

History 4473-01W

Recent America: The United States since 1945

Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Dan Williams

Office Hours: TLC 3207

MWF, 12-1pm

Wed., 3:30-4:30pm

Thurs., 10am-5pm

(Additional office hours available by appointment)

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Class Location:

Pafford 208

MW, 2-3:20pm

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, changes in popular understandings of morality, and many other aspects of postwar American life.

Classes will consist mainly of interactive lectures and class discussions. I encourage all students to participate by asking questions during lectures and making comments in discussion sessions. There will also be opportunities for short student presentations on designated days throughout the semester.

This is a Discipline Specific Writing (DSW) course, so writing assignments, including a research paper, will be a central component of this class.

Learning Outcomes:

Through the papers and exams in this course, students will demonstrate critical thinking skills and the ability to analyze diverse perspectives, as well as the ability to evaluate American societal trends in their historical context. The assignments in this course will also require students to demonstrate their writing, research, and communication skills.

Assessment:

Students' final grades will be determined as follows:

Midterm exam

15%

Research paper	30%
Short essay assignment	15%
Class participation and presentation	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 and D-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 grade average of 59.5, which converts to a D, is the lowest possible passing grade in the course.

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.

D-range and failing grades are assigned to work that fails to meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

Exams: There will be an in-class midterm exam and a take-home final exam. The midterm exam will consist of essay questions and I.D. terms, and will emphasize broad themes presented in the lectures, discussions, and readings. One week before the exam, you will receive a study guide that will give you more information about the material covered on the test. I will give a make-up exam only in cases of a pre-arranged, excused absence for which documentation must be provided, or in cases of a legitimate health or family emergency that must be documented with a doctor's note, dean's note, or similar measure of proof. In all other cases, a make-up exam will not be an option.

The take-home final exam will consist of essay questions. I will give you the exam questions on December 2, and you will have until 11:59pm on December 7 to write 8-10 pages in response to the essay questions.

Short essay assignment: This essay, which is worth 15 percent of your class grade, should be 4-6 pages long. There are two possible ways to complete the assignment:

Option 1: Select four movies on a similar theme – two from one particular decade from the 1950s through the 1980s, and two from a different decade during that same time period – and analyze the differences in the ways that theme is portrayed in the four movies. For instance, you might choose a theme such as gender, race relations, youth culture, marriage and family life, attitudes toward children, moral values, or any other theme of your choice, and analyze the development of that theme in the movies that you have selected. A good essay will trace changes in the portrayal of that theme over time and relate those changes to cultural and societal developments that are discussed in class lectures and assigned readings.

Option 2: Interview four different people who are at least 60 years old to find out how they experienced a particular historical development of the 1960s, such as the civil rights movement or the Vietnam War. Write a comparative essay that analyzes their experiences in historical context and explains the possible reasons for any differences in their perspectives on the historical event that they describe.

The short essay is due on October 21, but you need to submit your selected theme for the short essay (with a list of the four movies that you plan to analyze if you choose that essay option) by September 30.

Research paper: The most important assignment of this course is an 8-12 page research paper. The research paper is designed to be a semester-long project. The research paper topic and source list are due in September. The first draft is due on November 4, and the final version of the paper is due on December 2. You will have opportunities to discuss your research with me throughout the semester, and you will receive feedback on your first draft from several of your

classmates, as well as from me. Consult the online guidelines for research papers for more information about this assignment.

For all writing assignments, please consult the writing guidelines that the history department has posted on the College of Arts & Humanities' website for DSW courses (http://www.westga.edu/dsw/index_10083.php), as these guidelines will be used as a standard to evaluate work produced in this course.

Plagiarism policy: Plagiarism, which is the presentation of someone else's words or ideas as your own, is a serious offense that will not be tolerated. It should go without saying that all papers that you write in this course must be your own work. Any students who are caught copying words or ideas from another student's work, a website, a textbook, or any other source, and presenting these words or ideas as their own work without proper attribution, will be charged with plagiarism. Students who have engaged in academic dishonesty will automatically fail this course and will be reported to the university administration for possible further disciplinary action. Please look at the course website to find guidelines on proper footnoting procedures, tips for avoiding inadvertent plagiarism, and a detailed explanation of what constitutes plagiarism. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to properly cite sources, please ask, because I will be happy to provide explanations. Ignorance is not an excuse for plagiarism; it is your responsibility to read the materials on plagiarism that are posted on the course website and to take all necessary steps to avoid plagiarizing someone else's work.

The UWG history department's policy on plagiarism can be found here:

http://www.westga.edu/~histgrad/academic_honesty.html. As this document states, "Any use of the ideas, information, or words of anyone else, including paraphrasing of the words and ideas, without crediting them is plagiarism and is a crime. A direct quote of the words (even only a few words) of someone else must be in quotation marks as well as have a note indicating its source."

More information about the university's honor code and the consequences for violating it can be found here:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf.

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: Your class participation grade will be based primarily on your CourseDen book summary posts, your primary source presentation, your participation in class discussions, and the written feedback that you give your classmates on their research paper drafts.

Your primary source presentation should be approximately 3-5 minutes long. For this presentation, you should choose a *New York Times* article from the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s, and give a short presentation analyzing what you can learn about cultural, social, or political attitudes during that decade from that one newspaper article. If you choose to give a presentation on an article from the 1950s, your presentation will be scheduled for September 16. If you choose to present on an article from the 1960s, your presentation will be scheduled for October 26.

Presentations on articles from the 1970s will be scheduled for November 4. You will not receive an individual grade for your presentation, but I will factor my evaluation of the presentation into your class participation grade.

As part of your class participation, you should write short summaries of each of the five assigned books and post those summaries on CourseDen. Each book summary should consist of at least two paragraphs that briefly summarize the book, highlight an idea that you found particularly interesting or provocative, present an observation that will lead to further discussion, and suggest at least one intriguing question for the class to discuss. I will not assign these CourseDen posts a letter grade, nor will I evaluate them on the basis of grammar or structure, but I will instead treat them as I would comments that you make in class, and I will consider their content when I formulate class participation grades at the end of the semester.

After posting your summaries of the book, you should comment on the ideas presented in at least two other student posts. You should post your comments sometime before the class meeting in which we discuss the assigned book. Thus, for example, you should post your summary of Alan Petigny's *The Permissive Society* (which we will discuss in class on September 16) no later than 11:59pm on September 15, and your responses to at least two other students' summaries of this book no later than 2pm on September 16. For more information on this assignment, please consult the guidelines for the book summaries that are posted on the course website.

Your class participation grade will also be based on your level of engagement in our class discussions. Most classes will consist of interactive lectures, which will give you a chance to ask questions and discuss the ideas presented in the readings. I do not have a formal attendance policy, but since students cannot participate in class discussions if they do not attend class, habitual absences, as well as habitual silence in class throughout the semester, could negatively affect a student's class participation grade.

Finally, your class participation grade will also be affected by the feedback that you offer your fellow classmates on the research papers that they submit. Shortly after the first drafts of the research papers are due, each student in the class will likely be given between two and four paper drafts to read and critique. You will have approximately ten days to read and comment on these drafts.

Students with accessibility and accommodation needs: I am very happy to accommodate all students with documented disabilities or special testing requirements. For more information on obtaining the requisite documentation for any disability or to learn more about Accessibility Services, the Center for Academic Success, and the University Writing Center, go to: http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf.

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.

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, other history department faculty, or athletic coaches who need to know the academic status of students on their team, 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 to introduce yourself and discuss any concerns that you may have about this course. I believe that this will be an excellent semester, and I'm pleased to welcome you to this class.

Required readings:

The following books are available in the college bookstore, and are required:

Alan Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). ISBN: 978-0521757225.

J. Todd Moye, *Ella Baker: Community Organizer of the Civil Rights Movement* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013). ISBN: 978-1442215665.

Michael W. Flamm and David Steigerwald, *Debating the 1960s: Liberal, Conservative, and Radical Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007). ISBN: 978-0742522138.

Catherine E. Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage through the New Right* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). ISBN: 978-0807856529.

Helen Marrow, *New Destination Dreaming: Immigration, Race, and Legal Status in the Rural South* (San Jose, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011). ISBN: 978-0804773089.

Class Schedule:

- 8/24 Introduction: Postwar America
- 8/26 Postwar American Liberalism
- 8/31 The Cold War
- 9/2 Religion and Morality in the 1950s
Research paper topic due
- 9/7 No class (Labor Day)
- 9/9 Families in an Age of Affluence
Research paper source list due
- 9/14 Youth Culture in the 1950s
- 9/16 Class Discussion: Was the 1950s a liberal or conservative decade?
CourseDen post on Alan Petigny, *The Permissive Society* due by 11:59pm on Tuesday, September 15
Primary source presentations on the 1950s
- 9/21 The Quest for Civil Rights in the 1940s and 1950s
- 9/23 The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s: A Discussion and Evaluation
CourseDen post on J. Moye Todd's *Ella Baker* due by 11:59pm on Tuesday, September 22
- 9/28 Poverty in Postwar America
- 9/30 The Vietnam War, the New Left, and the Antiwar Movement
- 10/5 Youth Rebellion and the Counterculture
- 10/7 The Sexual Revolution, Rights Consciousness, Secularization, and Morality
- 10/12 The Feminist Movement, Gay Liberation, and New Attitudes toward Sexuality
- 10/14 The Feminist Movement and Abortion
- 10/19 Black Power, *Bakke*, and Backlash
Week of 10/19: Meetings with individual students to discuss research paper
- 10/21 Sixties Liberalism and American Politics, 1960-1980: From JFK to Carter

Short essay due via CourseDen by 11:59pm

- 10/26: Assessing the 1960s: A Class Discussion and Debate
CourseDen post on *Debating the 1960s* due by 11:59pm on Sunday, October 25
Primary source presentations on the 1960s
- 10/28 **Midterm Exam**
- 11/2 An Era of Limits: Environmentalism, the Energy Crisis, and Stagflation
- 11/4 The Religious Revival of the 1970s
Primary source presentations on the 1970s
First draft of research paper due
- 11/9 A New Conservatism
CourseDen post on Catherine Rymph's *Republican Women* (read pp. 1-13, 131-249)
due by 11:59pm on Sunday, November 8
- 11/11 Race, Crime, and Drugs
- 11/16 The Economics of the Reagan Era
Comments on other students' papers due via email
- 11/18 Cultural Conflict and the Politics of the Family
- 11/23-11/27 No classes (Thanksgiving break)
- 11/30 Immigration and Globalization
CourseDen post on Helen Marrow's *New Destination Dreaming* due by 11:59pm on Sunday, November 29
- 12/2 American Politics and Society in the Twenty-First Century
Final version of research paper due
- 12/7 **Final exam essay due via CourseDen by 11:59pm**