that outlook. The readings draw from both sides of the debate.

- Rudolph Vecoli, "Return to the Melting Pot: Ethnicity in the United States in the Eighties," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 5 (1985), 7-20
- John Higham, "Current Trends in the Study of Ethnicity in the United States," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 2 (1982), 5-15
- Herbert Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2 (1979), 1-20
- Thomas J. Archdeacon, "Problems and Possibilities in the Study of American Immigration and Ethnic History," *International Migration Review*, 19 (1985), 112-34
- R.D. Alba, "The Twilight of Ethnicity among Americans of European Ancestry: The Case of the Italians," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 8 (1985), 134-58
- Stanley Lieberson, "Unhyphenated Whites in the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 8 (1985), 158-80

Week 15: December 15

Immigration Today

Although its impact on population growth is not what it was in the past, immigration is once again today a salient issue in American politics and social discourse. The literature on the documented (legal) and undocumented (illegal) immigrants and on the refugees arriving at the present is growing at a faster rate than studies on the history of I&E. (By the way, historians have made few contributions to the analysis of contemporary trends or to the debate over policy). This week's reading, however, offers a good synthesis, by an historian, of what is going on in the field.

David M. Reimers, *Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America*