

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of History
Winter/Spring, 1987-88

HISTORY 398
The History of the United States, 1945 - 1987

Professor John Sharpless
History Department
263-1800

COURSE CONTENT:

The intent of History 398 is to provide an overview of economic, political and social trends since World War II. Naturally, the course will draw heavily on other social science disciplines (economics, political science and sociology) for much of its material. However, we will attempt to chart cultural and artistic trends as well.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance at both lectures and discussion section is required. To "test" for attendance at lectures, there will be occasional surprise quizzes. Although the points allotted to the lecture quizzes are few, they could make the difference at the end of the course. Discussion points will be awarded to students who attend discussion sections regularly. There will also be occasional short assignments to encourage reading and discussion on a weekly basis.

There will be an "in class" mid-term examination and a "take-home" essay examination, in addition to the final examination. The contribution of each component of the course will be weighted by the following percentages:

Discussion Section Points.....	15%
Lecture Quizzes.....	5%
Mid-term Exam (in class).....	25%
Take-Home Essay Problem.....	25%
Final Examination.....	30%

REQUIRED READING:

Students should be warned that the reading requirements for the course are considerable. In addition to the books on order at the University Bookstore, there will be a photocopied booklet of materials and/or some reserved readings. The books on order at the bookstore are:

- N.L. Rosenberg & E.S. Rosenberg, I Our Times (Prentice-Hall).
- Sohnya Sayers, et al., The Sixties Without Apology (U of Minn.).
- Peter Carroll, It Seemed Like Nothing Happene (Holt Paperback).
- Steven Ambrose, Rise to Globalism (Penguin).
- Myra MacPherson, Long Time Passing (Signet).

- *Sara Evans, Personal Politics (Vintage).
 - *R. N. Bellah, et al., Habits of the Heart (Harper Paperback).
 - *Paul Conkin, Big Daddy From the Pedernales (Twayne).
- (* = purchase optional)

I realize that for some students a book list of this size may pose a financial burden. I have requested, therefore, that these books be placed on three (3) hour Reserve at both H.C. White Library and the Historical Society Library.

EXAMINATIONS AND GRADES:

In order to avoid any confusion over the direction and content of the course, we will be distributing the questions for midterms and the final (in class) on January 28. It should be stressed that these are not simply study questions. They are the examination questions just as they will appear on the examination.

The total number of points possible for all assignments, tests and quizzes is 500. The number of points necessary to attain each grade level are as follows:

Grade	Points Total
A	460-500
A/B	410-459
B	360-409
B/C	310-359
C	250-309
D	220-249
F	0-219

We reserve the right to give the grade of "F" to any student who fails to meet the basic requirements of the course, regardless of their point total. In other words, you are expected to attend all lectures and all sessions of your assigned discussion section. You are expected to complete all assignments on time. You are expected to take the examinations at the prescribed time and the designated place. If you fail to meet these basic expectations, you will receive an "F" for the course even though you may have accumulated more than 220 points by the end of the term.

While exceptions to these basic requirements may (very occasionally) be granted, the student is obligated to request that such an exception be granted three days prior to the due date (for assignments) or one week prior to the examination period (for tests). There will be no "Incompletes" or extensions beyond the end of the term. Please, no exceptions on this score.

PLAGIARISM:

Unfortunately, it appears necessary to comment on plagiarism and cheating. Obviously, it is expected that examinations and assignments will reflect your own original efforts. We do not discourage studying together, however,

in the final analysis your essays, assignments and answers to the questions on the examinations must represent your ideas and be written in your own words.

If it is shown that your work in the course does not represent your own efforts, the consequences can be serious. Cheating could cost you your college career or, at the very least, it could mean an "F" in this course. But equally important, even if you are not caught I believe that cheating is a sign of a serious lack of respect for the people teaching the class, your fellow students and yourself. Enough said. If you make a sincere effort to meet the demands of the course, we will make a sincere effort to help you pass the course. Cheating is quite unnecessary.

OTHER MATTERS OF CONCERN:

Office Hours

The Teaching Assistants will post their office hours on their office door. Professor Sharpless will hold office hours by appointment on Wednesday, 10:00-12:00. His office is 4110 Humanities.

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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of History

History 398

American History, 1945-Present

John Sharpless

ABOUT THE MID-TERM AND FINAL EXAMINATIONS

To avoid misunderstanding over the goals and direction of the course I have made it a practice to distribute the questions for both the mid-terms and final examinations in advance. In each case, the questions which will appear on the examination will be taken from the list of questions provided below.

I. The questions on the first mid-term examination will be taken from the following:

- A. "When the American foreign policy elite adopted the 'philosophy of containment,' they accepted the notion that the Cold War would go on forever and forever..." As strange as this quotation may appear, it does convey a sense of the foreign policy "philosophy" of the post-war era. How did it come to pass that the Cold War seemed so much a permanent state of affairs? How did this presumption shape our foreign policy in the years before 1963? How did each President in this era seek to reinforce the "pattern of policy" already in place?

- B. At first glance, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy would seem to be three very different people. Although both Eisenhower and Kennedy presented themselves as repudiating the preceding administration, promising a new and different approach to national problems, in reality all three men pursued essentially similar programs once in office. At most, style, not substance, set these men apart from each other.

Assess the validity of this statement, focusing only on foreign policy and events between 1945 and 1963. (Refer directly to the books by the Rosenbergs and Ambrose.) You may accept, reject or modify the proposition as you see fit.

- C. The period from 1946 to 1963 is often seen as a time of prosperity and domestic security. This image is not without some factual basis. Indeed, many Americans found it possible to attain a level of wealth and security that would have been beyond their parents' imagination even twenty years earlier. Home ownership, the purchase of a car and a college education were all within reach. The "middle class life style" became synonymous with the American "way of life." Behind this prosperity, however, was the hidden hand of ongoing government intervention. While people had the impression of "doing it themselves," they were actually assisted through a wide range of direct and indirect subsidies.

Focusing on education, housing and transportation policy, evidence the ways in which the federal government assisted the rise of the white urban middle class in the post-war era.

- D. Anxiety over the "communist threat" deepened in the early years of the 1950s as Americans sought to provide an explanation for troubles at home and abroad. Perhaps there were real reasons to suppose a communist conspiracy might have existed. Yet, as we look back from today's perspective, it is often difficult to imagine what all the fuss was about. It is one thing to be concerned about spies but to view all dissent as unpatriotic seems a bit paranoid. Could it really be true that all deviance away from the "mainstream" (artistic, literary or political) was communist inspired? After all, we have long cherished individual freedom of expression. It now seems ironic that some Americans went so far as to demand not only the suppression of basic civil liberties but also enforced conformity and mindless obedience to the State in order to protect the "American Way of Life." [Isn't that what we feared most about communism?] How can we explain this extreme reaction to communism in this era?

Trace the growing concern over "communist infiltration" in America during the period between 1946 and 1956. What events led many Americans to believe that the forces of communism were at work in America? What was done to deal with this "threat"? Who were the leaders in the movement to identify and eliminate subversives? What groups supported their campaigns? Who opposed their efforts? And, finally, what were the "long run" implications of the anticommunism movement in the 1950s?

- E. In fashioning foreign policy between 1945 and 1975, American policy-makers were determined not to repeat past mistakes, but to learn from history. As a result, each policy proposed during this era was a direct response to the shortcomings (perceived and real) of its predecessor. How did previous experiences influence, for better or for worse, the policies adopted between 1945 and 1975? Were these policy-makers good historians, or did they derive the wrong lessons when better alternatives, also based on experience, were readily available? (Refer directly to the books by Rosenbergs and Ambrose.)

- II. Each student will write a short essay. The essays should not exceed nine (9) typed pages. The problem will be researched and the essay will be written outside of class. However, these are not to be considered cooperative ventures. Indeed, any evidence that our essay was not totally the result of independent effort will result in a failing grade.

THE MID-TERM ESSAYS ARE DUE IN CLASS (LECTURE HOUR) ON APRIL 12TH. NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE ALLOWED. LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

The 1960s were a time of protest and conflict. The growing divisions in American society broke along four primary dimensions: race, class, gender and generation. Utilize these basic concepts to examine the origins and development of the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement and the Anti-war Movement. Compare the issues each movement addressed, the tactics they employed, their influence on one another and their visions for America's future. In writing your essay, refer directly to the readings.

III. The questions on the final exam will be taken from the following:

- A. The economic policies of Kennedy, Johnson and Reagan might be described as "the political economy of growth". Attempt to explain what this phrase could mean: What were the assumptions behind their policies? Have the assumptions of economic policy changed in the post-World War II era?
- B. Identify and describe the basic values which Americans bring to foreign policy, and how those values shape and influence America's relationship with areas such as Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Draw examples from each of the time periods listed below:
1. 1945-1953 (Compare Truman and Eisenhower)
 2. 1964-1973 (Compare Johnson and Nixon)
 3. 1977-1985 (Compare Carter and Reagan)
- C. There is little doubt the role of the media in American politics has increased greatly since the forties. The question is, how does the media affect the political process. Compare the presidential elections of 1960 and 1968 with the election of 1984, focusing on the relationship between the candidate, the media and the voter.
- D. Over the last fifty years there has been a radical shift in people's attitude about mortality and ethical behavior. The sources for these changes are many. At one level, changes in economics, science and technology have placed different demands on people as they confront the problems of daily life. At another level, social philosophers, religious leaders and intellectuals have been rethinking age-old philosophical problems of "good and evil." The force of their ideas has been keenly felt as well. Write a short essay reviewing the major trends in moral and ethical behavior. Attempt to isolate the reasons why the changes have occurred.
- E. In the late 1960s and middle 1970s, political scientists, journalists, historians and, at least, one President of the United States complained of a "crisis of confidence" and loss of public faith in American institutions. First, explain what they meant by this phrase. Identify the key elements of the argument. Second, identify any trends in the 1960s and 1970s which would have contributed to this "crisis of confidence."
- F. Both John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon have been described as the prototype of today's media politician. In what ways did they anticipate the television politics of the 1980s? Make specific comparisons to President Reagan's style and presentation. In what specific ways has the media transformed American politics from the 1960s to the present? Assess whether television politics has made it harder to maintain accountability of public officials.

- G. The book, Habits of the Heart, argues that Americans are often confused and troubled when it comes to personal values and morality. We hold as ideals three broad notions--individualism, freedom, and justice--yet we are not always sure how these values should be realized in everyday life. Choose three of the following areas of public and/or private life and show how our ideals are often compromised to meet the demands of the immediate situation. In each case cite specific examples from the recent past which serve to illustrate our basic confusion on moral issues.

Courtship, marriage and the family
Political activity and public policy
Race relations and civil rights

- H. Myra MacPherson's powerful and moving interview with the survivors of the Vietnam era evidences not only the tortuous legacy of the sixties but the deep divisions within the generation that experienced the war. Compare and contrast the experiences and attitudes of the following people, and explain the reasons for their different perspectives within the context of Vietnam as a "different" war:

Vets and those who avoided the draft
Black and White Americans
The "afflicted" and the successful Vets