

**History 152: U.S. History since 1877**  
Fall Semester 2017  
Tuesdays & Thursdays: 10:30-11:45 a.m.  
Krannert G016

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Office Hours: W 2:00-4:00 p.m.  
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**Required Books**

John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million*  
Ronald Takaki, *Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic Bomb*  
Pietra Rivoli, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in a Global Economy*  
Additional readings can be found on Blackboard

**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. Research on a local subject offers students the chance to do the work of a historian. Each week, students are prompted to read a document. It is the responsibility of the student to locate this document—all are accessible on-line.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Develop skills used by historians to make sense of U.S. History since 1877
2. Gain experience using original materials to understand the past
3. Practice reading and writing with the goal of understanding why things happened

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## **Part I: 1877-1918—Reconstructing America**

Part I of this course takes a broader view of “reconstruction” than the twelve-year period following the U.S. Civil War in which the nation was put back together. During the four decades between Reconstruction and the U.S. entry into World War I, the United States underwent a dramatic social and cultural transformation. Everything from Work to Worship, Leisure to Politics, and Family to Community experienced jarring shocks that led to new ways of being in the world. While the Civil War must be considered a huge break in the continuity of the nation, the first part of this course covers an equally revolutionary era. When the peace came at the end of the Great War in Europe, the U.S. had emerged as a world power, an urban industrial giant, a multicultural and multiracial society, and a society divided along race, class, ethnic, and gender lines—a nation beginning the adjustment to modernity.

### **Week 1 (August 22-24)**

Introduction to the course, syllabus, assignments

Abraham Lincoln’s Legacy

1877: A Year of Decision

Read: “**The Gettysburg Address**”

### **Week 2 (August 29-31)**

Work in Industrial America

East is East and West is....

Read: Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, 3-54

Frank Norris, “A Deal in Wheat”

### **Week 3 (September 5-7)**

Redefining American Democracy

Redefining American Culture

Read: Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, 57-112

People’s Party Platform

### **Week 4 (September 12-14)**

Progressive Era: Modernity and Social Reform

Read: Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law in America,” *The Arena* 32.1 (January 1900): 15-24.

### **Week 5 (September 19-21)**

Progressive Era and Overseas Expansion

World War I and Modernity

Read: Woodrow Wilson’s Speech to Congress, April 2, 1917

**EXAM 1, Thursday, September 21, in class. Your essay on *Amusing the Million* is due at the beginning of class. During the 75-minute class period, you will take an in-class exam covering material presented in lecture and weekly readings. Both the paper and the in-class exam constitute “EXAM I.”**

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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 26-28)**

Adjusting to Modernity  
100% Americanism

Read: Hiram W. Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism,” *The North American Review* 123 (March-May 1926): 33-63.

### **Week 7 (October 3-5)**

1920s Culture Heroes  
The Rise of Mass Media and Culture

Read: Takaki, *Hiroshima*, Chapters 1-3 (3-52)  
Margaret Sanger, “The Civilizing Power of Birth Control”

### **Week 8 (October 12) [No class on Tuesday, October 10, because of October Break]**

The Modern City  
Roaring into the Great Depression

Read: Takaki, *Hiroshima*, Chapters 4-5 (53-100)  
Langston Hughes, “Let America Be American Again,” 1935

### **Week 9 (October 17-19)**

Depression Culture  
1930s International Violence and the United States

Read: Takaki, *Hiroshima*, Chapters 6-7 (101-151)

### **Week 10 (October 24-26)**

World War II and the “American Way of Life”

Read: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Declaration of War, 1941  
Korematsu v. United States, 1944

**EXAM 2, Thursday, October 26, in class. Your essay on Takaki's *Hiroshima* is due at the beginning of class. During the 75-minute class period, you will take an in-class exam covering material presented in lecture and weekly readings. Both the paper and the in-class exam constitute "EXAM II."**

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### **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 31-November 2)**

America and Globalism

American Interests

Read: Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt*, Part I (1-58)

Rachel Carson, *A Silent Spring* (excerpt)

#### **Week 12 (November 7-9)**

Conformity and Rebellion in the 1950s

Culture and Counterculture

Read: Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt* Part II (59-108)

Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Farewell Address," 1961

Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement," 1962

#### **Week 13 (November 14-16)**

Freedom Movements

Dilemmas of Growth

Read: Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt*, Part III (109-72)

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

“No More Miss America,” August 22, 1968, protest of the Miss America Contest

**Week 14 (November 28-30)**

The American Presidency in a Global Age

Read: Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt* (173-215)

Barry Commoner, an Interview on July 16, 2007, by the producers of *Earth Days*

**Week 15 (December 5-7)**

American Agenda in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Read: Paul Krugman, “Inequality Is a Drag,” *New York Times*, August 7, 2014

Wealth Inequality in America (You Tube)

**Final Exam: During Finals Week. Your essay on *Travels of a T-Shirt* is due at the beginning of the exam period. In addition, you will take an in-class exam covering material presented in lecture and weekly readings. Both the paper and the in-class exam constitute “EXAM III.”**

**Assignments and Grading**

1. Exam 1 = 1/3 of the final grade

**Thursday, September 22, in class.**

The exam will consist of three parts.

- “lightning round”: questions that require a short answer (lectures and readings)
- Short interpretive essays
- Essay on *Amusing the Million* due in class

2. Exam 2 = 1/3 of the final grade

**Thursday, October 27, in class.**

The exam will consist of three parts.

- “lightning round”: questions that require a short answer (lectures and readings)
- Short interpretive essays
- Essay on *Hiroshima* due in class

3. Exam 3 = 1/3 of the final grade

**TBA—Final Exam, in class.**

The exam will consist of three parts.

- “lightning round”: questions that require a short answer (lectures and readings)
- Short interpretive essays
- Essay on *Travels of a T-Shirt in a Global Economy* due in class at final exam.

### **Grading**

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

### **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. Out-of-class essays on the books likewise must be your own work. If you use someone else's words without indicating the source and without enclosing in quotation marks, the result will be failure on that portion of the exam. IF YOU ARE UNSURE WHAT CONSTITUTES ACADEMIC DISHONESTY, PLEASE SEE PROFESSOR CURTIS.**

### **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 page for this course.**

**Contact Professor Curtis via email: [curtis@purdue.edu](mailto: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.