

GHIST 225: United States History

Sections 41 - 44

Fall 2010 • Harrison Hall 1261

6:30 - 7:45 pm (Tuesday and Thursday)

Professor: Dr. Daniel Kerr

Office: Jackson 206

Office Hours: Th 11:00 – 12:20 am,

Tu & Th 1:30 – 3:20 pm

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Course Description

This course is designed to change the way you think about the history of the United States. Most students tend to think of U.S. history as a collection of facts relating to political events such as the American Revolution, the Civil War, the two world wars, and a litany of presidential elections. That has been the focus of the older style of political history. In this course we will move beyond political history to consider newer approaches to the past. In particular the recent research conducted by social historians and environmental historians will provide the substantive backbone for this course.

Rather than focusing on prominent individuals, this course will place ordinary people on the center stage. The course will pay close attention to the unfolding of the capitalist economic system and its consequences for the lives of these everyday individuals. We will also seek to understand how economic changes have altered people's relationships with the natural world. Throughout the semester close attention will be paid to the transformation of nature into a commodity, the changing patterns of people's lives as workers and consumers, and the evolving conceptions of race and gender over time. Instead of talking about Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, we will discuss the histories of topics as varied as McDonalds, paper towels, suburbs, cars, prisons, groceries, and hunting. The goal of this course is to provide you with a new appreciation for the study of the past.

Objectives

This course is designed to achieve four major objectives. Content: students will be familiar with the major events, themes, and issues in US history. Chronology: student will understand the importance of change and continuity over time, including the importance of cause and effect in history. Analysis: students will understand the methods employed by historians in collecting and analyzing evidence. Synthesis: as the culmination of the critical thinking process, students will be able to produce written and oral synthesis of evidence with a thesis and conclusion based on a responsible use of that evidence.

Requirements

Classroom Participation and Attendance: (20%)

In each class we will spend a significant portion of the period discussing the readings assigned for that week. Students are expected to actively participate in these discussions in an informed manner. This requires students to be present for each lecture and discussion section, to read the weekly assignments, and to be attentive to the materials presented through lectures. **Students are expected to come prepared for each discussion session with questions they may have about the material.** Informed participation includes raising these questions, fleshing out the arguments presented in the readings, analyzing and evaluating the conclusions of the assigned texts, discussing the implications that the arguments have on our larger understanding of history and summarizing the state of the conversation at hand. **Informed participation not only demands you speak, but that you actively listen to the issues that your classmates raise.** Unexcused absences count as a -1, attendance coupled with active listening counts as a 0, and informed participation in discussion counts as +1. At the end of the semester, a total score of 0 will earn a C (75), and a score of 24 (or however many discussion days we end up having) will earn an A+ (100) on the participation portion of the grade.

Analytical Reviews: (25%)

You will be expected to write four analytical reviews over the course of the semester. The reviews should be between two and three double spaced pages with 12 pt. Times New Roman font and standard margins. You can choose the weeks that you write your reviews, but you must have two completed by October 11th, and you must submit two essays in the weeks after that date. **The papers must be uploaded to the course drop box on Blackboard by 4:30 pm on the Monday prior to your discussion section.** Additionally the papers must be submitted in hard copy and in person at the start of your discussion section. Papers turned in late will be penalized 1/2 letter grade if they are uploaded after the 4:30 pm deadline on **Monday** and an additional letter grade for every 24 hours following the deadline.

The papers must focus on the secondary readings assigned for the week they are turned in. For example, reviews turned in on September 13th will focus on the Kathleen Brown chapter. Your essays need to address the major arguments or thesis developed in these chapters, but the reviews need to go beyond a simple summary of the material. They should draw conclusions and make an argument/reaction clearly expressed in your own thesis statement. Your original arguments/reactions can draw from material presented in the lectures, the textbook, and the primary source readings assigned. You need to back up your argument with properly cited evidence – including direct quotations.

Quizzes: (15%)

Multiple choice quizzes will be administered periodically to gauge your familiarity with the readings and lecture material. You will need to bring a #2 pencil to every class period. If you miss class on the day they are given, you will not be allowed to make up the quizzes. If you have a medically excused absence, the quiz will not count in your overall average.

Midterm Exam: (15%)

The midterm exam will be held on Tuesday, October 19th. It will include synthetic essays that ask you to examine major themes developed in the first half of the course. The questions will be provided to you prior to the exam. You will need one 8" by 11" bluebook for the exam.

Final Exam: (25%)

Your final exam will be held Saturday, December 11th from 8:00-10:00 am in Godwin Hall 336 and 338. It will be a comprehensive exam – meaning it will include material from the first half of the semester. The exam will be comprised of several essay questions. The exam will attempt to evaluate your understanding of the major themes of the course and the specific arguments of the historians we read. A list of essay questions will be provided to you prior to the exam. You will need two 8" by 11" blue books for the exam.

Grading Policy

(A) means genuinely outstanding, mastery of the subject, near flawless exposition, and incisive interpretation. **(B)** means well above average achievements in mastery of the subject, exposition, and interpretation throughout the course. **(C)** means comprehension of the basic concepts, competent exposition, and interpretation. The grade of **C** indicates that the student has learned the subject at an appropriate university level. **(D)** means unsatisfactory but still barely passing. **(F)** means failure. These grades are earned by the student and reflect student performance.

Plagiarism and the Honor Code

Academic integrity is part of the James Madison University Honor Code. This means students may not give or receive help during examinations. A student must do all the work on a paper bearing his/her name. JMU defines plagiarism as “the deliberate copying, writing or presenting as one's own the information, ideas or phrasing of another person without proper acknowledgment of the true source.” In the following cases, such a misleading impression is given:

1. Failure to give credit in a footnote for ideas, statements of fact, or conclusions derived from another writer.
2. Failure to use quotation marks when quoting directly from another writer, whether an entire sentence or only a phrase is quoted. In addition, all quotations must always be footnoted.
3. Close and extended paraphrase of another writer even if credit is given in a footnote.
4. Footnoting directly to a source that is quoted or cited by another author but that has not been examined by the writer of the paper, unless proper credit is given in a footnote.

Plagiarism need not be deliberate; it may be committed unintentionally through carelessness or ignorance. Since accidental plagiarism in a paper is indistinguishable from deliberate dishonesty, a student must be alert to avoid the sort of carelessness or ignorance that may leave him or her open to a charge of having plagiarized another's work. Students who are suspected of violating the Honor Code will receive a failing grade and be brought before the Honor Board. For further information see: <http://www.jmu.edu/honor/>

Readings, Blackboard and Course Webpage

Available at the Bookstore

Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! (Seagull, 2nd ed.)* (**Recommended—not Required**)
Three 8” by 11” bluebooks (for essay exams) and one sharp #2 Pencil (for quizzes)

Blackboard

This course will have a Blackboard Page. The page will include a discussion board, access to the supplementary readings and folders to submit your review essays. Instructions for logging on are located at: <https://blackboard.jmu.edu>

Course Webpage

<http://people.jmu.edu/kerrdx/GHIST225>

Registration and First-Week Attendance Policy

JMU Course Registration Policy

Students are responsible for registering for classes and for verifying their class schedules on e-campus. Late course additions will not be permitted. The deadline for adding and dropping a fall semester class without instructor and academic unit head signature is Tuesday, September 7, 2010. Between September 8, 2010 and Thursday, September 16, 2010, instructor and academic unit head signatures will be required to add a class. The deadline to withdraw from a semester long class with a “W” grade is Thursday, October 28, 2010.

College of Arts and Letters First-Week Attendance Policy

At the instructor’s discretion, any student registered for a class in the College of Arts and Letters who does not attend the first two (2) scheduled meetings of the class (or does not attend the first scheduled meeting of a class that meets once a week) may be administratively dropped from the class. Students dropped for non-attendance will be notified via e-mail by the Associate Dean of the College. Students who fail to attend the first two meetings of a class for which they are registered but who do not receive an e-mail notification have not been administratively dropped by their instructor. Unless those students drop the course on their own, they will receive a grade at the end of the semester. All students are responsible for verifying the accuracy of their schedules and changes made in their schedule via e-mail and through the web.

Please Note: This class will be conducted under the aegis of the AAUP 1940 statement of Academic Freedom, the essence and spirit of which is affirmed in the current JMU Faculty Handbook. The syllabus is subject to amendment or change at the discretion of the professor.

Course Map

Week 1 (August 30 – September 3): In the beginning there was Pangea

Give Me Liberty!, Chapter 1
Discussion sections will meet for introductions and ground rules.

Week 2 (September 6 – 10): Colonial Landscapes

Give Me Liberty!, Chapter 2.

Primary Source:

Gerrard Winstanley, “A Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England”

Secondary Source:

P. Linebaugh and M. Redicker, “Hewers of Wood,” *The Many Headed Hydra*, pp. 36-70.

Week 3 (September 13 - 17): Colonial Labor and Society

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 3 & 4

Primary Sources:

Richard Frethorne, letter to his father and mother, March 20, April 2 & 3, 1623
Gottlieb Mittelberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750*
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, pp. 70–88.

Secondary Source:

Kathleen Brown, “Vile Rogues and Honorable Men,” *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs*, pp. 137-186.

Week 4 (September 20 – 24): Revolution and Reaction

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 5-7

Primary Source:

Brutus, *To the free and loyal inhabitants of the city and colony of New-York...*

Secondary Source:

Barbara Clark Smith, “Food Rioters and the American Revolution,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, pp. 3-38.

Week 5 (September 27 – October 1): Expansion of Slavery

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 9-11

Primary Sources:

“Our Hearts are Sickened,” Letter from Chief John Ross of the Cherokee, Georgia, 1836
“Time Did Not Reconcile Me To My Chains”: Charles Ball, 1837

Secondary Source:

Ronald Takaki, "The Metaphysics of Civilization" *Iron Cages*, pp. 80-107.

Week 6 (October 4 – 8): Rise of Industrial Capitalism

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 8, 12 & 13

Primary Source:

"We Call On You to Deliver Us From the Tyrant's Chain": Lowell Women Workers Campaign for a Ten Hour Workday

Secondary Source:

David Roediger, "Neither a Servant Nor a Master Am I," *The Wages of Whiteness*, pp. 43-64.

Week 7 (October 11 - 15): Civil War and Reconstruction

October 11th: Your first two reviews must be turned in by this date.

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 14 & 15

Primary Source:

"There Was Never Any Pay-day For the Negroes": Jourdon Anderson Demands Wages

Secondary Source:

Leon Litwack, "Back to Work: The New Dependency," *Been in the Storm So Long*, pp. 387-449.

Week 8 (October 18 - 22): Commodification of Nature

Tuesday, October 19th: Midterm Exam

Give Me Liberty!, Chapter 16.

Secondary Source:

Wobblies!, Selections posted on Blackboard. (Note: You cannot do an analytical review for this week)

Week 9 (October 25 – 29): Imperial Expansion

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 17-19

Primary Sources:

American Soldiers in the Philippines Write Home about the War

Albert Beveridge, "The March of the Flag"

Documentary: Hijacking Catastrophe, movie shown during class period

Week 10 (November 1 - 5): Fordism and the New Consumer Culture

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 20-21

Primary Source:

Christine Frederick, "The 'One Best Way' to Wash"

Secondary Source:

Susan Strasser, "Having and Disposing in the New Consumer Culture," *Waste and Want*, pp. 161-201.

Week 11 (November 8 – 12): *Postwar Consumer Culture: Automobiles, Cities and Suburbs*

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 22-23

Primary Sources:

Home Owners Loan Corporation Appraises Los Angeles, 1939
Destination Earth (Shown in Class)

Secondary Source:

Thomas Sugrue, "The Deindustrialization of Detroit," *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, pp. 125-152.

Week 12 (November 15 – 19): *Civil Rights and Grassroots Resistance*

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 24-25

Documentary:

Freedom on My Mind (Note: The movie is 1 hr and 50 min long. The viewing will take place in the classroom on Thursday evening. You will not get out until 8:30 pm. Please plan accordingly as attendance is mandatory)

Secondary Source:

Robin D.G. Kelley, "Congested Terrain," *Race Rebels*, pp. 55-75.

Week 13 (November 22 – 26): *Thanksgiving Break*

Week 14 (November 29 – December 3): *Burgers and Fries*

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 27

Primary Sources: (Compare Both Essays for Your Analytical Review)

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, Chapters 9 - 11, p. 99-129.
Eric Schlosser, "The Most Dangerous Job," *Fast Food Nation*, pp. 169-190.

Week 15 (December 6 – 10): *Gated Communities*

Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 28

Primary Sources: (Focus on the Davis Essay for Your Analytical Review)

Anthony Gentile and John Applling Interviews (Shown in Class)
Mike Davis, "Fortress LA," *City of Quartz*, pp. 221-264.

Final Exam (Saturday, December 11, 2010):

8:00-10:00 am in Godwin Hall 336 and 338

Please note date and plan accordingly. Makeup exams will not be offered.