HIST 5473
Recent America: The United States Since 1945
Fall 2017

Instructor: Dr. Dan Williams
Office Hours: TLC 3207
T, Th, 9:30-10:30am
Wed., 10am-12pm, 2-5pm
(Additional office hours available by appointment)
Class Location:
Pafford 208
T / Th, 2:00-3:15pm

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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.

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 demonstrate the ability to:
1) Conduct historical research (assessed through the research paper assignment);
2) Formulate and defend a historical argument in Standard English (assessed through the research paper assignment).

Assessment:
Students’ final grades will be determined as follows:
Midterm exam 25%
Research paper 30%
Class participation 20%
Final exam 25%

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-
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 19, and you will have until 11:59pm on October 28 to submit an 8-10 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 essay question on November 30, and you will have until 11:59pm on December 5 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. The questions for both exams will be based heavily on the information covered in the assigned graduate readings.

**Research paper:** The research paper is a major component of this course. The research paper may cover any topic of your choice from 1945 to 2001. If you are a graduate student pursuing an M.A. in history, your research paper should be approximately 15-20 pages long. If you are a graduate student pursuing an M.Ed., MAT, MBA, M.A. in a non-historical field, or any degree other than an M.A. in history, you may submit a research paper that is only 8-12 pages in length. 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 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.

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:


### Class Schedule:

8/10  Introduction: Postwar America

8/15  Postwar American Liberalism  
**Graduate discussion: Articles on Truman and Postwar American Liberalism**  

8/17  The Cold War: Foreign Policy

8/22  The Cold War: Politics, Culture, and the Economy  
**Graduate discussion: Articles on the Politics of the Cold War**  

8/24  Religion and Morality in the 1950s

8/29  Families in an Age of Affluence  
**Graduate discussion: Petigny, The Permissive Society**

8/31  Youth Culture in the 1950s  
Undergraduate primary source presentations on the 1950s

9/5  The Quest for Civil Rights in the 1940s and 1950s  
**Graduate discussion: Articles on the Civil Rights Movement**  
9/7  The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s

9/12  Poverty in Postwar America

Graduate discussion: Articles on the War on Poverty

9/14  Sixties Liberalism: John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson

9/19  The Vietnam War

Graduate discussion: Articles on the 1960s and the Vietnam War

9/21  No class (instructor speaking at University of Oklahoma)

9/26  The New Left, the Religious Left, and the Reaction against the Vietnam War

No graduate discussion

9/28  Black Power and Backlash

10/3  Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement

Graduate discussion: Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*

10/5  No class (fall break)

10/10  Sixties Conservatism: Goldwater, Reagan, Buckley, and YAF

Graduate discussion: Articles on Conservatism in the 1950s and 1960s

10/12 Second-Wave Feminism

10/17 The Sexual Revolution, Rights Consciousness, Secularization, and Morality

**Graduate discussion: Spruill, Divided We Stand**

10/19 Assessing the 1960s
Undergraduate primary source presentations on the 1960s (graduate students not required to attend class)

10/24 Feminism of the 1970s and the Debate over Abortion and the ERA
No graduate discussion

10/26 Undergraduate midterm exam (no class for graduate students)

**10/28 Midterm exam essay due via CourseDen by 11:59pm**

10/31 An Era of Limits: Environmentalism, the Energy Crisis, and Stagflation
No graduate discussion

11/2 The Culture Wars of the 1970s

11/4 **First draft of research paper due via CourseDen by 11:59pm**

11/7 From Nixon to Carter
Undergraduate primary source presentations on the 1970s

**Graduate discussion: Articles on the New Right**

11/9 Reagan and the New Conservatism

11/14 Neoconservatism, Neoliberalism, and the Economics of the Reagan-Clinton Era

**Graduate discussion: Hartman, A War for the Soul of America**
11/16  Immigration and Globalization

11/21 & 11/23 No class (Thanksgiving break)

11/28  9/11, the Financial Crisis, and the Challenges of the 21st Century
        Graduate discussion: Stuesse, *Scratching out a Living*

11/30  America in the Age of Obama and Trump

12/2   Final version of research paper due via CourseDen by 11:59pm

12/5   Final exam essay due via CourseDen by 11:59pm