

History 102: American History, From the Civil War to the Present

Spring 2016 – UW-Madison Department of History



Class Info:

MWF, 12:05-12:55pm, Mosse Humanities 1121

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Course Description:

This course surveys the major events and changes in the United States since the Civil War. Our concern will be about how differences among Americans contributed to periods of social unity or disunity and reshaped the relationship between the United States and the world. In line with recent scholarly emphases to internationalize American history, we will pay special attention to how Americans related to other parts of the world, developed identities that transcended the state, and constructed the values and ideals of “America” in dialogue with rest of the globe. Along with material factors like the economy, war, and expansion, we will also explore the role of ideas and concepts of race, gender, ethnicity, and religion.

The course will be guided by a set of core questions: How have Americans from many walks of life - intellectuals, reformers, religious groups, laborers, racial and ethnic minorities, politicians and business leaders – related to the rest of the world? How have different groups championed or opposed the actions of the American government both at home and abroad? What values and

ideals have been promoted as American, and who did these values and ideals privilege and marginalize? How have the realities of lived experience and changing global patterns clashed with these ideals over the past 150 years?

Required Books:

Jeansonne, Glen. *A Time of Paradox: America Since 1890*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.

Douglas, Susan J. *Listening In: Radio And The American Imagination*. University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Drehle, David von. *Triangle: The Fire That Changed America*. Grove Press, 2003.

Packer, George. *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.

The above texts can be purchased at the bookstore. A copy of each is on reserve at College Library. Any additional readings will be available in digital form on the course page at learn@uw.

Course Requirements:

Students will participate in discussion sections, write a book review, and take three exams.

Grading:

Discussion Section	20%
Book Review	10%
Exam I	20%
Exam II	20%
Final Exam	30%

Discussion Section: Students are required to attend discussion section and to participate in discussions. Readings should be completed by the beginning of your section. The TA will evaluate each student and assign a participation grade at the end of the semester.

Book Review: Students will write a 4-page (1200 word) book review, for either von Drehle, *Triangle* (due March 4) or Douglas, *Listening In* (due April 15). You are expected to write a professional-style review essay modeled after those published in *Journal of American History*. Recent issues of this and other historical journals can be found through the UW Libraries Portal or JSTOR. I have also posted a model review as an example on learn@uw. Students should proofread their essays for clarity, substance, and style (grammatical mistakes, passive voice, and sloppy writing will incur grade deductions.) You are encouraged to discuss your papers with the either me or the TA before the due date. For advising with writing, make a point to visit the History Lab (<https://history.wisc.edu/thehistorylab.htm>).

Midterm Exams: Exams I & II will consist of two essay questions which will be provided in advance on the Monday of the week of the exam (February 15 & March 28). One essay question will ask students to discuss the themes of that section of the course, while the other question will center on the readings for that section of the course. These exams will be taken in-class the following Friday (February 19 & April 1) in blue books.

Final Exam: For the final exam students should write an 800-word essay to answer each of two questions, which will be handed out at the last lecture on May 6. The essays should make use of material from assigned readings, class lectures, and weekly discussions. Students may consult books and discuss their answers with one another. Each essay, however, should reflect the original writing of each student. Students should proofread their essays for clarity, substance, and style (grammatical mistakes, passive voice, and sloppy writing will incur grade deductions.) Students must submit their final examination answers by 2:45pm on May 10. We will not accept late submissions.

Make-ups: Make-up assignments and exams will be given only with written proof of university-sanctioned activities, illness, or family emergency.

Academic Integrity:

Students should consult “UWS 14” of the University of Wisconsin System Administrative Code in order to familiarize themselves with the University’s policy regarding academic integrity and plagiarism. Submitting work that is not original will result in a zero for that portion of the course grade, and the instructor will refer the details of the case to Student Assistance and Judicial Affairs.

Classroom Conduct:

Cell phones and headphones should be put away during lecture. Laptops are allowed for the purposes of note taking. Studies have shown handwritten notes are more effective than typed notes, so I encourage you to use the old fashioned way.

CLASS SCHEDULE

In order to make the most of our time, the class is divided into three units, each designating a period of American history after the Civil War.

1) For the first third of the course we will examine the long effects of the Civil War. After the war’s destruction, piecing back together a nation was a decades-long process. In its midst, new challenges from industrialization, urbanization, migration and immigration, and social unrest arose. Though the effects of the Civil War can still be felt today, by the first decades of the twentieth century reformers began to make extensive change to society and its institutions. The drive to reform and improve society consolidated the nation, even as fundamental divisions over race, ethnicity, class, and, increasingly, religion widened.

2) For the second unit we will examine the rise, successes, and failures of a troubled consensus that encompassed political, social, and intellectual leaders and at times included many middle and working class Americans. Beginning in the 1920s, Republican and Democrat presidents expanded American influence abroad through a combination of private and public efforts. The New Deal, World War II, and the Cold War expanded the reach of the government at home considerably. The circle of consensus between elites extended to other sectors of society in the 1930s, bringing with it promises of prosperity and equality. These developments also sparked reactions that circumscribed the extent of change, both from those who rejected the consensus vision of society and those who were unable to take part due to discrimination.

3) The third will explore the dissolution of consensus in a society changing and polarizing in the past fifty years. Old forms of discrimination like legal segregation became unacceptable to most Americans, even as moves toward racial and gender equality were heavily contested. Economic inequality began to return to its pre-consensus levels, and the processes of deindustrialization, globalization, and secularization created new rifts among Americans. A pervasive consumer culture rooted in popular icons, international companies, and ever-increasing connective medias provided a semblance of community, but on terms radically different and, to many, hopelessly insufficient for the late twentieth century. The end of the Cold War and the rise of the War on Terror further divided Americans along cultural and economic lines, bringing us to our present day.

PART I: Reconstruction and Reform (1865-1920)

Week 1: Reconstruction: Rebirth or Relapse (Jan 20, 22)

No section.

Week 2: The Gilded Age (Jan 25, 27, 29)

Reading: von Drehle, *Triangle*, 1-54

Week 3: Reform and Protest (Feb 1, 3, 5)

Reading: von Drehle, *Triangle*, 55-138

Week 4: The New Empire (Feb 8, 10, 12)

Reading: von Drehle, *Triangle*, 139-193

Week 5: The Great War and Wilsonianism (Feb 15, 17, 19)

Reading: von Drehle, *Triangle*, 194-268

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 34-63

EXAM I on Feb 19.

PART II: A Troubled Consensus (1920-1960)

Week 6: The Globalizing of America (Feb 22, 24, 26)

Reading: Douglas, *Listening In*, 3-54

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 64-92

Week 7: The New Deal and its Limits (Feb 29, Mar 2, 4)

Reading: Douglas, *Listening In*, 55-123

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 126-150

Book review for von Drehle, *Triangle* due on Mar 4.

Week 8: World War II (Mar 7, 9, 11)

Reading: Douglas, *Listening In*, 124-198

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 198-215

Week 9: The Cold War and the “American Century” (Mar 14, 16, 18)

Reading: Douglas, *Listening In*, 199-256

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 216-246

Week 10: Spring Break (Mar 21, 23, 25)

Week 11: Cold War Society (Mar 28, 30, April 1)

Reading: Douglas, *Listening In*, 284-358

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 257-335

EXAM II on April 1.

PART III: Division and Connectivity (1960-present)

Week 12: The Unmasking of “Consensus” (April 4, 6, 8)

Reading: Packer, *The Unwinding*, 1-88

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 336-370

Week 13: American Society in Turmoil (April 11, 13, 15)

Reading: Packer, *The Unwinding*, 89-171

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 389-423

Book review for Douglas, *Listening In* due April 15.

Week 14: Reverberations and Transformations (April 18, 20, 22)

Reading: Packer, *The Unwinding*, 175-276

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 424-459

Week 15: Reagan and the Digital Age (April 25, 27, 29)

Reading: Packer, *The Unwinding*, 279-350

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 460-476

Week 16: The Enduring Search for Consensus (May 2, 4, 6)

Reading: Packer, *The Unwinding*, 351-430

Jeansonne, *A Time of Paradox*, 477-496

FINAL (EXAM III) due May 10 at 2:45pm.