

**HISTORY 152  
UNITED STATES HISTORY SINCE 1877  
FALL 2008  
T/TH 1:30-2:45 in Smith Hall 108**

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Office Hours:  
T 11:45 am-12:30 pm & TH 2:45-3:30 pm  
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This course examines United States history from the end of Reconstruction to the present. It has three interrelated objectives. The first is to introduce some of the major themes, events, and personalities in the period so as to give students a basic framework of the last 130 years of the American past. Second, it attempts to develop students' ability to understand some of the interpretive problems that historians encounter and debate in explaining the past. The third goal is to develop critical thinking and related skills that students can deploy in other classes and in their own personal and professional lives.

There is a Blackboard Vista website for this section of History 152 with the syllabus, lecture outlines, exam information, grades, and other material. Log on: [www.itap.purdue.edu/tt/blackboard/](http://www.itap.purdue.edu/tt/blackboard/)

### **BOOKS**

The following two paperback books have been ordered by Follett's and University Bookstore.

- Jacqueline Jones, *et al.*, *Created Equal: A Social and Political History of the United States, Brief Edition, Volume II (from 1865)*, Second Edition.
- Elliott Gorn *et al.*, eds., *Constructing the American Past: A Source Book of People's History, Volume 2*, Sixth Edition.

**Please also buy three blue or green exam booklets, one for each exam.**

### **COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

#### The Gilded Age, 1877-1900

Read for Week 1 (August 26-28): Chapter 15 (skim) in *Created Equal*

Read for Week 2 (September 2-4): Chapter 16 in *Created Equal* and Chapters 2-4 in *Constructing the American Past*

Read for Week 3 (September 9-11): Chapters 17-18 in *Created Equal*

#### The Progressive Era, 1900-1920

Read for Week 4 (September 16-18): Chapter 19 in *Created Equal* and Chapter 6 in *Constructing the American Past*.

Read for Week 5 (September 23-25): Chapter 20 in *Created Equal* and Chapters 5 and 7 in *Constructing the American Past*

**First Exam in Class on Tuesday September 30**

#### The Roaring Twenties

Read for Week 6 (October 2): Chapter 21 in *Created Equal* and Chapter 8 in *Constructing the American Past*

Great Depression and New Deal

Read for Week 7 (October 7-9): Chapter 22 in *Created Equal* and Chapter 9 in *Constructing the American Past*

World War II

Read for Weeks 8-9 (October 16-21): Chapter 23 in *Created Equal* and Chapter 10 in *Constructing the American Past*

Cold War Politics and Society

Read for Weeks 9-10 (October 23-30): Chapters 24-25 in *Created Equal* and Chapter 11 in *Constructing the American Past*

**Second Exam in Class on Tuesday November 4**

The Sixties: The War at Home and Abroad

Read for Weeks 11-12 (November 6-11): Chapter 26 in *Created Equal* and Chapter 12 in *Constructing the American Past*

Read for Weeks 12-13 (November 13-20): Chapter 13 in *Constructing the American Past*

The Seventies: The Me Decade?

Read for Week 15 (December 2): Chapter 27 in *Created Equal* and Chapter 14 in *Constructing the American Past*

Since 1980

Read for Weeks 15-16 (December 4-11): Chapters 28-30 in *Created Equal* and Chapter 15 in *Constructing the American Past*.

**Third Exam during Final Exam Week (dates, times and locations to be announced)**

**GRADING**

**Exams:**

There are three in-class exams for this course. The first exam will cover the lectures and the reading from the first third of the course (1877-1920); the second exam will cover the lectures and the reading from the second third of the course (1920-1960); and the third exam will cover the lectures and the reading from the last third of the course (1960-present). Each exam will consist of several short-answer questions and one essay question. To help you prepare for the exams, you will receive in advance a list of possible short-answer questions and essay questions from which each exam will be drawn word-for-word. Each one-hour exam is worth 60 points. **Students should bring a blue or green exam booklet to each test. Blue/green booklets will be redistributed at the start of every exam.**

**Reading Response Essays:**

Over the course of the semester, you will write two informal two-page essays responding to questions based primarily on the reading material. The essays are due in class on the date indicated. **You decide which two of seven dates you will submit essays.** Note: essays must be submitted in hard copy in class—no email submissions and/or late submissions will be accepted. There also will be no backtracking. Each essay is worth 0-20 points. I want to emphasize that these are informal writing assignments. The purpose of these two-page essays is not to improve your writing skills but to stimulate thinking about issues, questions, and problems raised by your study of U. S. history since 1877. So you will be judged *not* on things like spelling, organization, and grammar but instead on things like the process and quality of thought. **Questions for the reading response essays begin after the grading summary below.**

**In Class Responses:**

There will be several opportunities during the semester to respond spontaneously and very informally to class material (lectures, films, discussion, etc.). These impromptu, unscheduled, unannounced and generally ungraded in-class written response pieces will be worth a total of 15 points. No make-ups for the in-class responses.

**TO SUMMARIZE THE GRADING:**

First exam:	0-60 points	A+ 227-235 pts	C+ 180-186 pts
Second exam:	0-60 points	A 218-226 pts	C 171-179 pts
Third exam:	0-60 points	A- 211-217 pts	C- 164-170 pts
Informal essay 1	0-20 points	B+ 204-210 pts	D+ 157-163 pts
Informal essay 2	0-20 points	B 194-203 pts	D 147-156 pts
<u>In-class responses</u>	<u>0-15 points</u>	B- 187-193 pts	D- 140-146 pts
Total:	0-235 points		F 0- 139 pts

**QUESTIONS for READING RESPONSE ESSAYS**

Over the course of the semester, you will write two short essays. The essays are due in class on the dates listed below. You decide which two of seven dates you will submit essays, but keep in mind that there will be no extensions granted and no backtracking allowed. Each essay should be about 2 pp. or 550 words. It may be typed or (neatly) hand-written. Each one is worth 0-20 points.

These are *informal writing* assignments. The purpose of these essays is not to improve your writing skills but to stimulate thinking about issues, questions, and problems raised by your study of American history since 1877. The goal is for you to discover, develop, and clarify your own ideas. You should do the appropriate reading and reflecting; then write in response to the question for 30-35 minutes. You will not be judged on things like spelling, organization, and grammar. But we will be looking for evidence that you are thinking seriously about history. **Your essays should show** that you are wrestling with concepts explained in the reading, in lectures and films shown in class, and in discussions and **that you have done your reading** and reflection before attempting your essays. For the most part, you will be rewarded for the process of thinking rather than the act of composing.

**INSTRUCTIONS: SELECT ANY TWO OF THE FOLLOWING SEVEN ESSAY OPTIONS.**Essay Option 1. Answer **one** of the following three questions. Due September 11

1. Were the 1877 strikers successful or unsuccessful?
2. Was Wounded Knee a battle or a massacre?
3. Was there evidence of class conflict in late 19<sup>th</sup> century America? How was class conflict managed, or contained?

Essay Option 2. Answer **one** of the following three questions. Due September 25

1. You are a newly arrived and somewhat lonely immigrant in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century and have relatives back in Europe/Asia/South America who are thinking about joining you in the Land of Opportunity. You miss them and would like to have their good company, but you also have come to know well how different life is in the United States. Write a letter to your loved ones describing life as you have come to know it in the new country. You may assume that your letter will greatly influence their decision to stay in the old country or make the journey to the new one.
2. Were Progressive reformers motivated by altruism or by self-interest?
3. Were Upton Sinclair and Margaret Sanger more similar or different in how they thought about the poor? About immigrants? Were their motives for becoming involved in reform activities more similar or different?

Essay Option 3. Answer **one** of the following two questions. Due October 9

1. How did Americans respond to the Great Depression? Who or what did people blame for hard times?
2. You are handling correspondence for the Roosevelts. How do you respond to the letters they receive from the “forgotten man” and the “forgotten woman”?

Essay Option 4. Answer the following question. Due October 21

1. Why do we often think of World War II as “the Good War” and those who fought it as “the Greatest Generation”? Can you reconcile the idealism of the Four Freedoms with tensions on the home front?

Essay Option 5. Answer **one** of the following three questions. Due October 30

1. Were the views of Harry Truman, Joe McCarthy, and John Kennedy on the Cold War more different or similar?
2. What was Iron Man fighting for and against?
3. If you've seen *Pleasantville*, *The Truman Show*, *Rocket Boys*, *Ed Wood*, *Far from Heaven*, *Mona Lisa Smile*, *Good Night and Good Luck*, or any other recent movie set in the 1950s, comment on the film's reliability as a guide to the immediate post-World War II era.

Essay Option 6. Answer **one** of the following two questions. Due November 20

1. Why did some critics call the leaders of the civil rights movement un-American while others considered the movement in the mainstream of American democratic traditions?
2. Write a letter to President Nixon expressing your opinion about his plans for Vietnamization. Use the point of view of one of the following people: an American soldier stationed in Vietnam; someone who believes the war should end immediately; someone who feels we should stay in Vietnam until the war is won.

Essay Option 7. Answer **one** of the following four questions. Due December 9

1. Were the farm workers' movement, the women's movement, and the environmental movement just offshoots of the African American civil rights movement or were they separate and independent struggles?
2. Is *That 70s Show* about the 1970s or is it about the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
3. What was being contested in the “culture wars” of the 1980s?
4. Were the ideas of Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan, Pat Robertson, and Newt Gingrich more similar or different? Are P. J. O'Rourke's ideas the same or different than those of the other conservatives?