

HIST 2112: United States History 1865-present
Fall 2009
University of West Georgia
TR 3:30-4:45
Pafford 206

Instructor: Richard Primuth
Office: TLC 3103
Office Hours: MW 1-3pm; TR 2-3pm; by Appt.
Email: rprimuth@westga.edu
Website: <http://www.history2112.weebly.com>

What is it about history that makes some people dislike history classes so much? The answer probably has a lot to do with misconceptions people have about what “history” is. The British historian Arthur Toynbee said, history is “just one damn thing after another.” The famous Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes apparently agreed, saying “the literature of the past is a bore.” But any professional historian will tell you that history is about far more than “the facts.” Names and dates are only the beginning. Any fool can tell you *what* happened in the past; the trick is to understand *why*. Look around you. Why is the United States of 2009 the way it is? Why does it have the social, cultural and political structures it does? How did it get that way? Why do you and I and our fellow citizens speak, act and believe as we do? The goal of HIST 2112 is to think about some possible answers. (Dr. Brian A. Doyle, UGA)

Course Description: This course is a broad survey of the growth and change within the United States from the end of the Civil War to the present. Through lectures, readings, discussions and other activities we will examine political, cultural, and social themes in this nation’s recent history. We will study not only such events as wars and presidential assassinations, but social issues such as immigration and women’s rights, as well. We begin with emancipation and reconstruction, move through Progressivism, two world wars, the Civil Rights Movement, the nation’s shift to the right, and end with the administration of America’s first African-American president. The course is fairly light in reading, but emphasizes development of writing skills. Critical thinking and good analytical skills are essential in today’s workplace, and sharpening those skills will be a centerpiece of this course.

Course Objectives: In addition to gaining a basic understanding of themes, issues and events in American history since 1865, students will develop critical reading, writing, and thinking skills. Students will come out of the course with a broader understanding of the United States’ place within a global context, the nations’ diversity and the significance to their own lives.

Required Texts:

America: A Concise History, Vol. 2: Since 1865 (4th edition), by James A. Henretta and David Brody
The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents, by Jo Ann E. Argersinger

Course Requirements:

Movie Review: You will need to write a 2-3 page review of a movie dealing with any topic in American history since 1865. After a short introduction and summary of the movie, the paper should concentrate on the film's strengths and weaknesses. Was it accurate? Did it have a slanted viewpoint? Was it good history? Why or why not? The paper needs an introduction, argument with supporting evidence and a conclusion. Movie suggestions include (but are certainly not limited to): *Birth of a Nation*, *The Miracle Worker*, *Inherit the Wind*, *Matewan*, *Tora!Tora!Tora!*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Ghosts of Mississippi*, *Stonewall*, *All the President's Men*, *Apollo 13*, *Taking Woodstock*, or *W*. (Due September 10)

Book essay: Read and be ready to discuss *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents* on October 13. On that day there will also be a short essay (2-3 pages) due. Discuss why this incident was important for women's rights, class issues, workers rights, or for immigration (pick one). You will need to develop an argument and use examples from the documents to bolster that argument. (Due October 13)

Research Paper: For this paper you may choose any topic in U.S. history since 1865. In this 6-8 page work you will need to introduce your subject, form a historical argument, use evidence to support that argument, and write a convincing conclusion. This paper will need footnotes and is expected to follow the *Chicago* documentation style. We will discuss this in more detail during class. (Due November 17)

Exams: There will be three non-cumulative exams given in the course. These exams will be a mix of short identifications and essay questions. You will need to bring your own blue books which can be purchased throughout campus. (September 22; October 27; TBA)

Class Participation: This will determine a substantial portion of your grade and includes attendance and participation in class discussions.

Extra Credit: You may write a short (2-3 pages) review of a visit during the semester to a history museum, exhibit or site for extra credit. This needs to be a critical essay. Did the site or exhibit seem to have an overall theme or message? Were there historical inaccuracies? What was done well and what was done poorly? Please include a copy of your ticket or pass with a date attached to this paper. Suggested sites include the Atlanta History Center, *America I Am: The African American Imprint* at the Atlanta Civic Center (ends September 6), Historic Banning Mills (in Whitesburg, Ga.), *Documented Rights* at the National Archives (in Morrow, Ga.), Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, Margaret Mitchell House and Museum, and Roosevelt's Little White House Historic Site. (Due anytime through November 13)

Grading:

Movie Review: 10%
Book Essay: 10%
Research Paper: 20%
Exam 1: 15%
Exam 2: 15%
Exam 3: 20%
Class Participation: 10%
Extra Credit: up to 5%

Grading Scale:

90% + A
80% + B
70% + C
60% + D
59% - F

Writing Assistance: This course has several writing assignments constituting 40% of your possible grade. If you are struggling (writing does not come easily to most people) seek help sooner rather than later. Suggestions include:

- The UWG Library website (includes citation and style guides, as well as important history databases such as America: History & Life)
- The Writing Center (TLC 1201)
- College writing skills books (many of these are quite good and can be found online for less than \$1.00)
- Peers (having another pair of eyes proof your work is always a good idea)
- Class Instructor (I am happy to give any help that I can)

Class Rules:

- Turn cell phones off during class; this is common courtesy
- No food in class, beverages are fine
- Attendance is expected, and please be on time
- This is an academic environment, show respect for others
- Academic honesty is expected. Do not submit the work of others as your own. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and is not tolerated at this university. For details see the Student Handbook, appendix A and the history department statement on plagiarism: <http://www.westga.edu/~history/statementonplagiarism.pdf>

Tentative Course Outline:

Week 1 (August 13-14): Course Introduction

Week 2 (August 17-21): Reconstruction
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 15

Week 3 (August 24-28): The West/Industrialization
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapters 16 and 17

Week 4 (August 31- September 4): Urbanization/Gilded Age politics
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapters 18 and 19

Week 5 (September 8-11; no classes Sept. 7): Progressivism
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 20
Due: Movie review (September 10)

Week 6 (September 14-18): American Empire/ World War One
Read: Henretta & Boyd, pages 616-633 and chapter 22; online document

Week 7 (September 21-25): Modernity and the Great Depression
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 23
Exam 1: September 22

- Week 8 (September 28- October 2): Roosevelt and the New Deal
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 24
- Week 9 (October 5-9): World War Two
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 25; online documents
- Week 10 (October 13-14; no classes Oct. 12, 15, 16): Class discussion
Read: *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents*
Due: Book essay (October 13)
- Week 11 (October 19-23): The Cold War/American affluence
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapters 26 and 27; online document
- Week 12 (October 26-30): Camelot and the Great Society
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 28
Exam 2: October 27
- Week 13 (November 2-6): Civil Rights
Read: Documents to be assigned (online)
- Week 14 (November 9-13): The 1970s
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 29
- Week 15 (November 16-20): The Reagan Revolution and the 1980s
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 30
Due: Research paper (November 17)
- Week 16 (November 23-24; no classes Nov 25-27): Globalization
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 31
- Week 17 (November 30- December 4): From Bush to Obama
Read: Henretta & Boyd, chapter 32
- Final Exam: TBA