

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

By Christopher Capozzola



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Based on a rich array of sources that capture the voices of both political leaders and ordinary Americans, *Uncle Sam Wants You* offers a vivid and provocative new interpretation of American political history, revealing how the tensions of mass mobilization during World War I led to a significant increase in power for the federal government. Christopher Capozzola shows how, when the war began, Americans at first mobilized society by stressing duty, obligation, and responsibility over rights and freedoms. But the heated temper of war quickly unleashed coercion on an unprecedented scale, making wartime America the scene of some of the nation's most serious political violence, including notorious episodes of outright mob violence. To solve this problem, Americans turned over increasing amounts of power to the federal government. In the end, whether they were some of the four million men drafted under the Selective Service Act or the tens of millions of home-front volunteers, Americans of the World War I era created a new American state, and new ways of being American citizens.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book demonstrates the singular significance of America's brief but crucial experience with modern war in 1917 and 1918."--Michael S. Neiberg, *The Journal of American History*

"But do you want Uncle Sam? Capozzola's fresh history of the American past is a bracing challenge to the American present--and future."--James Carroll, author of *House of War*

"Capozzola does an excellent job of rendering the jingoistic, dogmatic mindset that characterized the country at a crucial time...All this the author captures in eloquently rendered and assiduously researched detail."--*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"A well crafted and important work that adds critical depth to the historical understanding of this transformative period of American history. Capozzola convincingly argues that during World War I the power of the state grew at the expense of citizens' rights."--Andrew Wiest, *History: Reviews of New Books*

"A sharp sense of irony and dry wit undergird this eloquent history of how Americans remade their understanding of the relationship between state and citizen in the crucible of World War I. We now live with the massive structures of state power that were first constructed then; we share many of that generation's obligations and anxieties. Can we learn from their mistakes?"--Linda K. Kerber, author of *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship*

"Uncle Sam Wants You immerses readers in one of the formative moments of the twentieth century, when the fervent production of war-time loyalty collided with much weaker voices of civil liberties and dissent. In an eloquent blend of historical narrative and political theory, Capozzola pursues the question: what can the state legitimately demand of its citizens? This is a powerfully told and eye-opening history whose implications will bring readers right up to the present."--Daniel T. Rodgers, author of Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age

"The stresses of wartime inevitably change a society, both in the short and the long term. Christopher Capozzola's *Uncle Sam Wants You* brilliantly illuminates the powerful and often unnoticed impact of World War I on American culture. By so doing, it sheds essential light on contemporary controversies that will

affect the United States for years to come."--Geoffrey R. Stone, University of Chicago

"Capozzola brings politics into social history, and paints a more vivid picture of the pervasiveness of wartime repression than has so far been available...[R]eaders are unlikely to find a fresher, more substantial exploration of the repressive atmosphere of World War I anytime soon."--*The History Teacher*

"You will gain many fresh insights by reading Capozzola's finely nuanced study about how the domestic impact of the war did and did not change the conception of what it meant to be an American citizen."-- Michael E. Parrish, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*

"Capozzola succeeds in bringing political theory to the ground level. Engaged writing style and compelling analysis will make the book useful in advanced undergraduate and graduate history, political science, and political theory courses alike."--Beatrice McKenzie, *The Historian*

"Capozzola writes with a vividness and verve. Essential reading not just for experts in the period but for anyone interested in the broader themes of American history, especially those wanting to learn about the development of its political culture."--Steven Casey, *War in History*

"Readers of Capozzola's book will be struck by the stark contrasts concerning US participation in the Great War and the current war on terror."--*CHOICE*

"Subtle, complex, and remarkably balanced. A very well-written book on a period of American history just now starting to get the scholarly attention it deserves. A book all historians of modern America should not only be familiar with, but be able to enjoy reading as well."--Mark E. Grotelueschen, *Journal of World History*

"This is a fine study of the way US society was changed by the stresses of war and society as well as to the history of the US."--*Times Higher Education Supplement*

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"Ambitious, imaginative, and admirable." -- The Annals of Iowa

About the Author

Christopher Capozzola is an Associate Professor of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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Paul Butler:

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Florence Nguyen:

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Anthony Rouse:

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