

HIST-1233: US History, 1850-Present

Professor: Trevor J. Davis, M.A.

Location: Founders Classical Academy of Corinth (3600 Meadowview Dr.)

Academic Year: 2022-2023

Location: FCAC Upper Campus, Room #9

“Fellow-citizens, *we* cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation... We -- even *we here* -- hold the power, and bear the responsibility.” – Abraham Lincoln, Annual Message to Congress (December 1862)

Course Objectives

1. To provide students with knowledge of foundational events, figures, and processes in American history from 1850 to the beginning of the twenty-first century.
2. To acquaint students with a coherent narrative framework for understanding American history as a foundation for both personal growth and responsible citizenship.
3. To familiarize students with the critical philosophical knowledge and historical methods necessary for analyzing historical narratives and arguments on the basis of evidence and reason.
4. To foster students with a love of history (“*historia*” – “inquiry”) for its own sake.

Course Overview

This course is a survey of the history of United States, beginning in the middle of the nineteenth and ending with the Cold War and the tumultuous historical events that continue to shape the nation in the twenty-first century. This course will begin with a quick survey of early American history up through the American Civil War (1861-1865), a fierce military conflict that tested the durability of the United States’ distinctive form of constitutional government and ultimately climaxed with the total destruction of the slaveholding system that undergirded the rebellious Confederacy’s political ideology and socio-economic structure. We will then move to discuss the post-Civil War United States’ emergence as a superpower in an increasingly competitive and unstable global order that would be shattered by the World Wars, and reshaped by the United States’ post-war rivalry with the Soviet Union for global military, political, social, cultural, and economic supremacy.

History is frequently tragic, yet we must remember that it is also a remarkable testament to human tenacity, endurance, and the ability of the human spirit to endure and ultimately overcome tremendous evils and privations. This is true of both individual human beings and national communities that strove to endure and ultimately overcome such adversities of ideological tyrannies and world war. Even if we limit our gaze to our own country, we can take legitimate pride that the United States abolished slavery and ultimately expunge legalized racial segregation in this period; it expanded the categories of eligibility for

political participation and democratic franchise; and ultimately achieved lasting political and military triumphs over both the fascist and socialist regimes that sought to overthrow it. If nothing else, the study of our recent history will reveal that our struggles are perhaps less unique than we often imagine, and that we may take comfort in the fact that prior generations of American citizens triumphed over very similar or even worse challenges than those that we face today.

In examining the history of our country (cultural, social, economic, political, religious, and so forth), we must not let our investigation be governed by either our personal prejudices or by rose-tinted nostalgia. Rather, we must seek to evaluate the past on the understanding that it was populated by people fundamentally like us in their human nature. Their lives, struggles, loves, hatreds, their great triumphs and terrible mistakes are all part of a story that is greater than the individuals that constitute the sum of its parts. We must seek to find the good while simultaneously acknowledging (and, even more importantly, learning from!) the hard truths that are made visible by the worst mistakes of our national history, so that we can each of us be prepared to contribute responsibly and thoughtfully to our country's posterity.

Course Content Disclaimer

Students *should* be forewarned that this course will cover difficult historical topics, including matters relating to violence, religion, race, and other potentially controversial content. The reality is there are fundamental issues in American history which touch on all these difficult aspects of human existence, and it is impossible to develop a healthy and well-rounded knowledge of even basic U.S. history (much less modern life) without addressing them. We will *not* approach such content simply to delight in controversy for its own sake, but *rather* as means for developing a mature and thoughtful perspective on the history of the United States.

Texts

Dr. Wilfred McClay, *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story*. New York: Encounter Books, 2019. – This is the general textbook which will serve as a supplement to in-class lectures.

Dr. Gary Gallagher and Dr. Joan Waugh, *The American War: A History of the Civil War Era*, 2nd edition. Philadelphia, PA: Flip Learning, 2019. – This is required reading for examining the American Civil War and Reconstruction (1861-1865, 1865-1876).

Dr. Norman Stone, *World War One: A Short History*. New York: Basic Books, 2010, and *World War Two: A Short History*. New York, Basic Books, 2014. – These are required reading to provide a broader (non-American and global) context for the events of the First World War (1914-1918) and Second World War (1939-1945).

Primary handouts may be distributed in-class or online in the context of assignments.

Materials

Notebook paper, pens, and laptop computer for assignments and research projects.

Grading and Assignments

Online discussion board posts and responses – 20%

2 Essays – 30%

1 Midterm – 25%

1 Final – 25%

Students will have discussion board posts and responses every two weeks to ensure they are reading the assigned books and paying attention to our in-class lecture content. The midterm and final will consist of extensive essays analyzing and interpreting historical issues using the assigned sources for the class. All essays (whether for exams or for the two designated papers) *must* have a clear thesis statement and be written in comprehensible academic English. Additional guidance will be provided by the course instructor in preparation for written assignments. Make up work (for example, for a doctor's visit with a doctor's note) will be possible at the instructor's discretion.

Grade Scale

Grade	Points
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	0-59

Homework and Assignments

Students are expected to complete their work and turn their assignments in on the specified due dates. No late work will be accepted unless it is under the most extenuating circumstances as determined by the course instructor. Rubrics and guidelines will be provided for all assignments. Plagiarism is absolutely unacceptable and will result in academic discipline in keeping with FCAC and MSU policies (see below).

Participation

Students should be prepared to ask questions and engage in discussion of course content. Regular notetaking is absolutely essential for succeeding in this course. This is a college class; if you do not pay attention and do not complete assignments, your grades will reflect the amount and quality of effort you put in (or don't) to the course. Laptops **ARE STRICTLY FORBIDDEN** (as are all other digital devices) in the context of lecture; all students will be expected to take down notes in pen and paper. Laptop computers may only be used during study-hall days under the strict supervision of the course instructor.

Written Assignments

Students will be expected to complete two research-intensive papers for this class, consisting of a historiography and an argumentative research paper. These papers will be 5 pages each, typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and must be formatted using the Chicago-Turabian system. These papers will provide students with the opportunity to draw on their course readings (especially primary sources) and lecture content to demonstrate their ability to effectively analyze and interpret historical events in a reasonable and informed manner.

Classroom Procedures and Conduct

All standard rules and procedures laid out in the Responsive Ed Parent-Student handbook and the MUS Student Code of Conduct will apply to this course. The instructor will especially expect the following from all students:

1. Punctual and regular attendance.
2. Food and most drinks will not be permitted in the classroom (exceptions are made here for the use of water bottles)
3. Students will show appropriate respect and courtesy towards their classmates and the course instructor
4. All students must be seated and prepared (with notes, pens, and textbooks) for class *before* the official start of class periods.
5. Use of prohibited digital devices (i.e., cell phones, smart watches, laptops during lecture, etc.) will result in disciplinary measures at the discretion of the course instructor

Academic Dishonesty

There is zero-tolerance for academic dishonesty in this class. Per the handbook, academic dishonesty is defined as cheating or plagiarism. Cheating is defined as the copying the work of another student. Plagiarism is defined as the possessing, viewing, or distributing pictures, text messages, or e-mails of test content or answer keys, or the submission of another author's work (in the context of an essay) as one's own without providing proper citation and attribution. If a student is caught engaging in dishonest academic behavior, they will receive a penalized grade on that particular assignment and suitable disciplinary action per the Student Code of Conduct. If you are having trouble with an assignment in the class, the best thing to do would be to contact the course instructor for help, rather than damaging your personal and academic integrity by resorting to dishonesty.

FERPA

Please note that, per Federal law, your grades and performance in this course are confidential between myself and the individual student. The course professor cannot talk to your parents or to anyone else about your performance without violating FERPA regulations. You are responsible for your in-class behavior and academic performance in this course.

Course Unit Calendar

Unit 1:

- Introduction: America in the Mid-Nineteenth Century
- Slavery and Free Labor in the Antebellum U.S.
- The Compromise of 1850 up to the Election of 1860

Unit 2:

- The Road to Fort Sumter and First Bull Run
- The War for Union: The Civil War up to 1863
- The War for Union and Abolition: The War from 1863-1865

Unit 3:

- Effects of the Civil War
- Lincoln Assassination and Presidential Reconstruction
- Congressional Reconstruction and the Grant Administration
- Redemption and the Compromise of 1877

Unit 4:

- Westward Expansion and the Indian Wars
- The Gilded Age
- Rise of Industrial Monopolies
- The Progressive Era

Unit 5:

- The First World War
- The Inter-War Period – The Roaring 20s through the Great Depression
- The Second World War
- Origins of the Cold War: America as a Global Superpower

Unit 6:

- The Cold War
- The Civil Rights Movement
- American Culture and Society
- The End of History? America in the Twenty-First Century