

History 5473

Recent America: The United States Since 1945

Fall 2008

Instructor: Dr. Dan Williams
Office Hours: TLC 3225
T, Th, 11:00-12:30
Wed., 10-12, 1-4
(and by appointment)

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Class Location:
Pafford 204
T, Th, 2-3:15

Description:

This course will offer you an opportunity to analyze important societal trends in the United States from 1945 to the early twenty-first century, and will equip you to assess the central influences that have shaped recent American history. In this course, we will discuss race relations, gender roles, cultural and intellectual trends, technological developments, the economy, politics, religion, literature, the media, family life, youth culture, education, immigration, demographic changes, attitudes toward crime and poverty, and many other aspects of postwar American life.

Classes will consist mainly of interactive lectures and discussions. In addition, graduate students will participate in weekly, one-hour, small discussion sessions that examine current monographs and articles on postwar American history.

Learning Outcomes:

In this course, students will learn critical thinking skills and the ability to analyze diverse perspectives, and they will also gain the knowledge needed to evaluate American societal trends in their historical context. This course will also help students to improve their writing, research, and communication skills.

The graduate component of this course will emphasize historiographical trends in the field, and will give graduate students a better understanding of the scholarship in this historical discipline, which may help them in preparing for research projects in other areas of their graduate program.

Assessment:

Students' final grades will be determined as follows:

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Midterm exam | 15% |
| Book analyses | 20% |
| Research paper | 25% |
| Class participation | 20% |
| Final exam | 20% |

There will be no opportunity for extra-credit assignments in this course.

Grading Methodology: This university does not use a plus / minus grading system, but during the course of the semester, I will use plus / minus grades, as well as split-letter grades (e.g., an A- / B+), in order to evaluate students' written work with precision. In computing final course grades, I convert all grades into numeric scores according to the following system:

A = 95

A/A- = 94

A- = 92

A-/B+ = 90

B+ = 88

B+/B = 87

B = 85

B/B- = 84

B- = 82

B-/C+ = 80

(A similar pattern is used for grades in the C-range).

In computing final course grades, a grade average of 89.5 or higher converts to a course grade of A, a grade average between 79.5 and 89.49 converts to a course grade of B, and a grade average between 69.5 and 79.49 converts to a course grade of C.

A-range grades, including the grade of A-/B+, are reserved for work that is of exceptional quality. In order to receive an A-range grade on an essay assignment, a student's essay must show evidence of original thinking and the ability to synthesize information from a wide variety of sources, as well as an accurate understanding of the material and good writing technique. Papers that receive a grade of 90 or above must be cogent and persuasive in their argumentation, and they must be well written and tightly organized around a strong thesis. In short, a paper that receives an A-range grade not only meets the basic requirements for the assignment, but also demonstrates that a student has mastered the interpretative, analytical, and writing skills expected for a course at this level.

B-range grades are given to essays that demonstrate a student's accurate understanding of the material, adequate use of the assigned documents, and competence in writing. They rarely contain the sophisticated analysis required for an A-range essay, but they meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

C-range grades are given to essays that contain factual inaccuracies, errors in interpretation, inadequate use of the assigned documents, or poor writing technique, even though they usually meet most of the basic requirements for the assignment.

Failing grades are assigned to work that does not meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

Exams: Graduate students will take two take-home exams in this course. You will receive the midterm exam essay question on October 7, and you will have until 4pm on October 14, to submit a 5-7 page essay in response to that question.

The take-home final exam will also require you to respond to an essay question. I will give you the exam on December 4, and you will have until 4pm on December 9 to write 8-10 pages in response. The midterm and final exams will test your ability to analyze the concepts covered in class readings, discussions, and lectures.

Book analyses and research paper: You are required to write two 4-6 page summaries of two of the eight books that you read for this course. That analysis is due on the date on which the graduate discussion for the book takes place. A book review should give a brief summary of the book while highlighting the author's thesis or point of view, and it should also evaluate the historical significance of the subject. It should include a detailed analysis of the book's relationship to broader historical trends discussed in the textbook and the lectures. If you are reviewing a work of historical scholarship, you should discuss its usefulness to researchers and its relationship to other work in the field to the extent that you are able to do so. If you are evaluating a journalistic analysis, discuss the historical context in which it was written and the ways in which historians can use it as a source for their work. As a graduate student, you will be expected to demonstrate some awareness of the historiographical significance of the book that you review.

You will also be expected to write one 12-15 page research paper for this course. Consult the online guidelines for research papers for more information about this assignment.

Papers that are turned in after the assigned date will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are overdue.

It should go without saying that all papers that you write must be your own work, and that any students who are caught plagiarizing another student's work, a paper from a web site, a textbook, or any other source will automatically fail this course and may be subject to further disciplinary action. Plagiarism is a serious offense that will not be tolerated.

All of your written work for this class must be original; you are not allowed to submit essays that you have written for other courses or that you have completed prior to this semester.

Class participation: Classes will consist of interactive lectures, which will give you a chance to ask questions and discuss the ideas presented in the readings. I will also expect you to attend weekly discussion sessions that I will hold for the graduate students. Most of your class participation grade will be based on your participation in these weekly meetings. At these sessions, we will discuss historiographical questions and the readings in greater depth, and will also discuss some of the graduate readings that do not appear on the undergraduate syllabus.

Class communication: I may send out periodic email communiqués to students in this course, so please check your UWG email account regularly. The university administration has stipulated that all email communication between faculty and students should take place on UWG email accounts, so please use your UWG email account for all electronic communications that you send me.

University policy also prevents me from disclosing grades over email, so if you would like to discuss your grade on any assignment in the class, please set up an appointment to meet with me in my office. Please do not email me with a request for your grades, since I am not allowed to email that information to you.

To protect students' privacy rights, I will not return graded papers or exams to any third party (e.g., a student's friend or relative who asks to pick up a student's work on that person's behalf) unless a student gives me permission in writing (e.g., an email) to do so. There are occasions when I must disclose a student's grade to university administrators or other history department faculty (e.g., the department chair, students' advisors, or the graduate studies coordinator), but in all other cases, I will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of students' grades.

I would like to do whatever I can to help you succeed in this course. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have a question about any subject pertaining to this class. I make it a priority to respond promptly to emails from students, and I am happy to talk with students during my office hours, so please feel free to stop by my office anytime that you want to discuss your concerns about this course. I believe that this will be an excellent semester, and I'm pleased to welcome you to this class.

Required readings:

Graduate students in this course will follow a reading list that differs from that of the undergraduates who are taking HIST 4473. The following books are required for graduate student discussions, and can be ordered online or at the university library through GIL Express:

Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). ISBN: 978-0674009745.

Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). ISBN: 978-0807848487.

Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). ISBN: 978-0691095134.

Hugh Davis Graham, *Collision Course: The Strange Convergence of Affirmative Action and Immigration Policy in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). ISBN: 978-0195168891.

Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1989). ISBN: 978-0465030552.

Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001). ISBN: 978-0306811265.

Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). ISBN: 978-0691058887.

Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). ISBN: 978-0807857977.

Class Schedule:

- 8/19 Introduction: Postwar America
Graduate meeting: Introduction to the course
- 8/21 The Beginning of the Cold War
- 8/26 Families in an Age of Affluence
Graduate discussion: May, *Homeward Bound*
- 8/28 Youth Culture in the 1950s
- 9/2 Undergraduate book discussion of Pete Daniel, *Lost Horizons*
Graduate discussion: Daniel, *Lost Horizons*
- 9/4 The Quest for Civil Rights in the 1940s and 1950s
Research paper topic due.
- 9/9 Pursuing the Dream: the Civil Rights Movement in the Early 1960s
Graduate discussion: Writing the history of the civil rights movement
Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Historical Review*, 96 (1991): 456-471 (JSTOR).
Charles W. Eagles, "Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era," *J. of Southern History*, 66 (2000): 815-848 (JSTOR).
- 9/11 Postwar Liberalism
- 9/16 Undergraduate book discussion of John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me*
Graduate discussion: Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*
- 9/18 Poverty in Postwar America
- 9/23 The Vietnam War, the New Left, and the Antiwar Movement
Graduate discussion: The historiography of the 1960s and the Vietnam War
Rick Perlstein, "Who Owns the Sixties? The Opening of a Scholarly Generation Gap," *Lingua Franca*, May / June 1996
[<http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/9605/sixties.html>].
Christopher C. Lovett, "A Walk in the Sun: Reflections on Teaching the Vietnam War," *The History Teacher*, 31 (November 1997): 77-92 (JSTOR).
George C. Herring, "American Strategy in Vietnam: The Postwar Debate," *Military Affairs*, 46 (April 1982): 57-63 (JSTOR).
William M. Hammond, "The Press in Vietnam as Agent of Defeat: A Critical Examination," *Reviews in American History*, 17 (June 1989): 312-323.
- 9/25 Youth Rebellion and the Counterculture

Source list for research paper due.

- 9/30 Black Power, *Bakke*, and Backlash
Graduate discussion: Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*
- 10/2 Rights Consciousness and the Emergence of Multiculturalism
- 10/7 Undergraduate book discussion of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
Graduate discussion: Black Power
Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, 345-375 (online course reserves).
Peniel E. Joseph, "Black Power's Powerful Legacy," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 21, 2006 (EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete).
- 10/9 No class (Fall Break)
- 10/14 The Sexual Revolution and Gay Liberation
Graduate discussion: Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*
- 10/16 The Feminist Movement
- 10/21 *Roe v. Wade* and America's Debate over Abortion
Graduate discussion: Zaretsky, *No Direction Home*
Midterm exam essay question distributed.
- 10/23 Undergraduate book discussion of Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*
- 10/28 Environmentalism in an Era of Limits
Graduate discussion: Ralph H. Lutts, "Chemical Fallout: Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, Radioactive Fallout, and the Environmental Movement," *Environmental Review: ER*, 9 (1985): 210-225.
Midterm exam essay due.
- 10/30 The Emergence of the Sunbelt
- 11/4 The Religious Revival of the 1970s
Graduate discussion: Schulman, *The Seventies*
- 11/6 A New Conservatism
First draft of research paper due.
- 11/11 Race, Crime, and Drugs
Jonathan Rieder, "The Rise of the 'Silent Majority,'" in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 243-268.
- 11/13 Undergraduate book discussion of Samuel G. Freedman, *The Inheritance: How*

- Three Families and the American Political Majority Moved from Left to Right*
(New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998)
- 11/18 Decade(s) of Greed
Graduate discussion: Ted V. McAllister, "Reagan and the Transformation of American Conservatism," in *The Reagan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism and its Legacies*, ed. W. Elliot Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 40-60 (online course reserves).
Alan Brinkley, "The Problem of American Conservatism," *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994): 409-429.
- 11/20 The Information Age
- 11/25 Immigration and Globalization
Graduate discussion: Graham, *Collision Course*
- 11/27 No class (Thanksgiving)
- 12/2 Undergraduate book discussion of *Dreams from my Father*
Graduate discussion: Michael Jones-Correa, "Reshaping the American Dream: Immigrants, Ethnic Minorities, and the Politics of the New Suburbs," in *The New Suburban History*, ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 183-204 (online course reserves).
Research paper due.
- 12/4 America in 2008
Final exam question distributed
- 12/9 **Final exam essay due at 4pm**