



History 17.2 – United States 1877 to Present

Spring 2017

Instructor: Nick Perrone

Course: History 17.2

Course Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00-5:30 PM

Location: Emeritus Hall 1678

Office Hours: TBA

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Introduction and Requirements:

This course is a survey of the history of the United States from Reconstruction to the present. It examines the major economic, social, political, and cultural events that shaped the United States and their impact on American life. This course also examines the United States' increasing involvement in world affairs. Special emphasis is placed on analyzing the cause and effect relationships in U.S. history and on the historical interpretation of events and trends in U.S. history.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this course you should be able to explain the major political, economic, and social developments of the United States from Reconstruction to the present. You will also be expected to explain the increasing role of the United States in foreign affairs since 1865. Throughout the course we will compare and contrast the experiences and contributions of Americans across class, gender, racial, and ethnic lines. We will also identify various interpretations of United States history since 1865.

Expectations:

Full and informed participation (attending class, keeping up with all assigned readings, and actively engaging with discussions) is expected of all students and will comprise 10% of the grade. Several short, in-class quizzes will count for another 15% of the grade. Two short paper will comprise 30% of your grade. 20% of your grade will come from the midterm. The last 25% of the grade will be drawn from the final examination. Please be aware that there will be no late assignments accepted in this class. Failure to hand in any assignment by the deadline will result in a failing grade on that assignment.

A word on e-mail: I will do everything in my power to respond to student e-mails as quickly as I can (within 24 hours, whenever that's possible). That said, I will not accept any assignments via e-mail. And I warn you that I don't always check e-mail more than once a day.

There will be numerous reading assignments and I will expect you to keep up with the readings from class meeting to class meeting. I will frequently ask you to draw upon the assigned reading in order to

participate in class discussions. Some weeks will have more reading than others so be prepared to get a head start on some of the longer reading assignments.

Discussions:

You will be required to answer weekly discussion questions and bring a typed copy of your response to class. Answering the questions is not necessarily all you need to do in order to receive full credit. You need to be sure to have some measure of analysis in your answer. I don't simply want you to report back what the sources said, but do some critical reading and demonstrate that you have the ability to think critically.

You also need to have an argument. This is a good way to think about approaching any writing at the college level. We are beyond the point where you just need to prove that you did the reading. I don't want a book report, but instead I want you to demonstrate that you have the ability to construct an argument from the reading. If I ask about the similarities and differences between slaves and indentured servants, you should be able to make an argument about the nature of unfree labor (was it good? was it bad? were there winners and losers? if so, who were they? was race an issue? if so, why? if not, why not?) The point here is that you can take any number of positions and make a convincing argument. This is the beauty of historical writing. There is not just one single right answer, there are a number of right answers. There are a number of ways to make a convincing argument.

And this leads us to our final part of the argument. In order to receive full credit, you must support your argument with evidence. We all have opinions, but they mean a lot less without evidence to support them. You can say that aliens built the pyramids, but without evidence it doesn't make for a very compelling argument (and you sound crazy). The Major Problems book is where you should be able to find the primary source evidence that you need to support your argument. What you saw on the History Channel, or what your friend told you is not evidence. These are not academic or primary sources. And since this is a college level course, you should be able to demonstrate that you can utilize college level sources.

Finally, be sure to make thoughtful, well-reasoned comments to your colleagues. Just saying, "nice summary," or "I totally agree with what you said here" is not really good enough. Try and actually engage with the argument. You can be critical as long as you are constructive and polite. Our classroom is a safe place to express our ideas, so racism, sexism, homophobia or any other form of intolerance will not be allowed.

A Note on Terminology:

This is just a bit of guidance to help you navigate the sometimes perilous subject of historical terminology. Many of the readings use the term "negro" when referring to African Americans. Most of these readings are from the nineteenth century through the 1960s. From the 1970s forward, that term falls out of favor with the people that it was used to describe, and thus becomes outdated and, in most cases, inappropriate. You should only use the term "negro" in quotes, as I have done, and only when referring directly to how people used the term in the past. It would be best to use the term African Americans at all times, unless directly quoting a text. The term "negro" is no longer appropriate and is

offensive. The term African American did not exist in the nineteenth century, and the word "negro" was the most popular and, at the time, appropriate word for referring to Americans of African descent. Times have changed and that term is no longer appropriate.

The same goes for "colored people." This term is no longer appropriate to use. It was used through the 1960s, but has really been out of favor and become offensive in the last 40 years. If you need to describe all racial minorities in one fell swoop, then the term "people of color" is best. But, you should try and distinguish between racial and ethnic groups at all times. The experiences and situations of minority groups is almost never the same, and thus you should use extreme caution when using the term anyhow.

I don't make the rules, but you should be aware of what is and is not appropriate out in the wider world. Stick with "African Americans" and "people of color" and you should be alright. There are far more nuances to these terms, and more terms that are appropriate or even better to use under certain circumstances, but for now these are a couple good rules to get acquainted with.

Here is a good article to help explain the change over time and place:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/03/30/295931070/the-journey-from-colored-to-minorities-to-people-of-color> (Links to an external site.)

The same rules apply when referring to Hispanics (people who come from Spanish speaking countries), Latinx (people who come from Latin America), and Chicanx (people of Mexican origin). Confused? That's alright, we'll have a whole section on when these terms became more popular and why. Here's a quick video to help you out if you need it: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/hispanic-latino-latinx-difference_us_57e40929e4b0e28b2b52b15e

One more note on terminology while we're at it. Please do not use the term "illegals" when referring to a person or group of people you believe to be in the United States without documentation. Only very serious misbehavior is generally considered "criminal" in our legal system. Violations of less serious laws are usually "civil" matters and are tried in civil courts. People accused of crimes are tried in criminal courts and can be imprisoned. Federal immigration law says that unlawful presence in the country is a civil offense and is, therefore, not a crime. The punishment is deportation (<http://www.tolerance.org/immigration-myths>).



Special Needs and Emergencies:

If you require special educational services due to any special needs of any kind, please see me by the beginning of the second week of class. You will need to provide campus-authorized verification and a list of needed services. Similarly, in the event of serious illness, personal injury, death in the family, or other personal crisis, I will be sympathetic and flexible with assignments if you alert me quickly. A belated excuse for missing class, an exam, or failing to submit a paper will not suffice. For all medical excuses, you will need to provide appropriate and clear written documentation.

Academic Honesty:

Students are expected to observe the standards of scholarly integrity detailed in the Solano Community College Code of Student Conduct and discipline. According to the code, "Academic dishonesty, such as cheating or plagiarism; forgery, alteration, misuse, misappropriation or theft of College papers,

documents, records or identification or knowingly furnishing false information to the District or College or its officers or employees” are all forms of academic dishonesty. Any student appearing to have committed such violations will be referred to the Vice President of Student Services for disciplinary action.

Course Texts:

All books listed below are available for purchase at the campus bookstore, or, if you prefer, via online vendors, and have been placed on reserve at the library.

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

Loury, *Race, Incarceration, and American Values*

Elizabeth Cobbs-Hoffman, Edward J. Blum, Jon Gjerde (eds.), *Major Problems in American History*, Volume 2, 4th Edition

A Note On the Texts:

The textbooks I have selected are designed to accomplish two main tasks. The *Major Problems* book is assigned in order to provide you mainly with primary sources and historical interpretations of those primary sources. Each chapter of this book begins with a basic primer for the period and the sources provided. There are between five and seven short (usually 1-2 pages) and accessible primary sources followed by two different historical interpretations of the period or specific primary sources. There are two essays at the end of each chapter that have been written by professional historians. These two essays offer different interpretations of the period in which we are studying. These historians might be analyzing the same period or events but still come to different conclusions about the cause and effect. This book will provide you with an understanding of how historians “do history.” Essentially, historians interpret and analyze primary sources in order to try and understand cause and effect as well as change over time. This is one of the primary goals of this course, the ability to understand **change over time**. The *Major Problems* book will provide us with a glimpse into the types of primary sources that historians use, along with some essays to demonstrate to you how historians write about those sources. While it is important to learn about important historical actors, **history is not about memorizing names and dates**. Hopefully this book will help drive this point home.

You will use Baldwin to write the short paper, and both Baldwin and Loury to write the long paper. I will explain these assignments in greater detail as we get closer to the due dates.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, **buy the books!!!!!!** (or rent them, or check them out from the library, or download them for free from a sketchy Russian website that will steal your identity and crash your computer) I am not particularly concerned with how you get the books. I am sympathetic to financial restrictions and that is why I have chosen books that are widely available in multiple formats and reasonably priced. You will need the books to complete this course. There is no reason to wait until week three to purchase the books. If you are purchasing the books from an online purveyor that promises to deliver the books within three weeks, then be sure to have a way to access the assigned readings in the interim. If you email me to inform me that your books “are on the way” you will not receive an extension on your assignments. If you get your books early, you will decrease your risk of falling behind.

Part One: Reconstruction and Western Settlement

Week One: Introduction & Reconstruction

1/18 Course Introduction/Review of US History through 1865

Reading: Textbook , Chapter 1

Week Two: Reconstruction

1/23 Reconstruction and its Collapse

1/25 Executive vs. Congressional Reconstruction

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 1

Week Three: The Contested West

1/30 Imperialism

2/1 Gold Fever

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 2

Part Two: From the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era

Week Four: The Gilded Age

2/6 Class Division

2/8 Politics and Culture of Corruption

Reading: Introduction and Chapter 8 of *The Monied Metropolis* by Sven Beckert (I will post this on the course website)

Week Five: Workers

2/13 Race and Industrialization

2/15 The Men and Women Who Really Built America

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 3

Week Six: (class)Warfare at Home and Abroad

2/20 **Washington's Day Holiday (No Class)**

2/22 Imperialism and World Power

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 4

Week Seven: **Midterm**

2/27 Review

3/1 MIDTERM

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 5

Part Three: World War I, II, and The Cold War

Week Eight: Progressive Ebb

3/6 Triangle Shirtwaist Company

3/8 Toward a World War

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 5

Week Nine: WWI, The Depression, and the New Deal

3/13 WWI

3/15 A New Deal for America

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 8

Week Ten: Spring Break

(NO CLASS)

Week Eleven: WWII

3/27 Preparing for War

3/29 Hot Spots in a Cold War

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 9 & 10

Part Four: Abundance, Rebellion, and Reaction

Week Twelve: Affluence and Anxiety

4/3 Affluence and Anxiety

4/5 Unmet Challenges (**PAPER #1 DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**)

Read: Textbook Chapter 11

Week Thirteen: Reform and Rebellion

4/10 Minority Rights

4/12 The Politics of Confrontation

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 12

Week Fourteen: The New Right

4/17 The Rise of the New Right

4/19 End of the New Deal Consensus

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 13

Week Fifteen: Drugs

4/24 An Unwinnable War

4/26 Race and Politics

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 15 and <http://www.thenation.com/article/170841/exclusive-lee-atwaters-infamous-1981-interview-southern-strategy>

Week Sixteen: The Left Moves Right

5/1 Race and Incarceration

5/3 The Reagan Revolution

Reading: Loury Part I (Posted on the course website)

Week Seventeen: The End of the Cold War and Globalization

5/8 The Neoliberal Agenda

5/10 A New American Century?

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 16

Week Eighteen: The Last Right Turn?

5/15 How did we get here?

5/17 Final Review

Final – May 22, Time TBD

Check the finals schedule on the college website to be sure of the final time and date.

*Please note that this syllabus will change as we move through the semester. Inevitably, some discussions and topics will require more discussion than originally planned. This depends on a number of factors including but not limited to class dynamics and current events. I will add and subtract readings depending on the circumstances.