

HIST 2020: The United States since 1877

Fall 2017
Mitchell Hall 315
MWF, 9:10–10:05 am

Contact Information

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Course Description

Everything has a history—everything, including the United States, despite our tendency to focus on what is happening *right now* and what is about to happen *any minute*. In this class, we will examine various episodes of American history from the end of Reconstruction to the present day, as the nation transformed itself into a multiracial democracy and the greatest military, economic, and cultural power in the world. We will learn to think historically, so that we can look at American society today and see beyond the 24-hour news cycle.

Course Objectives

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- interpret and analyze primary and secondary sources
- use primary and secondary sources to form a historical argument
- think historically, utilizing the 5 Cs of history (change over time, causality, context, complexity, and contingency)
- understand basic facts and concepts about the history of the United States since 1877

Readings

Your required readings will be uploaded to the course website at www.wrblack.com/hist2020fa18.

The textbook for the class is:

- Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History*, 5th ed., vol. 2 (www.amazon.com/dp/0393614190)

I will draw on this book for lecture material, but I will not assign any readings from the book. Nor will I expect you to know anything in the book that isn't discussed in class or included in your assigned readings.

Why would you want the book at all? Well, the book provides background and detail that I won't have time to provide in class. This will be particularly valuable if you don't remember much from your high-school U.S. history class. The book will also help you figure out what you would like to focus on for your research project.

What if that sounds great but you don't want to spend \$70? I would encourage you to find a cheap used copy online of an older edition. Just be sure it's Volume 2 and not Volume 1—we're not going to be talking about Pocahontas or George Washington. Another option is the free, online history textbook *The American Yawp* (www.americanyawp.com).

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss what accommodations I can make. You should also contact:

Disability Resources for Students
110 Wilder Tower
(901) 678-2880

Assignments

Reading Responses

If you turn to the course schedule, you'll notice that several of the days look this:

W 9/6	Remembering the Civil War
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francis Miles Finch, "The Blue and the Gray" • Frederick Douglass, "Speech Delivered in Madison Square, New York, Decoration Day, 1878"

This means that on Wednesday, September 6, we will discuss these two readings in class. It also means that you should email me your response to these readings by Tuesday, September 5, at 6:00 pm.

You will not receive credit if you email the response past 6:00 pm.

The response should first include the following:

- Something you learned or were surprised by
- A historical question the reading led you to ask

Then, if you're responding to a primary source, include the following:

- An argument you could make using the primary source or sources
- One quotation *per source* that supports your argument, and why it supports your argument

Or if you're responding to a secondary source, include the following:

- The author's argument in no more than three sentences
- How the author uses a single primary source (just pick one) to support their argument

There will be 10 responses total. Each response is worth 4 percentage points of your grade, adding up to 40% of your grade.

Class Participation

Class participation is worth 10% of your final grade. I will grade you chiefly on the basis of our reading discussions—not only how much you talk but how much you listen. Don't worry if it's not your personality to talk a lot—if you're listening and engaged, I'll know. Halfway through the semester I will give you a preliminary class participation grade, and if you'd like we can talk one-on-one about improving it by the semester's end.

Research Project

Throughout the semester you will be working on a research project, which can be about any topic in U.S. history since 1877. You'll basically be doing everything required to write a research paper without writing the actual paper. The project will consist of the following chunks:

- **Chunk 1:** An annotated bibliography of at least six secondary sources (including at least two books and at least two articles)
- **Chunk 2:** An annotated bibliography of at least six primary sources
- **Chunk 3:** A thesis statement
- **Chunk 4:** A thesis-driven bibliography of at least four secondary sources and at least eight primary sources (you're perfectly free to use sources from your previous bibliographies), explaining how each source is related to your thesis
- **Chunk 5:** Final revised thesis statement and thesis-driven bibliography, including a reflection on the 5 Cs of historical thinking

I will devote time in class to explaining each of these chunks and let you know in fuller detail what I'm looking for. Each of the five chunks is worth 10% of your grade—adding up to a total of 50%.

Chunk 5—a final revision of Chunks 3 and 4—will serve as your final exam. Don't expect to just turn in Chunks 3 and 4 without revising them and expect to get a good grade. (That's a whole letter grade, I should note.)

Grading

Your numerical grade in the course will be determined according to this chart:

Assignment	Points
Reading Responses	40
Class Participation	10
Research Project Chunk 1: Secondary Source Bibliography	10
Research Project Chunk 2: Primary Source Bibliography	10
Research Project Chunk 3: Thesis Statement	10
Research Project Chunk 4: Thesis-Driven Bibliography	10
Research Project Chunk 5: Final Draft of Chunks 3 and 4	10

And your letter grade will be determined according to this key:

Grade	Points
A	90–100
B	80–89
C	70–79
D	60–69
F	0–59

I reserve the right to raise your final grade if your performance improves significantly during the semester.

Schedule

M 8/28 Course introduction

W 8/30 Course introduction

F 9/1 The Compromise of 1877

M 9/4 NO CLASS (Labor Day)

W 9/6 Remembering the Civil War

F 9/8 Remembering the Civil War

- Frederick Douglass, “Speech Delivered in Madison Square, New York, Decoration Day, 1878”
- “Forrest Again in White Shroud,” *Memphis News-Scimitar*, April 30, 1905

DUE: Two possible research paper topics by Saturday, Sept. 9, 11:59 pm

M 9/11 Research Paper Topic

W 9/13 Finding Secondary Sources

F 9/15 The Spanish-American War

M 9/18 The Spanish-American War

- Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden”
- Mark Twain, “The War Prayer”

W 9/20 Ida B. Wells

F 9/22 Ida B. Wells

- Readings TBD

M 9/25 Hollywood

W 9/27 Hollywood

F 9/29 Hollywood

DUE: Secondary source bibliography by Sunday, Oct. 1, at 11:59 pm

M 10/2 Finding Primary Sources

W 10/4 Finding Primary Sources

F 10/6 Kotex

M 10/9 Kotex

- *Very Personally Yours* (1948)
- *You're a Young Lady Now* (1959)

W 10/11 World War II and the Cold War

F 10/13 World War II and the Cold War

- Readings TBD

M 10/16 NO CLASS (fall break)

W 10/18 Primary Source Bibliography Workshop

F 10/20 NO CLASS

DUE: Primary source bibliography by Sunday, Oct. 22, at 11:59 pm

M 10/23 The Interstate Highway

W 10/25 The Interstate Highway

- Readings TBD

F 10/27 NO CLASS

M 10/30 Writing a Thesis Statement

W 11/1 Birth Control and the Sex Revolution

F 11/3 Birth Control and the Sex Revolution

- Readings TBD

DUE: Thesis statement by Sunday, Nov. 5, at 11:59 pm

M 11/6 Equal Rights Amendment

W 11/8 Equal Rights Amendment

- Gloria Steinem, "Testimony before Senate Hearings on the Equal Rights Amendment"
- Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?"

F 11/10 Thesis-Driven Bibliography Workshop

M 11/13 April 1968

W 11/15 April 1968

F 11/17 Memphis Burning

- Preston Lauterbach, "Memphis Burning"

M 11/20 Memphis Burning

DUE: Thesis-driven bibliography by Tuesday, Nov. 21, at 11:59 pm

W 11/22 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

F 11/24 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

M 11/27 Revision Workshop

W 11/29 The Kardashians

F 12/1 The Kardashians

- Anne Helen Peterson, “How Kim Kardashian Pushed the Boundaries of Celebrity Pregnancy”

M 12/4 Conclusion

W 12/6 More conclusion

DUE: Research project by Friday, Dec. 8, at 12:30 pm