



Survey of United States History Since 1865
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
HIST 1233 Sections 203 and 204
Fall 2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. John Ashbrook
Office: 215 O'Donohoe Hall
Office Hours: W: 1:30-3:30pm; TR: 9:30-11am; or by appointment
Office Phone: (940) 397-4153
Cell Phone: (434) 386-1750 (cell)
E-mail: john.ashbrook@msutexas.edu

Course Description

This is an introductory survey of United States history from Reconstruction to the end of the 20th century. The class is meant to give the students a basic knowledge and framework of American History, illustrating how the Constitution and America's changing role in the world led to its superpower status and overall prosperity. This course focuses on the political, legal, and economic issues that contributed to competing concepts of American identity and offers explanations for how and why the state developed in the manner it did. Major themes include changes in society, the development of American prominence on the world political and economic stages, and the crises that shaped the state and its people. Furthermore, it challenges some of the preconceived and learned notions about American History and the American people that are often presented as "truths" in public school courses, popular (and flawed) books (the *1619 Project* and Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* in particular), and in the media. These challenges are meant to stimulate lively and rational debate, in which students with various opinions can exchange points of view respectfully without childish shunning and cancelling or ad hominem attacks. There is NO room for personal and intellectual growth unless your opinions and values are challenged. The discussions, lectures, and readings are meant to develop critical thinking skills in relation to historical themes and particular events. A primary element of the course is the improvement of critical thinking skills, using historical themes and paradigms (examples, patterns, models, and standards) for this intellectual growth.

THECB Required Course Objectives

This course fulfills a Texas core requirement for Critical Thinking, Communication, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. As such, the course will assess the following learning objectives:

All four criteria are measured through a critical writing assignment, which may include one or more of the following: Substantial essay exam question; a critical and analytical book review; a research paper or project; a reading response paper; or other appropriate assignment as determined by the course professor.

Student Participation

Students will be held personally responsible for their own education. I am a harsh taskmaster and do not accept excuses that tend to be pervasive in today's society. You are adults, and with age comes responsibility for your own actions or lack thereof. Active student participation in learning (which includes careful reading of ALL assignments, classroom engagement, attentive note taking, and participation in discussions), the maintenance of a weekly study schedule, the completion of ALL assignments in a timely manner, adequate preparation for exams, and, when necessary, individual post-exam consultation with the instructor, is essential to meeting the learning outcomes of the course. However, if you turn in all assignments, pass your exams, and participate in discussions, you are not guaranteed a "good grade". A is a designation for superior work, and B for good work. If your work ethic, written work, and test taking efforts are merely satisfactory, you will EARN a C. The bare minimum earns a D.

Textbook

We will be using a single textbook selected as a corrective to the current state of college textbooks. It does not have modules or that many visuals. However, it has an easy to read, cohesive narrative of American History, presenting it in a more balanced way than most used in other courses. McClay offers what he thinks is most important aspects of American history to the reader. The book is offered fairly cheaply at the university bookstore and can be purchased in an electronic form.

Text: Wilfred McClay, *Land of Hope*, 2019, ISBN: 9781594039379

Online Readings: As assigned

Readings for the week MUST BE DONE by the beginning of the first class for that week.

Academic Integrity, Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

Notice: Understand the following – it applies to all assignments, including drafts of papers. If you, in any instance, "cut and paste" from any source, including but not limited to internet sources, without citing that source (plagiarism) or use unapproved internet sources, you will fail the course, including if you cheat in any way on a **draft**. Plagiarism of any kind will result in the same penalty. Ignorance of this policy and the university's policy on academic dishonesty is NOT an excuse. Be warned, this includes, but is NOT LIMITED to, use of an **AI program** for any reason; plagiarism of any form; having someone else do any of the work (research or writing), etc. **I will not accept the students' use of ANY AI program**, even for grammar purposes. Your work needs to be completely your own with no exceptions. If my AI detects pick

up **ANY** AI, you will fail the assignment. Again, this includes programs like Grammarly and similar products for editing. Depending on the severity of the offense, the professor reserves the right to employ any or all university sanctioned disciplinary actions, of which I will pursue prosecution to its furthest extent. I will drop you from the course and report the incident to the Student Affairs and any other office as per the university's policy.

Grading

Assignments	Percentage of grade
Exams (3) 20% each	60%
Analytical book review	20%
Active participation and attendance (includes pop-quizzes and in-class assignments)	20%

Final Grade	Percentage
A	90% plus
B	80 – 89.9%
C	70 – 79.9%
D	60 – 69.9%
F	Less than 60%

There will be two essay/short answer exams taken in class and a final during the scheduled time in exam week. At the beginning of the course, I will provide a list of terms for the semester to help students study for these exams, giving them what (in my opinion) is most important for well-educated students to understand United States History in the modern period. If I were you, at the beginning of the course, I would **immediately start the process of finding the who, what, where, when, how, and why answers** on the distributed terms sheet, keeping them in a separate notebook. In this manner, you will come to know the basics of each lecture/discussion, so you can better perform in class, and build your knowledge base for exams, discussions, and

pop quizzes. Be warned, the terms are not in chronological order and you are responsible for finding the correct terms to study for each exam's timeframe. We will discuss this more in class.

The book review may be a new exercise to some. It is **NOT a book report**. Reviews are **critiques of books** in which the reviewer briefly describes the main thesis and points the author uses to prove the argument. Once this is done, the reviewer critiques the book (**is the argument believable, well researched, persuasive, well-written?**). Does the author fulfill his or her stated or implied purpose? Is the argument subtle or ham-fisted? I will provide a "how to" sheet with a barebones description of how to do a short academic review. I suggest you use review essays from an academic journal (such as the *American Historical Review*) to get a feel for what they are meant to do. Now you might be asking yourself, "why do I have to do this? I don't intend to be a professional historian [or] I won't ever take another course in this department." Every academic field requires such critical exercises; furthermore, you may take a position after college in which the boss wants you to critique something in writing. This review will give you practice doing a formal critique. We will spend class time talking about and practicing analytical writing and the book review itself.

Selecting the book for the book review: The book you select to review **CANNOT** be a novel or any other work of fiction. It **CANNOT** be a biography or memoir of a historical figure. It must be an academic book on **US history** that fits the **time parameters for the course (1865-2005)**. The book must be from an academic or credible press, be over 200 pages in length, and written for an adult audience. It **CANNOT** be written by an activist, political pundit, or journalist (with certain exceptions). It must be approved by the instructor **NO LATER THAN February 5**. Request for approval **MUST** be sent via email and include the book's ISBN number. For **every day you are late in requesting book approval, the final grade for the review will be lowered by 5%**. I suggest you choose and read the book carefully in the first half of the semester to avoid the end of term flood of assignments. Early work is encouraged. It will be **due**, without exception, on **April 9 no later than 4pm**. No late work will be accepted. Same goes for the exams.

Active participation means not only attending the course, but contributing to discussion, asking questions, and being engaged. Just showing up IS NOT ADEQUATE. If you can't commit, there's no reason to take the course.

Extra Credit

I do NOT offer extra credit. DON'T ASK.

Make Up Work/Tests

I will only allow make up work if there is a legitimate excuse for missing a scheduled exam. I have the sole discretion in determining whether or not an absence is excused. University functions approved by the administration counts. Other reasons must be documented in some acceptable form or fashion (proof) must be presented.

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

I use MSU's D2L program to post documents or give assignments. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication between student and professor. In the first week, I will post the syllabus and the terms for the course. You can log into D2L through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor. I will put a few required readings on D2L (see schedule below) during the semester.

Online Computer Requirements

It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. *Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.* Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!

Institutional and COVID Policies

In general, the class policies concerning COVID are those implemented by MSU Texas and are subject to change as university policy changes. Please check university policies throughout the semester. Below are listed some of the things you should be aware of.

- 1) This is a face-to-face course. I will NOT be livestreaming the course unless a student tests positive or must go into quarantine due to exposure by an infected individual. It is the student's responsibility to inform me, in writing (email is fine), of the situation. I will implement livestreaming within two class sessions to accommodate the sick or quarantined students.
- 2) Due to the policies on social distancing and attendance, seating charts and seat assignments will be used in this course. Each student must sit in a desk or chair with an affixed sticker allowing seating. That desk or chair cannot be moved for any reason and attendance will be taken by seating chart. Once you select a desk, you must sit in that desk and that desk alone throughout the semester.
- 3) Due to the possibility of a campus shut-down, the students are responsible for owning or having access to the necessary equipment and software to continue this course via distance learning. Below are the MINIMUM requirements as determined by the university.

HARDWARE:

PC Desktops and laptops (Use Windows' Operating System and PC Info to find your hardware information if you are unsure)

- a) Intel Core (i3, i5, i7) processors; 4th generation or newer
- b) 4 GB of RAM, 8 GB of RAM is highly recommended
- c) 256 GB SSD Storage
- d) Dual Band spectrum (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) with 802.11ac or 802.11n

Mac desktops and laptops (Use Apple's About this Mac feature to find your hardware information)

- a) Intel Core (i3, i5, i7) processors; 4th generation or newer
- b) 4 GB of RAM, 8 GB of RAM is highly recommended
- c) 256 GB SSD Storage

- d) Dual Band spectrum (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) with 802.11ac or 802.11n

PLEASE NOTE!!!: Chromebooks are not recommended, as they will not work with D2L. You have been warned now, so do NOT expect me to make accommodations if distance learning is implemented during the semester.

SOFTWARE:

Minimum Software requirements

Operating Systems:

- a) Windows 10 (1709)
- b) macOS 10.13 (High Sierra)

Web browsers:

- a) Internet Explorer 11 (Windows)
- b) Microsoft Edge
- c) Safari
- d) Firefox
- e) Chrome

Conferencing Software:

- a) Microsoft Teams
- b) Zoom Web Conferencing
- c) Skype for Business
- d) Web X

Other supported hardware and software options are located at

<https://msutexas.edu/it/assets/files/basic-software-and-hardware-list.pdf>

- 4) If absence due to COVID infection or exposure occurs, it must be documented by the university. If you cannot make office hours, call during posted times only for immediate concerns. Otherwise, email or call to make a face-to-face or electronic meeting.
- 5) All documents relating to the course will be available on D2L. Check regularly.

Instructor Class Policies

Conduct: All students are expected to act as responsible adults. Any disruptions or distractions will be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Below you will find general guidelines covering certain actions and/or behaviors that are to be avoided. As a general rule any behavior that disrupts the administration of this class will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have the opportunity to gain from the time spent in class, students are prohibited from engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, in a request that the offending student leave the classroom. Furthermore, the professor reserves the right to deduct points from the student's semester total or remove the

student from the course. **Arriving late is considered a distraction.** If arriving more than five (5) minutes late – DO NOT enter the classroom.

Electronic Devices, Texting, and Phones: The use of tape recorders, iPods, mp3s, or any other recording device in class is **prohibited**. It is imperative that you turn off phones, all other communication devices, and electronic equipment before entering the classroom. The use of a telephone or texting device for any reason is prohibited. *On the first offense the student will be penalized 20 points on her or his participation score for the week. The second offense will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom. The professor reserves the right to expel and administratively withdraw a student from the class upon the third offense.*

Laptops, Tablets, & etc.: You must obtain permission from the professor to use laptops, tablets, and phones (or any other device capable of accessing the internet) in the classroom. Recent scholarship suggests that laptops and tablets are **major distractions** to fellow students and in general do not enhance learning and/or the classroom experience. Furthermore, there will be no surfing, texting, emailing, etc. in the classroom, unless I specifically ask the students to do so.

E-mail: Note that e-mail correspondence is the most effective and convenient way in which to communicate with me outside the classroom. The professor/student relationship is professional by nature and, accordingly, your e-mail correspondence should be constructed professionally.

Attendance and your grade: This course is structured so that it is to the student's advantage to attend class regularly. From past experience, students who choose not to attend on a regular basis are not successful. I allow three, and only three unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will result in a penalty to your participation grade. If you have a total of nine unexcused absences, you will not be able to pass the course.

Withdrawals (Course Drop): The professor is NOT responsible for student withdrawals. The student is responsible for meeting all academic deadlines including withdrawal deadlines.

Services for Students with Disabilities: In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Student Disability Office](#).

Grade Appeal Process: Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#).

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule

Week 1—Introduction to the Course and Policies

Reading: McClay, Introduction and Epilogue

Jan. 20—Introduction to American History and Class Policies

Jan. 22—The Civil War

Week 2—The Ordeal of Reconstruction and Congressional Power

Reading: McClay, Chapter 11

Jan. 27—Punishing the South

Jan. 29—Andrew Johnson vs. Congress, Weakening the Presidency

Week 3—Post-Reconstruction America

Reading: McClay, Chapter 12

Feb. 3—Meanings of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments

Print out the entire text of these amendments and bring them to class.

Feb. 5—Western Expansion and Indian Conflict

You must have instructor approval (via email) on a book for your book review today, no later than 4pm

Week 4—Building an American Empire

Reading: McClay, Chapter 13

Feb. 10—The Spanish-American War

Feb. 12—American Foreign Policy, 1865-1914

Week 5—The Progressive (?) Era

Reading: McClay, Chapter 14

Feb. 17—**EXAM 1**

Feb. 19—Problems with Progressivism and the Growth of the Government

Week 6—Progressivism's Champion, Woodrow Wilson, and the Great War

Reading: McClay, Chapter 15

Feb. 24—Technocratic Rule and Elitism in American Government

Feb. 26—The US and the Great War

Week 7—Fighting the Great War, the American Experience

Reading: James W. Rainey, "Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I," *Parameters: U.S. Army War College* 13 (3) (1983): 34-46; and Stephen J. Lofgren, "Unready for War: The Army and World War I," *Army History* (22) (1992): 11-19. [Both on D2L]

Mar. 3—World War I, the European Experience, 1914-17

Mar. 5—American Difference and Experience on the Western Front

Week 8—The Roaring 1920s

Reading: McClay, Chapter 16

Mar. 17—Urban Hedonism: Flappers, Jazz, Changing Culture

Mar. 19—Teetotalers, Do-Gooders, and Organized Crime: Prohibition and Al Capone

Week 9—FDR and the New Deal

Reading: McClay, Chapter 17

Mar. 24—Progressive Reaction to the Great Depression

Mar. 26—New Deal or "Raw" Deal? Prolonging the Depression under Roosevelt

Week 10—Midterm exam week

Mar. 31—**EXAM 2**

Apr. 2—**Holiday break**

Week 11—Fighting the Second World War

Reading: McClay, Chapter 18

Apr. 7—The Second World War and America's Experience

Apr. 9—Deconstructing Wikipedia as a resource

Reading: Military history of the United States during World War II (wikipedia page on World War) [special attention will be paid the problems of using Wikipedia in academic context]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_the_United_States_during_World_War_II

BOOK REVIEW DUE AT 4PM (NO EXCEPTIONS)

Week 12—The Cold War

Reading: McClay, Chapter 19

Apr. 14—The Korean War

Apr. 16—The Vietnam War

Week 13—The 1960s and the Baby Boomers

Reading: McClay, Chapter 20

Apr. 21— Counterculture and the Reaction to Middle America

Apr. 23—Counterculture, Part II

Week 14—Nixon to Reagan: Stagflation to Prosperity

Reading: McClay, Chapter 21

Apr. 28—The Reagan Revolution: Partial Repudiation of Progressivism

Apr. 30—The Fall of Soviet communism

Week 15—Class Wrap-Up and final exam discussions

Reading: McClay, Chapter 22

May 5—The World after the Cold War

May 7—TBA

Final Exam during Finals' Week at the scheduled time and day. Bring a blue book.

Final Exam for TR 8-9:20am section:

Thursday, May 14 from 8-10am

Final Exam for TR 11-12:20pm section:

Tuesday, May 12 from 1-3pm