COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course traces the history of the United States since 1800 through its ideas. How have intellectuals understood, reacted to, or participated in such developments as slavery, abolition, the rise of the corporation, Jim Crow segregation, World War II, the Cold War, the social movements of the 1960s, and globalization? How has the role of intellectuals changed with the emergence of the research university and the inclusion of new voices on the national stage? We will explore questions such as these as we read a variety of primary sources from throughout the period, beginning with Social Darwinism and ending with the memoirs of Barack Obama. This class has two main purposes. The first is to introduce you to a particular method of approaching the past. Like social history, cultural history, diplomatic history, and economic history, intellectual history—the study of ideas and intellectuals—offers a specific way of explaining events, which we will explore throughout the quarter. The second purpose of this class is to acquaint you with some of the most powerful, influential, and interesting texts in the U.S. intellectual tradition. By the end of this course, you will have read widely in the canon of U.S. social theory and will be equipped to carry out any number of research projects within the field.

AREA OF CONCENTRATION: Americas

TEACHING METHOD: Lecture

GRADING BASIS: Student option

INSTRUCTOR PROFILE: Susan J. Pearson is an historian of nineteenth-century America with special interest in cultural and intellectual history.