

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of History
Spring 2025

History 940
3 credits
Seminar–American History 1900-1945
Monday 1:20-3:15
Mosse Humanities Building 5255

William J. Reese
Professor of History and Educational Policy Studies
Email: wjreese@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Humanities 5102
Monday 3:30-4:30 and Wednesday 11:00–12:30 & by appointment.

Course Description

This is an advanced seminar on American history from 1900 to 1945, a period of momentous social change and corresponding efforts at social amelioration. Understanding the Progressive Era, the 1920s, and New Deal has challenged historians for decades. We'll read some of the most important interpretations of various aspects of reform, from sweeping interpretations on broad subjects to more tightly focused monographs on specialized topics. Reform movements appeared in various guises in the early decades of the twentieth century, representing conservative, liberal, and radical ideologies. From social gospeler to fundamentalist, trust buster to New Dealer, settlement house volunteer to professional altruist, diverse movements arose in an age of dramatic change.

The required readings will provide the core of weekly seminar discussions. The quality of the course will therefore depend heavily on the quality of weekly preparation. In addition, every student will write one paper, limited to 17-18 pages exclusive of endnotes, due at the end of the semester. Details for this assignment are described later in the syllabus. There are no examinations in the course.

Required Books

The following books are available in paperback. Multiple copies of some of the

books are in the UW library system, and a copy is on reserve at College Library. In addition, some of the books are available as e-books accessible via Madcat. I have placed an asterisk after those titles.

- 1) Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform
 - 2) Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order
 - 3) Jackson Lears, Rebirth of a Nation
 - 4) Michael Kazin, Godly Hero
 - 5) Linda Gordon, The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*
 - 6) Katherine Benton-Cohen, Inventing the Immigration Problem*
 - 7) Lisa McGirr, The War on Alcohol
 - 8) David Kennedy, The American People in the Great Depression: Freedom from Fear
 - 9) Lizabeth Cohen, Making a New Deal*
 - 10) Glenda Gilmore, Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights
 - 11) Daniel Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings*
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Course Outline and Assignments:

Week #1 January 27	Introduction to the Course
Week #2 February 3	Hofstadter, <u>Age of Reform</u>
Week #3 February 10	Wiebe, <u>Search for Order</u> & David Cannadine, "On Reviewing and Being Reviewed," <u>History Today</u> 49 (March 1999): 30-33. [I'll provide a copy of the article]
Week #4 February 17	Lears, <u>Rebirth of a Nation</u>
Week #5 February 24	Kazin, <u>Godly Hero</u>

Week #6 March 3	Gordon, <u>Great Arizona Orphan Abduction</u> ***1-2 page prospectus due***
Week #7 March 10	Benton-Cohen, <u>Inventing the Immigration Problem</u>
Week #8 March 17	McGirr, <u>The War on Alcohol</u>
Week #9 March 24	Spring Break
Week #10 March 31	Kennedy, <u>American People</u> (Part one of original <u>Freedom from Fear</u>)
Week #11 April 7	Cohen, <u>Making a New Deal</u>
Week #12 April 14	Gilmore, <u>Defying Dixie</u>
Week #13 April 21	Rodgers, <u>Atlantic Crossings</u>
Week #14 April 28	Student Presentations
Paper Due, Friday, May 2, 4:30 P.M., please send in an email in a PDF.	

Credit Hours and Student Workload

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135

hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

Diversity and Inclusion

Throughout the semester, we will try to honor the University of Wisconsin's traditions of academic excellence and 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."

Student Responsibilities and Course Requirements

The formal course requirements include class attendance, weekly preparation for class discussions, a brief presentation of book reviews for one of our assigned readings, an 8-10 minute presentation at the end of the semester, and the completion of one paper. If you miss a class, on the following week, please hand in a double-spaced two to three page, critical review of the book whose discussion you missed.

The quality of your class participation will account for 70% of your final grade. The paper will be worth 30%. A one to two page typed prospectus, which will not be graded, is due no later than March 3. This prospectus will provide a rationale for the paper, the main question you are trying to answer, and a tentative bibliography of sources. Let's talk about your ideas for the paper before you complete the prospectus. If it's more convenient, you can also begin this conversation on e-mail. The paper is limited to 17-18 double-spaced typed pages, exclusive of end notes and bibliography. Aspire to write a paper that could be published in a scholarly journal.

For the paper assignment, please choose between the following. (1) You can write a paper that is largely historiographical and would explore a specific reform or topic. Here are some examples, hardly exhaustive: temperance and prohibition, pacifism, the imperial

presidency, suffrage movements, the social gospel, fundamentalism, psychological testing, adolescence and high schools, child labor, progressive education, the regulatory state, America and World War I, the Scopes Trial, trans-Atlantic reform movements, FDR and the political left, and the rise of communism. Your paper will rest upon your mastery of the major secondary sources and will explain how scholars have interpreted the subject. (2) Or, you can write a paper that is principally based on original, primary sources. This would require identifying a clear research question, the relevant archival/primary sources, and either challenge, revise, or reaffirm a dominant thesis in the larger historiography.

Whichever option you choose, please contact me early in the semester to discuss your topic. Students will present a brief (8-10 minute) overview of their research at our final class meeting on April 28.

Except for illness or other reasons recognized by the UW, extensions will not be granted either for the prospectus or the paper. In fairness to everyone, late papers will lose a half of a grade for every day late.

Important Deadlines & Dates:

March 3	1-2 page prospectus on paper
April 28	Student Presentations (8-10 minutes)
May 2 (Friday)	Paper due 4:30 P.M.

Grading Scale:

A (93–100); AB (88–92); B (83–87); BC (78-82); C (70–77); D (60–69); F, below 60

Academic Dishonesty/Misconduct:

All students are expected to do their own work. Academic dishonesty in the form of plagiarism, cheating, etc., will not be tolerated. For information on the University's policies on academic integrity and misconduct, see <https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>.

Artificial Intelligence

You may use artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as Copilot, DALL-E, etc.) in this class for limited purposes. Approved purposes include the translation of course materials or

your own writing from or to a language other than English, assistance locating additional background information and/or sources on a course topic, and assistance editing your writing for greater clarity.

While you may use AI for these specific purposes, you must attach an addendum to any assignment for which you have used AI to explain how you used it. Additionally, you must submit complete transcripts from any and all chat transcripts related to the assignment. Finally, and most importantly, you must cite the original source of any and all information that you locate through an AI tool or application, and you must assess the validity of that source and confirm its veracity. Citing a tool such as ChatGPT provides insufficient documentation of source material since AI tools draw from existing data (without necessarily evaluating their reliability or providing attribution) and can make up non-existent sources and regurgitate misinformation and unethical content. In this and other courses, you are hopefully developing essential critical thinking skills to subject AI-generated content to the greater scrutiny it deserves. When seeking additional background information and/or sources, librarians and library resources will generally be more efficient and reliable than AI.

Any use of AI tools other than where indicated is a violation of this course's expectations regarding academic honesty and will be addressed through UW–Madison's academic misconduct policy, specifically UWS 14.03(1)b (b), "Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise."

Religious Observances

If you anticipate a conflict between an academic requirement and a religious observance, please notify me so we can set a mutually acceptable deadline for the completion of the assignment.

Mental Health

Students often experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and personal well-being. These may include mental health concerns, substance abuse, sexual or relationship violence, family circumstances, campus climate, financial matters, among others. Students are encouraged to learn about and utilize UW-Madison's mental health services and/or other resources as needed. Visit uhs.wisc.edu or call University Health Services as (608) 265-5600 to learn more.

Students with Special Needs:

The University of Wisconsin–Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin Statute (36.12), and UW–Madison policy (Faculty document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. I will work directly with you in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, which is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Learning Goals:

#1: Students will demonstrate an understanding of diverse historical theories, epistemologies, and methodologies relevant to historical research.

#2: Students will be able to develop a researchable question and design a project on some aspect of American history, ca. 1900–1945.

#3: Students will gain experience using primary and secondary sources in historical research.

#4: Students will know how to write clearly and compellingly for diverse audiences.

#5: Students will understand professional standards for conducting scholarship ethically and responsibly.

Class Discussion & Participation:

To ensure that discussions are well-informed, students are expected to complete all weekly assignments prior to class. We are all bound by the common norms of civility, which ensures that we treat each other respectfully. Here are some participation grade guidelines.

Attendance and Class Participation Grade Guidelines

A: This student

- **never misses class**, always completes assigned readings, and comes to class

prepared to think carefully, making connections between readings and across topics.

- is willing to take the lead in discussion periodically, posing interesting questions or taking risks by answering tough questions.
- avoids dominating discussion, instead participating mindfully in discussion with other students, considering their ideas and responding thoughtfully and respectfully.
- helps to create a sense of a shared conversation in the group as a whole.
- shows passion for the work of the class and is committed fully to our work while in the classroom.

AB: This student

- does most of what an A student does, but may be slightly deficient in one area—for instance, may be a conscientious reader and thinker who tends not to listen to other students or otherwise dominates conversation instead of engaging in productive deliberation.
- may have been late to class a few times, or **may have two unexcused absences**, or may have missed a reading or two.

B: This student

- participates often, but not consistently.
- may attend every class and do all the readings but avoids taking the lead in discussion, instead only responding to questions or adding periodically to others' ideas.
- may participate well, **but may have three unexcused absences**.

BC: This student

- may be a frequent but superficial discussion participant.
- may be reticent to participate as fully as desirable.
- at times may seem not to have done the readings, though usually comes prepared.
- **may have four unexcused absences**.

C: This student

- is intermittently prepared for class.
- may have flashes of brilliance, but despite perfect attendance rarely participates beyond the occasional superficial comment.
- **may have five unexcused absences**.

D: This student

- very rarely participates, and only in superficial ways.
- **may have more than five unexcused absences.**

F: This student

- may have **six unexcused absences** and/or attends most classes but never participates.

Guidelines for Papers

Each paper will be evaluated on its scholarly strengths: the clarity of the thesis, depth of analysis, elegance of presentation, use of sources, and persuasiveness.

Each paper is limited to 17-18 pages, double-spaced, exclusive of endnotes and bibliography. There are many different style guides; historians tend to use the University of Chicago's A Manual of Style.

The prospectus: 1-2 pages double-spaced, due March 3. Feel free to submit the prospectus earlier than the due date. Please send the prospectus in an email to me in a PDF or bring a copy to class. Each prospectus (which will not be graded) should be typed and include your name, email address, a tentative title, a rationale for your paper, and a bibliography.

The paper is due on Friday, May 2, 4:30 P.M.: Please send your paper in an email in a PDF. Except for reasons of illness or others recognized by the UW, extensions will not be granted either for the prospectus or paper. In fairness to everyone, late papers will lose one-half grade for every day late.

Paper Grading Rubric

A: This paper is exceptionally well written, with almost no mistakes of grammar, usage, or citation. It poses an original research question, engages with existing scholarly literature, and, where appropriate, analyzes primary sources in the context of a persuasive thesis.

AB: This paper is like an A paper, but does not meet standards of excellence in either its writing or its argumentation. The research topic may be less sophisticated or original, or the writing may suffer from noticeable flaws in grammar, citation, or structure.

B: This paper is well written with a few grammatical mistakes. It adequately synthesizes existing scholarship on a subject, which it illustrates with sufficient evidence. Although it makes few new claims, this paper clearly articulates a thesis and supports it with reasoned,

well-organized arguments.

BC: This paper is like a B paper, but suffers from numerous flaws in grammar, citation, or structure. It lays out a clear research topic but fails to make a persuasive argument in its support.

C: This paper presents an argument but compromises its clarity with numerous flaws of style or evidence. It does not show an understanding of existing scholarship on a subject, does not incorporate original primary sources, or does not arrange them in a coherent fashion.

D: This paper shows insufficient effort. It may fulfill basic requirements of length, but is poorly written or researched, incoherent in its arguments, and unconnected to relevant scholarship.

F: This paper is unacceptable, either because of insufficient length, poor quality, or plagiarism.

CRITERIA	Undeveloped 5 points	Needs Improvement 10 points	Developing 15 points	Good 18 points	Exceptional 20 points
MEANING	No clear argument	Argument is unclear or poorly developed	Argument clear, but lacks specificity or purpose	Argument is clear, specific, fully developed	Argument is specific, original, insightful
DEVELOPMENT	Fails to incorporate sources	Includes references to sources or direct quotes, but not does interpret them clearly or accurately	Incorporates sources, but does not engage in active dialogue with them	Chooses sources effectively and engages in active dialogue with key concepts	Engages in complex and insightful dialogue with key concepts
ORGANIZATION	There is no discernable sense of organization within the essay and/or within individual paragraphs	Paragraphs are clearly delineated, but transitions are difficult to follow and/or paragraphs lack internal unity.	The overall organization is clear, but the transitions need clarification and/or paragraphs need further organizational unity	Essay is well organized and transitions are fluid. Paragraphs are unified and cohesive.	Essay is exceptionally well-organized. Transitions augment rhetorical development. Paragraphs are unified and cohesive.
LANGUAGE	Writing is difficult to follow, and incoherent at times	Most of the writing is clear, but some sentences are difficult to follow because of mechanical or language issues	Writing is clear, but sentence structure isn't varied effectively and word choice isn't always specific or accurate	Written style is above average, with varied sentence structure and accurate word choice	Writing is engaging and articulate. Sentence structure and vocabulary is used effectively to enhance rhetoric
CONVENTIONS	Grammar and punctuation errors interfere with clarity throughout	Grammar and punctuation errors affect clarity with some regularity	Grammar and punctuation errors occasionally affect clarity	Limited grammar and punctuation errors that do not affect clarity	Very limited or almost no grammar or punctuation errors

Book Review Assignment

Early in the semester, I will provide a model to help you complete this assignment. For this assignment, you will read as many book reviews as possible and then provide our class with (1) a list of the reviews, with full documentation, and a short summary of each review [2 pages double spaced, maximum, for this part of the assignment]; and (2) a hard copy of the most insightful review that you read. Please do not share these reviews or unique perspectives drawn from them before or during our class discussion. Your presentation will be limited to 5-7 minutes near the end of class.

In your presentation, succinctly summarize the reviews. How well or poorly was the book received by reviewers? What was the basis of the praise or criticism? On what basis did you select what seems like the most insightful review?

Book reviews may be located in popular or professional journals, on-line or in print. Some can be located through a “google” search. Via Madcat, some useful guides include Book Review Digest Plus, H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences, JSTOR, and EBSCO Academic Premier.

For insights into the nature of book reviews in history, we’ll read David Cannadine, “On Reviewing and Being Reviewed,” History Today 49 (March 1999): 30-33.