

AMERICAN CIVILIZATION SINCE 1877

Dr. William D. Bryan

This course will provide you with a broad overview of American history since 1877. This is an exciting era! It was a time of unprecedented upheaval, as Americans sought to make sense of rapidly changing political, social, economic, demographic, cultural, and environmental landscapes. In the years following the Civil War, the United States shifted away from its rural roots and became a predominately urban and industrial nation for the first time. In the process, Americans confronted many new issues, including wild economic booms and busts, internal and external population migrations, changing ideas about gender and family, new forms of technology, devastating natural disasters, debates about who should be entitled to citizenship, the transformation of the U.S. into a global power, the evolution of new social classes, changing forms of leisure and consumerism, pitched conflicts over labor and working conditions, unprecedented social movements, environmental degradation, and a rapidly changing political spectrum.

As we trace these important changes, this course will introduce you to the methods that historians use to read and write about the past. We will grapple with accounts from people writing in many different historical contexts and will consider how important issues have changed over time. Ultimately, this class will underline the fact that American history is not simply a static narrative of events, but the product of contentious debates among a variety of historical actors. Over the course of the class you will be required to distill large amounts of information down to the most important points, sort through a variety of conflicting accounts by weighing the value of each source, and ultimately come to original conclusions about the material that you can defend with evidence. My hope is that this will make you critical reader and a good writer—skills that are valuable outside of the classroom.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

History courses typically involve a lot of reading, and this course is no exception. There are three books required for this course, as listed below.

»Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History*, Volume II, Seagull 4th Edition (ISBN#: 978-0393920314)

»Eric Rauchway, *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Theodore Roosevelt's America* (ISBN#: 978-0809016389)

»C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (ISBN#: 978-0195146905)

All other materials for Friday discussions will be provided on ANGEL.

GRADING POLICY:

The class grade will be formulated from two papers, a midterm exam, a final exam, and your participation in weekly class discussions. The grade breakdown and due dates are listed below:

Document Analysis Papers (2) (20% each)

- »Paper #1 (The Johnstown Flood) due **February 14**
- »Paper #2 (The Origins of the Cold War) due **April 4**

Midterm Examination (20%): **March 3**

Final Examination (25%): **TBA**

Class Participation (15%)

The midterm and final will be taken in class, and will test you on your ability to analyze historical information, come to your own conclusions about it, and defend these conclusions with evidence. They will be made up of a combination of identification and essay questions. Students who fail to take exams during the assigned exam period will receive a zero for the assignment, unless clearing their absence with their teaching assistant prior to the assigned test date.

The two paper assignments will ask you to analyze a packet of primary source documents that will be provided to you. I will hand out the document packet and talk more specifically about my expectations for the paper well in advance of the due date. The first paper will examine the Johnstown Flood, and the second will examine the origins of the Cold War. Hard copies of your papers (no email copies) are due in class at the beginning of each assigned class period, and fifteen points will be deducted each day a paper is late. Papers more than four days late will not be accepted.

Friday classes will be a discussion-type format, and will focus on a series of short primary sources. You should read and think critically about the material beforehand, and be prepared to discuss it in class with your peers. Participation is an important part of your class grade (15%) and will be graded mostly on the quality of your observations.

Grades will be calculated using PSU's grading scale: A (100-95), A- (94.9-90), B+ (89.9-87.9), B (87.8-83.3), B- (83.32-80), C+ (79.9-75), C (74.9-70), D (69.9-60), F (59.9 and below). If you ever have questions or concerns about your performance in the course, please do not hesitate to speak with either your teaching assistant or myself.

ATTENDANCE:

I will not formally take attendance during Monday and Wednesday lecture classes, but your attendance at Friday discussion sections is required. You are allowed one unexcused absence for the term. Excused absences—such as illness, family emergencies, religious observances, and university-approved curricular and extra-curricular activities—must be cleared by your teaching assistant beforehand and should be properly documented. If you have an excused absence that causes you to miss an assignment, you must schedule a time to make it up beforehand.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

All forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other

students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction. If you ever have a question about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask either myself or your teaching assistant.

For further information about academic integrity at Penn State please refer to:
<http://tlt.psu.edu/plagiarism/>

DISABILITY ACCESS:

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell me as soon as possible.

COURSE SCHEDULE

subject to change

Week 1: Reconstruction

January 13: Introduction to the Class

January 15: Reconstruction

January 17: DISCUSSION, Thinking Historically/How to Read Primary Sources

Peter Stearns, "Why Study History?"

Kathryn Walbert, "Reading Primary Sources"

"Address of the Colored Convention to the People of Alabama"*

*Readings for each weekly discussion are posted on ANGEL.

Week 2: Expanding West

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 15

January 20: HOLIDAY

January 22: Reconstruction in the West

January 24: DISCUSSION, "Buffalo Bill" Cody and Popular Perceptions of the American West

A Peep at Buffalo Bill's Wild West

"Indian Affairs," *Friends' Review*, March 27, 1890

Letter from Agent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs

"Buffalo Bill on the Indian," *The Washington Post*, July 25, 1888

"Indians in the Wild West Show," *The New York Times*, February 21, 1901

Selections from William Frederick Cody, *An Autobiography of Buffalo Bill*

Week 3: The New South

January 27: The Compromise of 1877 and the Rise of the New South

January 29: How New Was the “New South?”

January 31: DISCUSSION, Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois

Booker T. Washington, Address at the Atlanta Exposition

W.E.B. Dubois, Selections from *The Souls of Black Folk*

John Hope, Selections from an Address to Nashville’s Colored Debating Society

Week 4: Urbanization and Industrialization

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 16

February 3: Urbanization and the “New” Immigration

February 5: The Rise of Big Business

February 7: DISCUSSION, “The Gospel of Wealth” and its Critics

Andrew Carnegie, “Wealth,” *North American Review* (June, 1889)

William Graham Sumner, Selections from *What the Social Classes Owe to Each Other*

Henry George, Selections from *Progress and Poverty*

Week 5: Labor Agitation and Agrarian Discontent

February 10: Labor Agitation

February 12: Agrarian Discontent (Film: *A Corner in Wheat*)

February 14: DISCUSSION, Debates over Empire **(PAPER #1 DUE)**

Albert Beveridge, “The March of the Flag” Address

William Jennings Bryan, “Imperialism” Address

Emilio Aguinaldo, “Aguinaldo’s Case Against the United States,” *North American Review* (September 1899)

Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”

Week 6: An American Empire

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 17

February 17: An Imperial Nation

February 19: Masculine Culture in the Twentieth Century

February 21: DISCUSSION, Anarchists, Progressives, and Teddy Roosevelt

Eric Rauchway, *Murdering McKinley* (ALL)

Week 7: Progressivism

Textbook: Foner, Chapters 18 & 19

February 24: Forest Fires and the “Wise Use” of Natural Resources

February 26: Progressives Go to War: WWI

February 28: DISCUSSION, Review for Midterm

*Look over all notes and readings, and come to class prepared to ask any questions about the material for midterm.

Week 8: The 1920s: A Decade of Contradictions

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 20

March 3: **MIDTERM (Bring a Blue Book)**

March 5: The 1920s: A Decade of Contradictions

March 7: DISCUSSION, The Scopes Trial: What was at Stake?

William George Hunter, Selections from *A Civic Biology: Presented in Problems*

Dudley Field Malone, Speech on the Fourth Day of Scopes Trial, July 15, 1925

William Jennings Bryan, Selections from *Bryan's Last Speech*

H.L. Mencken, "The Monkey Trial," *Baltimore Evening Sun*

Statement from the American Federation of Teachers

"Cranks and Freaks Flock to Dayton," *The New York Times*, July 11, 1925

"Dayton's 'Amazing' Trial," *The Literary Digest*, July 15, 1925

"If Monkeys Could Speak," *Chicago Defender*, May 23, 1925

Week 9: Spring Break (March 9-15)

Week 10: The Great Depression and the New Deal

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 21

March 17: The Great Depression and the New Deal

March 19: The Tennessee Valley Authority (Film: *The River*)

March 21: DISCUSSION, Roosevelt and his Critics

Franklin D. Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address

Huey Long, Address to the Share Our Wealth Society

Herbert Hoover, 1936 Campaign Speech

Letter: Minnie Hardin to Eleanor Roosevelt, December 14, 1937

Week 11: The World at War

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 22

March 24: World War II

March 26: The Homefront Fuels the War Effort

March 28: DISCUSSION, The Decision to Use "the Bomb" and the Start of the Atomic Age

Memo from Henry Stimson to Harry Truman, September 11, 1945

Notes of the Interim Committee Meeting, May 31, 1945

Notes from a Meeting at the White House, June 18, 1945

Memo to Henry Stimson from the Scientists at the University of Chicago, June 12, 1945

Notes from the Target Committee Meeting, May 10, 1945

Telegram: Senator Richard Russell to Harry Truman, August 7, 1945

Potsdam Declaration, July 26, 1945
White House Press Release, August 6, 1945
Selections from NSC-68 Memo, 1950

Week 12: Postwar Affluence and the Beginning of the Cold War

Textbook: Foner, Chapters 23 & 24

March 31: The Origins of the Cold War

April 2: Postwar Affluence and Suburbanization

April 4: DISCUSSION, Fallout and the Origins of Environmentalism (**PAPER #2 DUE**)

Gifford Pinchot, Selections from *The Fight for Conservation* (1910)

Rachel Carson, Selections from *Silent Spring* (1962)

“Pesticides for Plenty,” *Time Magazine* (1962)

Barry Commoner, “Beyond the Teach-In,” *Saturday Review* (1970)

Week 13: Civil Rights

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 25

April 7: Civil Rights

April 9: Black Power

April 11: DISCUSSION, Writing History as a Political Act

C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (ALL)

Week 14: Vietnam

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 26

April 14: Social Changes in the 1960s

April 16: Vietnam

April 18: DISCUSSION, The Pentagon Papers

Selections from *The Pentagon Papers*

New York Times Co. v. United States (1971)

Week 15: The Environmental Decade

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 27

April 21: Film: *The Fog of War*

April 23: Earth Day and the Making of an Environmental Decade

April 25: DISCUSSION, The New Right

Barry Goldwater, Acceptance Speech at 1964 Republican National Convention

Ronald Reagan, “The Evil Empire” Address

Jerry Falwell, Selections from *Listen America*

Ronald Reagan, “Message to Congress Transmitting the Annual Report of the Council on Environmental Quality,” July 21, 1982

James Watt, "Despite Critics, Interior Dept. Makes Rapid Progress," *Human Events* (1982)

Week 16: The 1980s, 1990s and Beyond

Textbook: Foner, Chapter 28

April 28: The Conservative Counter-Revolution

April 30: The War on Terror; An Increasingly Connected World

May 2: DISCUSSION, Review for Final Exam

*Look over all notes and readings, and come to class prepared to ask any questions about the material for the final exam.

FINAL EXAM: TBA (Bring a Blue Book)