Responsible Speech: Rights in a Culture of Obligation
Christopher Capozzola

in Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: September 2008
Item type: chapter

This chapter focuses on civil liberties during World War I. It shows that during America's first world war, a broad but tentative and fragmented coalition developed around the concept of civil liberties, using rights as a weapon of defense. Americans resisted obligation's coercive aspects and gave voice to a politics that imagined the citizen first and foremost as an individual and as a bearer of rights. They formed social networks, voluntary associations, and political institutions dedicated to realizing this vision. Out of this wartime effort emerged the American Civil Liberties Union, modern First Amendment jurisprudence, and understandings of individual rights in popular political culture that would transform American politics in the 20th century. The trial of Jane Addams, the Espionage Act, the Sedition Act, and the Nonpartisan League are discussed.

Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America
Benjamin René Jordan

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: September 2016
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Contrary to works arguing that both Boy Scouting and mainstream American manhood emphasized primitive virility and martial aggression in the early twentieth century, this book demonstrates that the Boy Scouts of America widely promulgate a popular new construct of “modern manhood.” It combined nineteenth century men's virtues such as self-control and a diligent work ethic with the scientific efficiency, expert management, and hierarchical loyalty that boys in
their adolescence and men needed to adapt to a rapidly urbanizing and industrializing society. Scout leaders utilized a scientific, constructive engagement with nature and natural resource conservation to teach members such values, and to partner with reformers and businessmen to advance a modern vision of “practical citizenship” and nonpartisan service leadership. The book analyzes a wealth of Scout texts and images, policy and membership debates, and local practices as well as surveys and memoirs of boys and leaders reflecting on their experiences in the 1910s and 1920s. By insisting that modern manhood and practical citizenship represented universal values while actively incorporating European immigrant Catholics, Jews, and labor unionists, BSA administrators helped redraw the bounds of mainstream American manhood and leading citizenship to include light-skinned, working class urban dwellers and corporate-industrial employees while marginalizing traditional rural farmers of all ethnicities.

Insurgent Democracy
Michael J. Lansing

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In 1915, western farmers created the starkest challenge to party politics in twentieth-century America. Their movement—the Nonpartisan League (NPL)—deployed novel tactics that challenged existing institutions. In an effort to empower average citizens, the League drove a brief but powerful electoral insurgency. At its peak, almost 250,000 paying members lived in thirteen states and two Canadian provinces. As a result, the NPL dramatically shaped North American politics in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Too often overlooked, the League’s perspective and tactics offer real possibilities for politics today.

Practical Citizenship
Benjamin René Jordan

in Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America: "Citizenship, Race, and the Environment, 1910-1930"

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As civic service initiatives and the growing Progressive reform emphasis on government by expert committees and quantitative analysis displaced
nineteenth century politics’ reliance on partisan loyalty and patronage appointments, early Boy Scouts of America officials partnered with supporters such as Theodore Roosevelt to promulgate a practical civic training program emphasizing nonpartisan, service leadership and performing a Daily Good Turn to those in need. The organization developed a neutral stance on the militarism and preparedness issue by downplaying martial drill and rifles and getting boy members to contribute significantly to civilian service drives during World War One. Boy Scout leaders emphasized the interdependence and camaraderie of the Scout uniform rather than its military connotations. Local and national government officials from all parties and regions responded to these efforts by showering the Boy Scouts of America organization with a range of exclusive privileges: land for camping and hiking, equipment, transportation, outdoor and emergency training, the country’s second federal charter, and the Presidents of the United States serving actively as Honorary Presidents of the Boy Scouts.

Divergent Paths to Racialized Citizenship
Karen V. Hansen

in Encounter on the Great Plains: Scandinavian Settlers and the Dispossession of Dakota Indians, 1890-1930

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Item type: chapter

Dakotas and Norwegian immigrants maneuvered through national debates about integration and adaptation into the American polity from their profoundly different legal statuses. This chapter explores the avenues for political engagement—Dakotas sought amends for their grievances against the U.S. government primarily in the courts, and Norwegians channelled their political voice through the ballot box. For both Dakotas and foreign-born Norwegians, achieving citizenship and finding a means of exercising political voice was tied to owning land. The assimilation project was successful insofar as Spirit Lake Dakotas generally agreed to become landowners and citizens. And Norwegians became naturalized at extraordinarily high rates. Ironically, landowning and citizenship facilitated their attachment to their respective ancestry and language, and enhanced their refusal to accommodate to assimilationist expectations.