



Survey of United States History Since 1865

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

HIST 1233 Sections **103 and 105**

Fall 2026

Contact Information

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Course Description

This course is designed to provide the student with an understanding of the history of European society, politics, and diplomacy during the long 20th century. It covers the Congress of Berlin in 1878, World War I, the interwar years, the rise of the dictators, World War II, the post-World War II era (Cold War), the fall of communism, and the growth of the European Union. It analyzes the changing nature of Europe through a critical examination of the social, political, and intellectual movements of the long 20th century, as well as the diplomatic and military consequences these movements sparked. European affairs during this period are filled with controversy, and some of the events we examine will force us to confront fundamental questions of human nature and morality.

Unfortunately, a one-semester course cannot hope to give adequate attention to every significant aspect of this dense and complex history, even assuming we could agree on what was 'significant'. Therefore, I will not present you with a chronological survey of 20th-century European history. Instead of building a single grand narrative running from roughly 1871 to the present, we will be looking at history from a number of vantage-points and through a number of themes from different perspectives.

Objectives

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 & Instructional Materials

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 are the most important aspects of American history. The book is offered fairly cheaply at the university bookstore and can be purchased online.

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.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic 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 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 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. 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.

AI Policy

Under no circumstance should a student use AI as a generative or editorial tool for any assignment in this course. I will run all assignments through multiple AI checkers to determine whether or not AI was used. If there is any evidence of AI usage, the student will automatically fail the assignment in question. If AI is used on more than a single assignment, the student will fail the course. **DO NOT USE AI!**

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student’s studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Percentages for each assignment.

Assignments	Percentage
3 exams 20% each. Sept 22; Oct 29; Dec 10	60

Assignments	Percentage
Analytical Book Review. Book must be approved by September 10. Approximately 900-1200 words. Due on November 5 by 4pm.	20
Active Participation and Attendance – may include pop-quizzes, summaries, and in-class assignments	20

Percentages for each letter grade for assignments and course.

Grade	Percentage
A	90% and above
B	80% to 89%
C	70% to 79%
D	60% to 69%
F	Less than 60%

Assignments

The book review will be turned in to a D2L dropbox in WORD FORMAT ONLY. NO PDF OR GOOGLE DOCS will be accepted. ****Assignments are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered a reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!!***

Exams

There will be two essay/short answer exams taken in class and a final during the scheduled time in exam week. All must be handwritten in class in blue books (blank booklets with a blue cover) available at the campus bookstore. At the beginning of the course, I will provide a list of terms and the exact essay questions 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. 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.

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 and practice writing the exam essays long before the exam times. Keep these 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.

Book Review

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 September 10 at 4pm.** 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 **November 5 no later than 4pm.** No late work will be accepted. Same goes for the exams.

Extra Credit

I do **NOT** offer extra credit. Don’t ask.

Late Work

I do **NOT** accept late work. Don’t ask.

Make Up Work/Tests

There will be no make-up work or exams. The only exceptions are for school approved functions, such as sporting or academic events, and for EMERGENCY medical situations and doctor’s appointments. No other excuse is acceptable.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: August 27, 2026.
- Deadline to file for December graduation: September 21, 2026.
- Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” November 23, 2026.
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. 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. Also, I communicate individually only through my email address: john.ashbrook@msutexas.edu. DO NOT contact me via D2L's email system. However, check your D2L inbox regularly as I will (rarely) post messages to the class through this system.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. This course is structured so that it is to the student's advantage to attend class regularly. Although students are primarily evaluated on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences lower the student's grade. 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 **eight** unexcused absences, **you will not pass the course**. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from the course.

Online Computer Requirements

It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer. ****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.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!*** There are many places to access your class! Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties, there is a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations; however, they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Recording Classes

****Recording classes is prohibited without the professor's explicit permission.*** Such recordings, when permitted, are for personal use only and may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published without the professor's prior consent. When it is feasible and appropriate, students may record classes to accommodate disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, with prior approval of Disability Support Services. Such recordings may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published.

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 ten (10) minutes late – DO NOT enter the classroom.

Electronic Devices, Texting, and Phones: The use of tape recorders, iPods, 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 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. Also DO NOT contact me using my D2L email address. Use john.ashbrook@msutexas.edu only! However, I sometime send group messages to your D2L email, so check this inbox regularly.

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 eight unexcused absences, you will not 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.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

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 Student Wellness Center, (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 [Disability Support Services](#).

Emergency Aid Resources for Basic Needs

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs—such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, textbooks or other life necessities, resources may be available to help. Visit the [Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more, and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU and how to access them. For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center #108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@mstuexas.edu.

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#).

***Notice:** 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

Aug 25—Introduction to American History and Class Policies

Aug 27—The Civil War

Week 2—The Ordeal of Reconstruction and Congressional Power

Reading: McClay, Chapter 11

Sept 1—Punishing the South

Sept 3—Andrew Johnson vs. Congress, Weakening the Presidency

Week 3—Post-Reconstruction America

Reading: McClay, Chapter 12

Sept 8—Meanings of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments

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

Sept 10—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

Sept 15—The Spanish-American War

Sept 17—American Foreign Policy, 1865-1914

Week 5—The Progressive (?) Era

Reading: McClay, Chapter 14

Sept 22—**EXAM 1**

Sept 24—Problems with Progressivism and the Growth of the Government

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

Reading: McClay, Chapter 15

Sept 29—Technocratic Rule and Elitism in American Government

Oct 1—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]

Oct 6—World War I, the European Experience, 1914-17

Oct 8—American Difference and Experience on the Western Front

Week 8—The Roaring 1920s

Reading: McClay, Chapter 16

Oct 13—Urban Hedonism: Flappers, Jazz, Changing Culture

Oct 15—Teetotalallers, Do-Gooders, and Organized Crime: Prohibition and Al Capone

Week 9—FDR and the New Deal

Reading: McClay, Chapter 17

Oct 20—Progressive Reaction to the Great Depression

Oct 22—New Deal or “Raw” Deal? Prolonging the Depression under Roosevelt

Week 10—Midterm exam week and book review discussion

Oct 27— **Discussion of exam 2 and book review**

Oct 29— **EXAM 2**

Week 11—Fighting the Second World War

Reading: McClay, Chapter 18

Nov 3— The Second World War and America’s Experience

Nov 5—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

Nov 10—The Korean War

Nov 12—The Vietnam War

Week 13—The 1960s and the Baby Boomers

Reading: McClay, Chapter 20

Nov 17— Counterculture and the Reaction to Middle America

Nov 19—Counterculture, Part II

Week 14—Nixon to Reagan: Stagflation to Prosperity

Reading: McClay, Chapter 21 and 22

Dec 1—The Reagan Revolution: Partial Repudiation of Progressivism

Dec 3—The Fall of Soviet communism

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

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

December 10 from 8-10am

Final Exam for TR 12:30-1:50pm section:

December 10 from 10:30am-12:30pm