

History 152: U.S. History since 1877

Fall Semester 2012

ME 1061

10:30 a.m.-11:45 a.m.

Professor Susan Curtis

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Office Hours: Wednesdays,
1:00 -4:00 p.m.

& by appointment

Teaching Assistants

Trevor Burrows

Office: Recitation 419

Office Hours:

Thursdays, 12:30-2:00

Fridays, 12:30-2:00

Kera Lovell

Recitation 409

Office Hours:

Mondays, 2:30-4:00

Wednesdays, 2:30-4:00

Required Books

All available at Follett's

James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*

Ronald Takaki, *Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic Bomb*

Luis Alberto Urrea, *The Devil's Highway*

U.S. History since 1877

This course introduces students to major issues in U.S. History from 1877 to the present. It is organized around three major themes—the “reconstruction” of America, the adjustment to “modernity,” and the implications of “globalism.” As an introductory course, it is designed to develop students’ skills in historical analysis—reading and interpreting “primary sources,” evaluating interpretations by historians, communicating ideas and analysis in clear, coherent prose, and applying insights from history to the contemporary situation.

Students will not be asked to memorize facts and dates. Rather, the grade in this course depends upon students’ ability to master some of the basic critical, analytical, and interpretive skills used by historians. Lectures and readings provide background and context, so regular attendance is crucial. In-class discussions offer examples of how to make sense of images and text from past times.

Part I: 1877-1918—Reconstructing America

Week 1 (August 21 – 23)

Introduction to the course, syllabus, assignments

Why the Gettysburg Address still matters

1877

Read:

“The Gettysburg Address” (Blackboard Vista)

Week 2 (August 28-30)

Victorian America and Modernization

Work in Industrial America

Read:

Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, Chapters 1-3

Andrew Carnegie, “Wealth” (Blackboard Vista)

Henry Demarest Lloyd, excerpt from *Wealth against Commonwealth* (Blackboard Vista)

Week 3 (September 4-6)

Men, Women, and Families in Industrial America
Changing Social Portrait
1890s, Reclaiming and Reinvisioning American Democracy

Read:

Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, Chapters 4-6
People’s Party Platform (Blackboard Vista)
Frank Norris, “A Deal in Wheat” (Blackboard Vista)

Week 4 (September 11-13)

Transforming American Culture
Worlds Colliding—The Robber Barons v. Social Reformers
“East is East and West is...East” or Modernization and the American West

Read:

Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, Chapters 7-9
Jane Addams, “The Subjective Necessity of Settlements” (Blackboard Vista)
Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law in America” (Blackboard Vista)
The Social Creed of the Churches, 1908

Week 5 (September 18-20)

Imperialism, Civilization, and Democracy
National and International Conflict and the Coming of World War I
Over There/Over Here—War, Culture, and Citizenship

Read:

Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, Chapters 10-11
Woodrow Wilson’s argument for entering World War I, April 4, 1917
Lester A. Walton’s report on the Conference at Versailles, 1918

EXAM 1, Thursday, September 20, in class.

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PART II: 1919-1945—Adjusting to Modernity: Citizenship in an Age of Consumerism and War

Part II of the course looks at the ways the United States adjusted to the ups and downs of being an international power in an age of modernity. One way of talking about the period between 1914 and 1945, which featured world wars on either end of the era, is that it was a “consumer culture and society.” By that, I mean that the economy, public policy, international affairs, and cultural apparatus all revolved around the production of goods aimed at ordinary buyers and that the acquisition of these goods came to be important markers of identity—both individual and national. We will begin by examining the ways that U.S. involvement in the Great War consolidated the structures, institutions, policies, and ideas that fostered consumerism. A good deal of this part of the course will be devoted to the adjustments that were necessary in the face of a devastating economic depression, an environmental crisis, and the coming of another world war. Technology, as a symbol of modernity, changed the quality of life, sometimes for good and sometimes for ill.

Week 6 (September 25-27)

100% Americanism
1920s Culture Heroes: Henry Ford, Babe Ruth, and Bruce Barton

Read:

Ellison DuRant Smith, Speech in favor of Immigration Restriction, 1924 (Blackboard Vista)
Hiram W. Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for America,” (Blackboard Vista)

Week 7 (October 2-4)

The Rise of Mass Media and Culture
What made the twenties roar?
The Illusion of Prosperity in the Age of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover

Read:

Takaki, *Hiroshima*, Chapters 1-2
Excerpt from *Only Yesterday* by Frederick Lewis Allen (Blackboard Vista)
“On the Air” (Blackboard Vista)

Week 8 (October 9-11)

No Class on Tuesday, October 9 – O C T O B E R B R E A K
Franklin Roosevelt’s “New Deal”—Solutions and Ironies
Roosevelt’s Challengers

Read:

Takaki, *Hiroshima*, Chapters 3-4
Huey P. Long, “Every Man a King” (Blackboard Vista)
Langston Hughes, “Let America Be American Again,” 1936 (Blackboard Vista)

Week 9 (October 16-18)

Depression Era Art—Mythmaking and Rebellion
1930s: A Decade of International Violence
Pearl Harbor

Read:

Takaki, *Hiroshima*, Chapters 5-7
American Gothic (Blackboard Vista)
Margaret Sanger, “The Civilizing Force of Birth Control” (Blackboard Vista)

Week 10 (October 23- 25)

The War Effort at Home
World War II and the “American Way of Life”
The Bomb that Changed the World

Read:

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Declaration of War, 1941 (Blackboard Vista)
Henry Luce, “The American Century,” 1941 (Blackboard Vista)
Korematsu v. United States, 1944 (Blackboard Vista)

EXAM 2, Thursday, October 25, in class.

PART III: 1945-Present: America in an Age of Globalism

The final Part of the course will explore U.S. history in an age of globalism. While at the beginning of the period Americans saw themselves as an “exceptional” nation, the reality was that the U.S. was becoming deeply immersed in a global system. Moreover, the determination to support “freedom fighters” around the world made many Americans take stock of the limits of “freedom” at home—especially for minority groups. So the period was marked by international involvement abroad and social turmoil at home as various groups pushed the nation to live up to the ideals expressed in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. In order to appreciate this context, we will examine the ways that American interests became increasingly defined outside the boundaries of the territory of the nation. Anticommunism and the “American Way of Life” became powerful ideological engines that drove both domestic and foreign policy for the five decades following the end of the war. At the same time as these global forces were at work, Americans experienced an explosion of electronic modes of communication, which had a profound impact on society, culture, and politics at home as well as on perceptions of Americans abroad.

Week 11 (October 30 - November 1)

The Meaning of “America” in a Global Age
Old Friends/New Enemies
Cold War at Home and Abroad

Read:

Urrea, *The Devil’s Highway*, Chapter 1

Week 12 (November 6 -8)

American Interests
Cultural discontent in the 1950s
Postwar Freedom Movements

Read:

Urrea, *The Devil’s Highway*, Chapters 2-6

Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Farewell Address,” 1961 (Blackboard Vista)

George P. Elliott, “The Happiness Rat Race,” 1959 (Blackboard Vista)

Week 13 (November 13-15)

1962: A Year of Decision
Culture/Counterculture
1970s: The End of Rooseveltian Nationalism

Read:

Urrea, *The Devil’s Highway*, Chapters 7-11

Students for a Democratic Society, “Port Huron Statement,” 1962 (Blackboard Vista)

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (Blackboard Vista)

Week 14 (November 20-22)

NO CLASS ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22 – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Domestic Growth/Global Environmental Crises

Read:

Urrea, *The Devil’s Highway*, Chapters 12-14

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (excerpt in Blackboard Vista)

Week 15 (November 27-29)

How Americans Came to Hate their Government.

Read:

Urrea, *The Devil’s Highway*, Chapters 15-16

James Carter, “Malaise” (Blackboard Vista)

Week 16 (December 4-6)

The Triumph of Neo-conservatism
“Why do they hate us?”: U.S. Foreign Policy from Desert Storm to 9/11
Wrap-up

Read:

Mark Zandi, *Financial Shock*, excerpt (Blackboard Vista)

Assignments and Grading

1. Exam 1 = 20%

Thursday, September 20, in class.

The exam will consist of three parts

- questions that require a short answer (lectures and readings)
- questions on the readings for Part I—*Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* and Blackboard Vista
- an essay on the main theme of Part I, “Reconstructing America”

2. Exam 2 = 20%

Thursday, October 25, in class.

The exam will consist of three parts

- questions that require a short answer (lectures and readings)
- questions on the readings for Part II—Blackboard Vista and *Hiroshima*
- an essay on the main theme of Part II, “Adjusting to Modernity”

3. Exam 3 = 20%

TBA—Final Exam, in class.

The exam will consist of three parts

- questions that require a short answer (lectures and readings)
- questions on the readings for Part III—Blackboard Vista and *Devil’s Highway*
- an essay on the main theme of Part III, “America in an Age of Globalism”

4. Quizzes = 20%

We will administer **six (6)** unannounced quizzes with 10 questions each drawn from both lectures and readings. Make-ups are not available. Only your top 5 scores will be calculated in the final grade.

5. Attendance = 20%

Attendance in this course is extremely important for students to get a sense of an interpretive narrative provided by the professor. We will take attendance every day. The following scale will determine your grade for attendance:

- 0 Absences = A+ (100 points)
- 1-3 Absences = A (98, 94, 90 points, respectively)
- 4-5 Absences = B (86, 82 points, respectively)
- 6 Absences = C (75 points)
- 7 Absences = D (65 points)
- 8 or more absences = F (50 points)

Grading

A+	98-100%	C	73-77
A	93-97	C-	70-72
A-	90-92	D+	68-69
B+	88-89	D	63-67
B	83-87	D-	60-62
B-	80-82	F	0-59
C+	78-79		

Academic Dishonesty

Exams in this course are in an essay and short answer format and will be administered in class.

Your work on the exams must be your own. Cheating, copying other students’ work, or bringing in essays written by others into the classroom will result in failure.

Pandemic Policy

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course.

See the Blackboard Vista page for this course.

Contact Professor Curtis via email: curtis@purdue.edu

Contact Professor Curtis via telephone: Office: 494-4159

Course and Instructor Evaluation

During the last two weeks of the semester, you will be provided an opportunity to evaluate this course and your instructor. To this end, Purdue has transitioned to online course evaluations. On Monday of the fifteenth week of classes, you will receive an official email from evaluation administrators with a link to the online evaluation site. You will have two weeks to complete this evaluation. Your participation in this evaluation is an integral part of this course. Your feedback is vital to improving education at Purdue University. I strongly urge you to participate in the evaluation system.