

HISTORY 102:
A History of the United States since 1865

Course Meetings (Lecture):
Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:45
L196 Education Building

Instructor:
Dr. Simon Balto (he/him)
Office: 4134 Mosse Humanities Building
email: sebalto@wisc.edu
Office Hours:
Tuesday and Thursday 11:30-12:30, and by appointment

Teaching Assistants:
Nicki Day-Lucore
email: daylucore@wisc.edu
Office: 4268 Mosse Humanities Building
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00-3:00

Kyle Miron
Email: kmiron@wisc.edu
Office: 4268 Mosse Humanities Building
Office Hours: Thursday, 11:00-1:00



“American Gothic” by
Grant Wood, 1930



“American Gothic” by
Gordon Parks, 1942

Welcome to History 102!

This is an introductory course focused on the history of the United States since 1865. It likely will not be similar to a history class like the ones you took in high school. (It at least is not similar to the ones I had when I was in high school!) In our time together, we'll be exploring and analyzing the history of this country's past 150+ years, focusing especially on the significant social, political, cultural, and economic shifts that changed it, rechanged it repeatedly, and made it into the one we inhabit now. This history is multidimensional, multiracial, multiethnic, multigender, and since the United States has never existed in a vacuum, and because it has shaped and been shaped by the rest of the world, transnational.

Among the core animating questions we'll be grappling with is this: *What does it mean to be an American?* All of us may come into the semester with different thoughts as to how to answer that question; some of us may come into the semester having not really thought about it at all. This course will, hopefully, cause each of us to consider that question more deeply, particularly since we sit at a moment in history in which answers to that question seem evermore contentious. With that in mind, we will be especially attentive this semester to what it's meant for people of different backgrounds—including immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, women, queer people, servicemembers, industrial workers and farmers—to grapple with that question.

Course Aims and Description

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Identify important patterns, processes, events, people, and places in U.S. history since 1865
- Formulate arguments about change over time
- Evaluate arguments about history
- Determine what constitutes reliable and valid evidence
- Interpret, compare, and contrast primary sources
- Think critically about how the narratives about the past are constructed and told

We will also be considering how the history we are studying shapes the world in which we live, and, as stated above, creating space for students from various backgrounds to think more actively about what it means and has meant to be an American.

While we will cover important names, dates, and events, our primary attentions will be paid to *interpreting those pieces of data in the interests of assembling a more complete picture of American history*. In other words, we will be less concerned with memorizing minutiae than with better understanding history and the human experience. You've probably heard the adage about not seeing the forest for the trees. The trees matter. But so does the forest.

The course meets three times weekly. Two of these meetings involve all of us meeting together in the lecture hall for interactive lectures. "Interactive lectures" will look different from one period to the next, but in general, much of the period will involve me presenting you with a story and analysis of a particular period in history while also periodically asking for your thoughts. The third meeting of the week will be a small group discussion section led by one of our class's fantastic Teaching Assistants. Those sessions will be your opportunity to engage your peers in dialogue about the week's readings and how they relate to the lecture material. You will receive a separate syllabus from your TA that lays out the parameters of and their expectations for discussion sections, but please understand that you attending *and being an active participant in* discussion sections is a crucial part of your final grade. Please be aware that part of participating in discussion sections will involve you also engaging in discussion threads on Canvas in advance of class so that your TA can have a

sense of how to guide discussion. Participating in those Canvas conversations will be an important part of your overall discussion grade, but cannot serve as a substitute for regular attendance and participation in classroom discussions themselves.

Course Credit Information

As a four-credit class, we meet as groups both big (lecture) and small (discussion) for roughly four hours per week. The class carries the expectation that you will spend two hours outside of class on course-learning activities (reading, writing, studying, etc) for every hour of classroom time. In other words, you should allot roughly eight hours of work for this course per week *outside of the classroom*, in addition to the time you spend inside the classroom.

Course Evaluation

Students will be graded on attendance and participation in discussion sections, one short paper, an in-class midterm exam, and a final exam. A small percentage of your grade will also be dedicated to lecture attendance. I do give a fair amount of extra credit opportunities throughout the semester (mostly to history-related events and lectures that pop up on the campus calendar), but these aren't intended to replace any of your normal work.

A note on lecture attendance: This class has no textbook, thus making regular attendance at lecture sessions absolutely imperative for student success. As such, attendance will be taken at all lecture sessions. That said, the world is a complicated place, and we are living at a complicated time. If you become ill with COVID or some other ailment, need to care for someone who is similarly ill, or have other emergencies arise, we will accommodate you and consider these to be *excused* absences. But it's very important in such a circumstance that you communicate with me and your TA as soon as you can and as regularly as you can so that we can collaboratively formulate a plan. Absences that are unaccounted for (as in, you don't let us know the reason for them) or are attributable to things like vacation, needing to do other coursework, and so on are *unexcused*. You may have two unexcused absences from lecture over the course of the semester. Beyond two, your grade will suffer.

Papers: There will be one paper (of roughly four pages, double-spaced) in this class, due near the end of the semester and wrestling with the experiences of Vietnam veterans and the meaning of the war. This paper will ask you to make use of oral interviews with veterans held at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, lecture material, film, and a visit to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. A more specific prompt will be distributed closer to that time. These essays will be evaluated for content, coherence, argument, and style. Make sure you're turning in something that you're proud of. Further details about my expectations for the papers will be included with the prompts.

Late Papers: Papers that are turned in late will be penalized 5% for each day that they are late. That said, stuff happens; if you know you're going to miss the deadline for urgent reasons, it's imperative that you contact myself and your TA as soon as possible so that we can strategize a plan.

Exams: Specifics of the exam formats will be discussed closer to the time of the exams. I'll say this, though: the exams will focus far more on students interpreting and analyzing history (i.e. short essays) than in rote memorization (i.e. multiple choice). Exams are not graded for grammar, style, etc. The final exam is not cumulative, meaning that it will be primarily about things that we

have discussed since the midterm, although there will be connections between the semester's two halves that will be obvious to you.

Discussion section: As noted above, your TAs will provide you with a separate syllabus (prepared in consultation with me) explaining their expectations for discussion section. Please note that your attendance in and participation at discussion sections (including regularly doing Canvas work before sections meet) is tied with the final exam for the most significant part of your grade. This is because it's where you have the greatest opportunity to develop your ideas, demonstrate your knowledge and analytic growth and skill, etc. It's crucial.

Grading: There are 500 total possible points in this class.

FINAL EXAM:	125 points
MIDTERM EXAM:	100 points
PAPER:	100 points
DISCUSSION SECTION:	125 points
LECTURE ATTENDANCE:	50 points

Grading Scale (number of points out of 500 for specific end-of-semester letter grade):

A: 462+	AB: 437-461	B: 412-436
BC: 387-435	C: 347-386	D: 300-346
F: below 300		

Notes on Classroom Etiquette, Technology, etc.

Part of being in a college classroom is getting yourself ready for standards of decorum and conduct that govern most post-collegiate employment settings. You're not in your dorm/apartment/the library once you step foot within the four walls of our classrooms. You're in a place where you are expected to be attentive and to be respectful to everyone around you.

Q: So, what does that mean?

A: For one, it means being responsible with how you use technology. There are reams of data that show that students who take notes by hand retain information better and get better grades than students who take them on their laptop or tablet. (See THIS and THIS and THIS, etc.) This makes sense – the internet is a temptation and attention-suck that humans have seldom before experienced *en masse*. I would like to tell you that you shouldn't use your laptop at all in class, but I'll leave that to your discretion. Regardless, I will say that laptops are allowed in class for note-taking purposes only. Do not do work for your other classes during our class sessions. Stay off TikTok and Instagram. Stay off email. Stay off whatever new social media platforms have emerged in the days since I write this and which I'm far too old to be hip to. In short, use your computers appropriately, or don't use them at all. I reserve the right to transition to a computer-free classroom, if necessity warrants.

Q: Texting during class is cool, right?

A: No. *Cell phones are not allowed at all.* Used properly, laptops have a justifiable use in class. Phones do not. If you're on your phone during class, I'll ask you to leave for the rest of the session and request that you meet with me individually to discuss a plan for how you're going to avoid doing it again. No one wants this, so please make sure we don't have to deal with it.

Q: How should I interact with the people around me?

A: Simple. *Be good to each other.* Central to this course are issues of citizenship, racism, sexism, political radicalism (both "right-wing" and "left-wing"), labor and capital conflict, discrimination,

violence, struggle, power, failure, exploitation, and achievement. Indeed, to say it once more, an animating theme of the course is what it has meant at various historical junctures and for various American peoples *to be American*. At least some of it will likely seem controversial in various ways to pretty much all of you. That's a good thing. College is meant to challenge you and the things you think you know and believe. Debate each other during discussion sections. Debate with me in office hours. I want everyone to feel free to express their opinions, so long as those opinions are well-informed and delivered with honest intentions.

That does not come with a free pass, however. We all – me, you, your TAs – are in various stages of figuring our imperfect selves out, and it's important to respect one another. Controversial or contrarian arguments are welcome. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc, are not. Think about what you're saying and how others might react to it before you say it. This is not about "having to be politically correct" or "woke." It's "being a functional adult in a pluralistic society."

Course Readings

There are three required books for this course. Two of these will be free for you, as noted below. I am hopeful that UW libraries will acquire the third as an e-book, as well, in which case you would not need to purchase any books. As of now, the third (*The Movement Made Us*) may be purchased new or used (if available) at the campus bookstore, or wherever else books are sold. Readings are due on the date that they appear on the syllabus.

- 1) Clint Smith, *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* (New York: Little, Brown, 2021)
 - *How the Word is Passed* is UW's "Go Big Read" selection for the 2022-2023 academic year. This is fortuitous for us, since it's a masterful book about the history of slavery and how history is remembered, misremembered, and reckoned with (or not reckoned with). If you're unfamiliar with the Go Big Read program, you can read more about it [here](#), but the gist is that it's designed to get as much of the campus community to engage in conversation about a particular book as possible. You may be reading it for other classes, in which case, great! We will be having conversations about it specifically through the prism of US history and how history and memory work. Because it is the "Go Big Read" selection, copies of the book are free for students. We will give out vouchers to you on the first day of class that can be redeemed for a free book.
- 2) Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
 - This book is available as an e-book through UW libraries.
- 3) David J. Dennis, Jr. and David J. Dennis, *The Movement Made Us: A Father, A Son, and the Legacy of a Freedom Ride* (New York: Harper, 2022)
 - As of now, this book will need to be purchased. It will also be on course reserve at the library.

In addition to these books, there will be short additional readings. These will be primary sources (letters, newspaper articles, journals, and so on from the time period in which they were created) and are available free from *The American Yamp Reader* – an online accompaniment to *The American Yamp* textbook. All of those readings are linked via hyperlink below.

Two Notes on Email

- 1) I do my best to respond to emails in a timely fashion, and usually do so. Understand, however, that responses to emails that you send in the evening or over the weekend may not be returned until the next business day. (For example, if you email me on Friday evening, please don't expect a response until Monday morning. If you'd consider the matter to be an emergency, please type URGENT in the subject line of the email.)
- 2) You should craft your own emails in a way that models professional courtesy. It's a good practice to be in. These are not text messages, and should include a salutation (i.e. "Dear Professor Balto") and a closing (i.e. "Sincerely, [your name]"). Very soon, you will be using email to communicate with potential employers, colleagues, etc. Start honing the skill now.

Academic Conduct

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Wisconsin's policies concerning academic integrity. Cheating can lead to all manner of unpleasantness, up to and including expulsion from the university. Any student found to be cheating or plagiarizing will be held accountable according to UW's standards. If you have *any question whatsoever* as to something you're doing may constitute plagiarism, *please ask*. I will not hold it against you if you're worried that you might be plagiarizing and want to check before turning something in. Once you turn it in, however, I'm contractually obligated to follow university procedures. Let's opt for safe over sorry.

For more information, the resources at the following page from the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards may be helpful: <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct/>

Disability Services

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of disability or ongoing illness, please contact me as soon as possible. UW's McBurney Center office coordinates services for students with disabilities; I will work collaboratively with the Center and students in need of accommodation to provide necessary accommodations. The McBurney Center's website, including their contact information, is here: <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/>

The History Lab

The History Department at UW offers resources to students through the History Lab that are intended to help you write like a historian. It's staffed by experienced graduate students who can help you form thesis statements and arguments, adopt correct citational practices, and so on. This would be a very, very good resource to tap into when you're working on your paper later in the term.

Writing Center

You are also encouraged to utilize the services available to you via UW's Writing Center, which offers wonderful resources and coaching for writers, regardless of self-perceived skill level. The Center (housed in Helen C. White, but with online options also available and satellite locations across campus) offers one-on-one consultation to students to help improve their abilities as writers. Consider consulting with them when planning and writing your papers. Services are free, and constitute a truly invaluable resource for everyone on campus. Visit the Center here for more information: <https://writing.wisc.edu/>

UW-Madison's Institutional Statement on Diversity

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background,

experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background — people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

Statement on Recording Lectures and other Classroom Content

My lectures for History 102 are protected intellectual property, per the policy of the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents. What does this mean? For one, it means that you are not authorized to record my lectures or other classroom content, whether by video or audio. The exception is if you are a student with a qualifying disability that requires accommodation as determined by the McBurney Center. It also means that you are not allowed to sell notes that you take in class; those are for your personal use only (or for collaborative study purposes with your peers who are also enrolled in this class). It means that you are not allowed to record classroom lectures or discussions and distribute them, whether by posting them online or selling them to any organization. Failure to comply with these guidelines constitutes copyright infringement and is susceptible to discipline under university policy.

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change, depending upon our collective needs and the flow of the semester.

(Note: Lecture titles derive from words, phrases, and sentences that people in the moment used in talking about the times in which they were living.)

Week 1: Telling American Histories

Thursday, Sep 8: Course Introduction: Why Study American History?

Reading

Smith, *How the Word is Passed*, pages 3-84

Note: *No discussion section in Week 1*

Week 2: The Union after the Fall

Tuesday, Sep 13: “What this Cruel War Was Over”: Slavery and the American Civil War

Thursday, Sep 15: “Freedom or its Shadow?.” The Promises and Problems of Reconstruction

Reading (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

Smith, *How the Word is Passed*, pages 85-206

[“Jourdan Anderson Writes His Former Enslaver”](#) (1865)

Week 3: A New Nation?

Tuesday, Sep 20: “Let Us Have Peace”: Reconciliation, Redemption, and the Forging of a New (Old) America

Thursday, Sep 22: “Manifest Destiny”: Money, Labor, and Land

Reading (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

Smith, *How the Word is Passed*, 207-290

Week 4: Clearing “the Frontier,” Colonizing the West

Tuesday, Sep 27: “When the Earth Shakes”: The Ordeals and Survivals of Native Americans

Thursday, Sep 29: “A Revolution So Complete:” Industrial Capitalism, Immigration, and the Melting Pot

Listen (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/479/little-war-on-the-prairie>

Watch (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSmjR1N8nyg>

Week 5: Life in a Gilded Age

Tuesday, Oct 4: “A Nation of Slaves?”: Populism, Unionism, and the Meanings of Class

Thursday, Oct 6: “The Game of Grab”: The Spanish-Filipino-American War, the Expansion of U.S. Global Power, and Reverberations on the Home Front

Reading (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery*, pages 1-80

[Andrew Carnegie’s Gospel of Wealth \(1889\)](#)

[The “Omaha Platform” of the People’s Party \(1892\)](#)

Week 6: A Progressive Era?

Tuesday, Oct 11: ‘Hellhounds’ and Jurists: Legalizing and Enforcing White Supremacy

Thursday, Oct 13: “Supreme Possibilities”: The Ambitions and Accomplishments of Progressivism

Reading (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery*, pages 81-142

[Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law in America” \(1900\)](#)

[Theodore Roosevelt on “The New Nationalism” \(1910\)](#)

Week 7: War, Power, and Movement

Tuesday, Oct 18: “Over Here and Over There”: World War I, at Home and Abroad

Thursday, Oct 20: “The Warmth of Other Suns”: Migration, Immigration, Prohibition, and the Nation on the Eve of Depression

Reading (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery*, 143-226

Week 8: Human Movements, Human Struggles

Tuesday, Oct 25: “A Nameless Dread Hangs Over”: The American People and the Great Depression

Reading

None

Thursday, Oct 27: **MIDTERM EXAM (IN CLASS)**

Week 9: New Deals, New Wars

Tuesday, Nov 1: “A Re-Appraisal of Values”: The New Deal and American Society

Thursday, Nov 3: “Ours to Fight For”: World War II

Reading (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

[Charles A. Lindbergh, “America First” \(1941\)](#)

[Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga on Japanese Internment \(1942/1944\)](#)

Watch (to be done by time of discussion section this week)

[George Takei on the Japanese Internment Camps During WWII](#) (7 minutes)

Visit (to be done by time of discussion section this week)

Visit the Wisconsin Veterans Museum (30 W. Mifflin St, where State Street ends at the Capitol Square). You may tour the whole museum if you like (it’s free, and important), but definitely spend some time at the exhibit focused on World War II. You will be asked to discuss your impressions of the exhibit.

Week 10: After the War

Tuesday, Nov 8: “Toward the American Ideals”: Reconversion and the Early Cold War

Thursday, Nov 10: “No Sense of Decency”: The Growing Cold War & the Police of the World

Reading

[Paul Robeson’s Appearance Before the House Un-American Activities Committee \(1956\)](#)

Note: discussion sections will meet at the Chazen Museum of Art to tour the exhibit “Sifting and Reckoning: UW-Madison’s History of Exclusion and Resistance”

Week 11: Tumult

Tuesday, Nov 15: “Move on Over or We’ll Move on Over You”: The Civil Rights Movement in America

Thursday, Nov 17: Tuesday, Nov 29: “We Gotta Get Out of this Place”: The Vietnam War at Home and Abroad

Reading (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

[The Port Huron Statement \(1962\)](#)

Watch (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

The War at Home

Week 12: New Lefts

Tuesday, Nov 22: “The Times They Are a’Changin’”: The New Left in America

Thursday, Nov 24: **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Reading

Dennis, *The Movement Made Us*, pages 1-101

NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK

Week 13:

Tuesday, Nov 29: “We Challenge Everyone with Our Strength”: Women’s Liberation, Queer Liberation

Thursday, Dec 1: “Something’s Happening to People Like Me”: The World the Sixties Wrought, and the “Malaise” of the 1970s

Reading (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

[National Organization for Women, “Statement of Purpose” \(1966\)](#)

[Native Americans Occupy Alcatraz \(1969\)](#)

Dennis, *The Movement Made Us*, pages 102-184

Week 14:

Tuesday, Dec 6: “Morning Again in America”: The New Right and the Reagan Revolution

Thursday, Dec 8: “Big Government is Over”: The Culture Wars and the Clinton Years

Reading (to be completed by the time of discussion section this week)

[Statement of AIDS Patients \(1983\)](#)

[Pat Buchanan on the Culture War \(1992\)](#)

Dennis, *The Movement Made Us*, pages 185-268

Week 15:

Tuesday, Dec 13: Into the present

Final Exam: Saturday, Dec. 17, 2:45-4:45 PM