**Introduction**

* Introduce: *Intellectual and Cultural History* by Thomas Bender
* What is intellectual history?
  + The history of the people who create, discuss, write about and in other ways propagate ideas.
* What is cultural history?
  + Combines the approaches of anthropology and history to look at popular cultural traditions and cultural interpretations of historical experience.
* Thomas Bender proposes that intellectual and cultural history becomes prevalent in academia during periods of uncertainty about ideas and ability of intellectuals

**Roots of intellectual history:**

* Begins during enlightenment, when ideas were becoming powerful
  + Voltaire: invented the history of “civilization,” civilization an intellectual concept
* First intellectual history by American:
  + Samuel Miller: *A Brief Retrospect of the 18th Century* (1803)
    - The achievements of intellectuals were commendable but clashed with moral progress
    - The first intellectual histories focused on morality versus ideas, and their role in history.
  + George Bancroft (*History of the United States*, 1854-1874) in contrast claimed that ideas directly from an ultimate moral source, God, had inspired the American government, and interpreted no dilemma. Appropriately, he does not dwell on the role of ideas and the intellectual.
* During the second half of the 19th century historians used intellectual history to justify their own ambitions:
  + John W. Draper, founder of NYU medical school, inventor and scientist
    - Detailed the intellectual histories of Europe (*History of the Conflict between Religion and Science,* 1874) in order to further the public opinion of modern science, in order to challenge the pretensions of religious moralism

**Intellectuals as a class of people:**

* Turn of the century “intellectuals” as a class of people became recognized
  + James Harvey Robison 1904 course: “The History of the Intellectual Classes of Europe” legitimized
  + Charles Beard: *The American Spirit: A Study of the Idea of Civilization in the United States”* (1942)
    - Both stressed neo-enlightenment virtues and defined what an intellectual should strive to be: custodians of discourse, keeping their studies outside the influence of class ,tradition or institution.
    - Columbia’s restriction of academic freedom during WW1: caused beard to resign as protest
* Interwar years intellectual history became the prominent undergraduate curriculum at several prestigious colleges including Columbia
* Disillusionment of post-WW1 pushed intellectuals to center stage
  + Intellectuals were tasked with defining the American intellectual past as well as solving the Great Depression

**Intellectual history takes solid form:**

* By 1940s intellectual history had arrived as a discipline, engineered by a new, influential class of intellectuals and became divided into two schools of thought:
  + Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (1936)
    - Documented the **internal history** of ideas and intellectuals, focusing on the evolution of ideas.
    - Rejected external influences such as politics or society
      * “Pure” history of ideas: ideas influence, clash and arise from interaction with one another
  + Merle E. Curti, *The Growth of American Thought* (1943)
    - Focused on both popular and elite writings
    - **External history:**
      * Social and political causation
* At this time: tendency to associate history of ideas with Europe, as it was considered a land of rich thought
  + American histories focused on the external influence of ideas
    - American intellectual culture was deemed not as sophisticated or important, the context and applications were however.
  + Perry Miller challenged these prejudices and false dichotomy as being counterproductive in *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (1953).
  + At same time the American Studies movement began, merging aspects of intellectual history and literary analysis.
    - Richard Hofstadter, Louis Hartz, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., C . Vann Woodward: bridged intellectual history with political history
      * Hofstadter is of particular note: he redefined “political culture” as a study of intellectuals exercising and interacting with different ideas.
    - Henry Nash Smith, Leo Marx: Study of literature and ideas
    - Both groups used their studies to form grand interpretations of the nature of American life.
      * This style of history writing has fallen into disuse, as grand statements require exhaustive evidence.
* As we’ve seen before intellectual history has been intimately connected to the history of intellectuals and the study of what it means to be an intellectual. During the 1960s intellectuals became increasingly self-conscious with their prominence and power in society, leading to a period of exploration.
  + Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1963)
    - Explored the nature and fate of the American intellectual
    - Portrayed intellectuals as alienated victims in a crude society, suspicious of them.
  + Influenced their history writing, depicting past intellectuals in a similar light. See: Robert Davidoff, *The Genteel Tradition and the Sacred Rage,* 1992.
  + Criticized democracy and common consensus.

**Decline of Intellectual History:**

* 1960s-19680: intellectual history became increasing neglected and lost its privilege. At odds with intellectual history:
  + Left’s faith in democracy
  + The failures of intellectuals responsible for designing the Vietnam War + “The Great Society”
  + New impetus for “history from the bottom up” AKA social history. Social history attempts to view historical evidence from the point of view of developing social trends.
  + Intellectual histories of 1950s premised on “consensual pluralism,” latter challenged by social conflicts of 1960s.
* American intellectual history was deemed out of touch by a new generation of historians and largely ignored.
  + Some social historians rejected the importance of the subjective or mental experience as causation in historical actions.
  + Assumed that the majority of people had no intellectual culture, and that their actions alone should be judged.
  + More importantly: pioneering historians such as Herbert G. Gutman (*Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class History,* 1976*)* and E.p. Thompson (*The Making of the English Working Class*, 1963) began to explore the working class experience, interpreting and delineating culture and meaning, creating histories of various subcultures that provided the foundation for the future merging of social and intellectual history to form cultural history.
* Social history has a profound impact on intellectual history:
  + Bender claims that it was during this time of great upheaval that intellectual historians became challenged by the emergent social history and began to ask the following questions: and I quote, “Can one be sure how the writings of intellectuals are read? Do different groups of audiences read them differently? Can they be read by historians in a manner that is sufficiently contextual to grasp their intended and received meanings? What is the role of institutions in the shaping of both the production and reception of knowledge? For whom, in fact, do intellectuals speak? What are the bounds of intellectual discourse? All Americans? Transnational networks? Or identifiable subgroups?”
  + These questions were constituted as a contextual framework to revitalize the riga mortis study of intellectual history through the volume *New Directions in American Intellectual History,* edited by John Higham and Paul Conkin (1979). By incorporating social context into intellectual history, cultural history was created.

**New Intellectual History:**

* Avoids global generalizations and grand theses, focusing on ethnography of groups and their cultures, paying special attention to historical context. Contemporary intellectual history has also emphasized the logic, construction and language of discourses.
* Emphasis on exploring how humans form, extract and accomplish meaning and adopt ideas within the context of language and the institution.
* This study can be divided into three categories, defined by angle of access:
  + Biography, dealing with a person
  + Textual, dealing with a document
  + Community of discourse, i.e. a shared question, a group, institutional setting, or place.
* Biographical approach seeks to explore the intellectual culture of the individual, the individual intellect and its relation and interaction with the greater society, the subject’s impact on the intellectual culture of the period, and the personal experience of the subject within a framework of political ideas and social forces.
  + Example: David Reynolds, *Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography*, 1995.
* The documentary approach analyzes the creations of others in order to recreate a model of the intellectual culture of the period and to establish a portrait of the cultural dynamics of the society, through such documents as diaries, paintings, sculptures, political statements
  + Example: David D. Hall, *The Mental World of Samuel Sewell*, 1989.
* The third approach, the study of the discourse was proposed by David A. Hollinger, *Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals,* 1979.
  + Intellectual history should include examinations of groups of people in reference to their (discourse) on intellectual topics
    - Example: Hazel V. Carby’s examination of the intellectual discourse of black women about their identify and position in a “racialized, gendered, and class-divided society” (*Reconstructing American Womanhood*, 1987).
    - How institutions, disciplines, professions, magazines, artistic cliques, responded to shared questions.
    - How intellectual circles interpreted and evolved their discourse during particular times of change such as WW1, cold war etc

**Cultural History:**

* How does cultural history fit into all of this?
  + Cultural history arose as the bastard child of social history and the renewed discipline of intellectual history.
  + Dozens of areas of study such as women’s, immigrant, working-class, and black culture. Other fields include public culture, economic culture, consumer culture, political culture, religious culture, and intellectual culture. Two noteworthy areas of study are: the nature of hierarchy and exclusivity and reception, both in reference to American cultural institutions.
* Neil Harris stressed the importance of exclusivity and reception in *Cultural Excursions*, 1990, focusing on cultural development in American cities and degrees of unity and differentiation, hierarchy and access. Levine explored these ideas further, formulating them into a compelling thesis.
  + Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in the United States,* 1988.
    - Argued that the history of 1830-World War I was one of “sacralization and exclusion.”
* Reception, or the ability and inclination of the intellect to absorb ideas, especially in regard to a subject’s or subject group’s reading of a text, is another noteworthy area of cultural history study. I.e. reception can be crudely said to be what an individual or group absorbs after being exposed to an enunciation of an idea, the most common exposure being through books.
  + Barbara Sicherman for example illuminated fundamental aspects of American culture by examining diaries and personal records of readers: *Sense and Sensibility: A Case Study of Women’s Reading in Late-Victorian America,* 1989.
  + In this fashion cultural history would evolve by the early 90s to examine the topics of social history while considering the prevalent ideas present, in the tradition of intellectual history

**Main Areas of Study:**

* Intellectual and cultural history, while a diverse field, tends to focus on two distinct time periods:
  + 1770-1820: The main focus is classical republicanism and civic virtue versus liberalism, and the prevalence these ideas had in the minds of people, paying particular attention to how the philosophies influenced the founding of the country; i.e. the intellectual genesis of documents and political actions
    - The field was matured when James Kloppenberg and Forrest McDonald (*The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse,* 1987 and *The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution*, 1985, respectively) proposed a systematic approach by arguing that a number of intellectual traditions and philosophies were available and the actors were not restricted to either liberalism or republicanism.
  + 1870-1920: A great focus on the intellectual history of pragmatism, in particular in documenting the philosophies’ extensive influence on American intelligentsia post-civil war. Particular emphasis has been in recent years leant to the philosopher John Dewey , the wideranging influence and impact of his work, and his role in the vigorous rethinking of American liberalism and democratic theory, signified by Robert B. Westbrook (*John Dewey and American Democracy*, 1991)
* Another notable area of study in recent years has been the social and cultural history of early 20th century America and the emergence of new identities in regard to class, gender, ethnic, racial backgrounds and the arrival of a consumer society.
  + This consumerist culture, argues James Livingston (*Pragmatism and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution,* 1994), had a profound impact on the intellectual habits of the American people, allowing them to construct new identities, liberate new desires, and to represent themselves in politics.
    - While Livingston’s grand argument has many vulnerabilities, it has for many historians established in the words of Thomas Bender, a, “major reorientation in historiography inherent in [his] ambitious sketch toward a synthesis”