

History 152: U.S. History since 1877

Fall Semester 2010

Math 175

Professor Susan Curtis

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Office Hours: Wednesdays

9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

12:30 p.m. -3:00 p.m.

And by Appointment

Teaching Assistants

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Fridays, 12:00- 2:00 p.m.

Required Books

The following required books can be purchased at Von's Book Shop on State Street:

John F. Kasson, [Amusing the Million](#)

Neil Postman, [Amusing Ourselves to Death](#)

Gary Gerstle, [American Crucible](#)

Additional Readings are posted 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.

Part I: 1877-1918—Reconstructing America

Week 1 (August 24 – 26)

Introduction to the course, syllabus, assignments

Why the Gettysburg Address still matters

1877

Nell Irvin Painter, “The Tocsin Sounds” from [Standing at Armageddon](#)

Questions to consider as you read: What was the source of alarm in 1877? Why did Americans fear that democracy was in jeopardy? Why does Painter believe that the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, which brought Reconstruction to an end, was “anticlimactic”? What were some of the forces at work producing major changes in American life in the 1870s and 1880s?

Week 2 (August 31- September 2)

Victorian America and Modernization

Work in Industrial America

Frank Norris, “A Deal in Wheat”

Gary Gerstle, [American Crucible](#), Introduction and Chapter 1

Questions to consider as you read: What were the benefits and costs of technological change in the 1890s? Were the costs and benefits evenly distributed throughout American society? How did new technologies affect the ways people lived?

Week 3 (September 7 - 9)

Men, Women, and Families in Industrial America
Changing Social Portrait

Quiz 1 in class on American Crucible, Introduction and Chapter 1

1890s, Reclaiming and Reinvisioning American Democracy

John F. Kasson, Amusing the Million, pp. 3-86

A Party of Patches—political cartoon from 1891

Questions to consider as you read: What messages are being conveyed in the political cartoon from 1891? Do you think the creator of the cartoon had a great deal of confidence in the People's Party? Is it coincidental that the amusement park ethos of Coney Island and Theodore Roosevelt's "Racialized Nation" took shape at the same moment? What social forces brought them into being? As you look at the photographs in Amusing the Million, do you see any evidence of the "melting pot"? How does Gerstle define "Civic Nationalism" and "Racial Nationalism"? Is either or are both expressed at Coney Island?

Week 4 (September 14 - 16)

Transforming American Culture

Worlds Colliding—The Robber Barons v. Social Reformers

"East is East and West is...East" or Modernization and the American West

John F. Kasson, Amusing the Million, pp. 86-112

Week 5 (September 21-23)

Imperialism, Civilization, and Democracy

National and International Conflict and the Coming of World War I

Over There/Over Here—War, Culture, and Citizenship

Gary Gerstle, American Crucible, Chapter 2

Questions to consider as you read: What was Theodore Roosevelt's "New Nationalism" and how did it grow out of and into "Progressivism"? What political ideas underlay Wilson's decision to enter the war, and how did both Civic Nationalism and Racial Nationalism play roles in defining the nation's enemies and desired citizens?

PART II: 1919-1945—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.

Week 6 (September 28-30)

Edward Filene's America: Citizen Consumers (showing of The City?)

Tuesday, September 28: Portfolio I is due in class

100% Americanism

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

Week 7 (October 5 – 7)

The Rise of Mass Media and Culture

What made the twenties roar?

The Illusion of Prosperity in the Age of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover

H. V. Kaltenborn, "On the Air: Radio's Responsibility as a Molder of Public Opinion"

Gary Gerstle, American Crucible, Chapter 3

Questions to consider as you read: How did definitions of "American" shift during the 1920s? Why did Americans seek to restrict immigration, and how did they decide who was eligible to become a citizen? What were the promises and pitfalls of the new mass medium of radio? Did it promote democracy or hinder it?

Week 8 (October 12 - 14)

No Class on Tuesday, October 12 – O C T O B E R B R E A K

Thursday, October 14: Quiz 2 in class on American Crucible, Chapters 2-3

Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal"—Solutions and Ironies

Roosevelt's Challengers

Gary Gerstle, American Crucible, Chapter 4

Questions to consider as you read: What did Americans debate as they tried to get the economy back on track? What were alternative visions of the "good society"? How would you characterize Franklin Roosevelt's nationalist vision? Was the New Deal "radical"? How did it blend aspects of both racial nationalism and civic nationalism? Why did working people—especially ethnic workers—become loyal supporters of FDR? Did the New Deal attempt to dismantle consumerism?

Week 9 (October 19 - 21)

Depression Era Art—Mythmaking and Rebellion

1930s: A Decade of International Violence

Pearl Harbor

Gary Gerstle, American Crucible, Chapter 5

Questions to consider as you read: According to Badger, what role did the U.S. entry into World War II play in ending the Depression? Recently, Saving Private Ryan and Tom Brokaw's Greatest Generation have made World War II seem like a great, heroic moment. Why did it mean so much to the generation who went to war? How did World War II affect American attitudes toward diversity—was everyone considered equal? Why did some Americans see World War II as a "race war"? What ideals did American defend by fighting the Axis powers? If you are familiar with Spike Lee's Miracle at St. Anna, how would you compare his portrayal of American soldiers with the one in American Crucible?

Week 10 (October 26 - 28)

The War Effort at Home

Tuesday, October 26: Quiz 3 in class on American Crucible, Chapters 4-5

World War II and the "American Way of Life"

The Bomb that Changed the World

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 (November 2 - 4)

The Meaning of "America" in a Global Age

Tuesday, November 2: Portfolio II is due in class

Old Friends/New Enemies

Cold War at Home and Abroad

Gary Gerstle, American Crucible, Chapter 6

Questions to consider as you read: Why does Gerstle believe that "racial nationalism" went into decline after World War II? If he is correct, why did many American display such hostility to the Civil Rights Movement and Legislation? During the early years of the Cold War, what did Americans regard as the key characteristics of a

citizen? How did they express this belief in domestic policies? Why did General Marshall believe that America's "common defense" required investment in countries overseas?

Week 12 (November 9 - 11)

American Interests
Cultural discontent in the 1950s
Postwar Freedom Movements

Thursday, November 11: Quiz 4 on American Crucible, Chapters 6 in class

Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963 Speech
Equal Rights Amendment
Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death
Gary Gerstle, American Crucible, Chapter 7

Questions to consider as you read: King's speech and the text of the ERA are emblematic of two liberation movements—why were they articulated in this period? Gerstle argues that "The American civil rights movement was part of this worldwide revolt against 'Western' domination and its associated ideologies of white supremacy"—what did the U.S. civil rights movement have to do with other "revolts"? How did the uprisings in the 1960s contribute to the emergence of "identity politics"? What did it mean to be "American" in the 1960s? One of the New Left Activists of the 1960s, Todd Gitlin, entitled his book on the antiwar movement, The Whole World Was Watching. How did the circulation of images of protest in the international arena affect politics and society in the United States? According to Neil Postman, what are the dangers of an image-based culture?

Week 13 (November 16 - 18)

1962: A Year of Decision
Culture/Counterculture
1970s: The End of Rooseveltian Nationalism
Gary Gerstle, American Crucible, Chapter 8
Lyndon B. Johnson, "The Great Society"

Questions to consider as you read: How did the ideals expressed by the SDS in the Port Huron Statement gradually evolve into "a politics and culture antagonistic or indifferent to American Nationalism," to use Gerstle's words? If people born in the United States did not identify with the nation, with what did they identify? How did writing about the environment change from the 1940s to the 1960s? Why were environmentalists regarded with hostility by some Americans in the 1960s? Did environmentalists challenge the dominant ideals of the nation?

Week 14 (November 23 - 25)

NO CLASS ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25 – THANKSGIVING BREAK
Domestic Growth/Global Environmental Crises

Week 15 (November 30 – December 2)

Tuesday, November 30: Quiz 5 in Class on American Crucible, Chapters 7-8

How Americans Came to Hate their Government.

Week 16 (December 7 – 9)

The Triumph of Neo-conservatism
"Why do they hate us?": U.S. Foreign Policy from Desert Storm to 9/11
Wrap-up
Gary Gerstle, American Crucible, Epilogue

Wednesday, December 15, Portfolio III is due, location TBA

Assignments and Grading

Late papers will NOT be accepted in this course, except under extraordinary circumstances and in cases of emergency. If you are unable to complete all elements of a Portfolio, turn in what you have completed—you will certainly fare better than getting an “F” for the entire unit. Plan ahead; if you see possible conflicts with the schedule of due dates in this course, speak with the Professor or one of the Teaching Assistants immediately.

1. Portfolio for Part I (10% of course grade)
 - Two S P E C I F I C 2-page Essays on items from Archival Folder, Part I
 - Review Essay on Amusing the Million
2. Portfolio for Part II (20% of course grade)
 - Three S P E C I F I C 2-page Essays on items from Archival Folder, Part II
3. Portfolio for Part III (30% of course grade)
 - Two S P E C I F I C 2-page Essays on items from Archival Folder, Part III
 - Review Essay on Amusing Ourselves to Death
 - Applying Historical Analysis—Eating in a Global Context
4. Quizzes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5—all over parts of Gary Gerstle’s American Crucible. Each is worth 8% of the course grade.

Grading Scale

As you can see from the section above, the three portfolios are weighted differently, reflecting my confidence that your historical skills will improve over the course of the semester. The assignments are designed to give you experience in using the tools of the historian—reading and analyzing primary sources, assessing the arguments made by professional historians, and applying historical insights in your life today.

Grades range from A to F with pluses and minuses. The final grade in the course will be calculated by multiplying the number value of each grade by the percentage it represents in the overall course grade and adding the weighted grades together.

A+ = 12

A = 11

A- = 10

B+ = 9

B = 8

B- = 7

C+ = 6

C = 5

C- = 4

D+ = 3

D = 2

D- = 1

F = 0

What do grades reflect?

A = Your essay reflects careful reading and accurate reporting and links readings to lecture material and to each other. You have successfully placed specific information in a historical context. Your essay is coherent and grammatically correct. When applicable, you have correctly identified the author’s thesis or main point and you have considered how the author has assembled evidence to support the thesis or main point. For an **A+** you have done all of this *and* added a particularly original insight or analysis of your own.

A- or **B+** = Your work is very good, generally displaying a careful reading, accurate reporting, and linkages between different kinds of material. Your essay is well-written and contains relatively few grammatical mistakes.

When applicable, you have correctly identified the author's thesis or main point and you have considered the author's use of evidence to support the thesis or main point. Your essay is not quite as polished as an "A" essay, and you have not discussed quite as many aspects of the issue, and it is clearly better than a "B" essay. You are beginning to show mastery of historical analysis and writing.

B = Your essay is good, but somewhat incomplete—either you are not reading carefully and thoroughly, or your essay does not make many linkages among course materials. Most of the time you place specific information in the proper historical context, but you sometimes project the contemporary context onto the past or offer opinions that do not reflect an appreciation of the "pastness" of the past. When applicable you have identified the author's main point, but your discussion of the evidence or the thesis is a bit vague. Your essay has grammatical and organizational problems, which makes it less compelling. But you are beginning to show an appreciation of historical analysis and writing.

B- or **C+** = Your work is OK—better than average—but not quite as carefully and accurately done as "B" work. Your work makes some linkages among course materials and some of the time you place specific information in the proper historical context. You may tend to project the contemporary context onto the past or offer opinions that do not reflect an appreciation of the "pastness" of the past. You may have some difficulty identifying the author's main point, although you do recognize some of the subpoints. Your discussion of the book—its thesis and evidence—is a bit vague. Your essay has grammatical and organizational problems. You are beginning to show an appreciation of historical analysis and writing. Overall, your work is not quite at the "B" level, but it is better than "C" work.

C = Your essay is clearly "passable," but it shows lack of attention to specific details and makes few linkages among course materials. You tend to "report" rather than "analyze" materials, so most of what appears in your essay is not incorrect, but it does not perform some of the basic work historians do as they encounter original materials or the interpretive work of other historians. You have difficulty identifying the author's main point, some of your information is inaccurate, and you do not demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings carefully or, perhaps, you have not understood what you read. Your discussions are vague, and grammatical and organizational problems make it difficult to discern what you are trying to get across. You tend to project the contemporary context onto the past or offer opinions that reflect an unwillingness to understand the past on its own terms. You struggle with historical analysis and writing.

C- or **D+** = Your work is still clearly in the passing range, but is marked by numerous problems that demonstrate a lack of effort, care, and/or understanding. Some of your references are incorrect, and you make even fewer linkages among course materials than a "C" paper. Grammatical and organizational problems mar your work. You miss the main point of an author's work when you are asked to identify it, and you neglect discussions of specific issues or evidence. You offer opinions that do not show a great awareness of historical contexts, and you tend to project the contemporary outlook onto the past. You have shown little evidence of understanding historical analysis and writing.

D = Your work indicates that you are not devoting much time to this course. You include inaccurate information, offer little specific detail, and/or write essays that reflect next to nothing from lectures or other course readings. You do not understand the author's main point and do not discuss the evidence used to support it. Your writing contains numerous grammatical and organizational problems, and it is difficult to see what you are trying to say. You make no effort to situate subjects in a historical context, instead relying on your own uninformed opinions or simply asserting that it happened in the past. You have shown little evidence of understanding historical analysis and writing.

D- = Your work is barely passing. You have turned in assignments, but they show almost no care or effort, are filled with inaccuracies, and betray a failure to read course materials or to attend class lectures carefully and attentively. Your essays are riddled with problems that reflect difficulty with basic communication, or your work is so thin, you have not given readers enough to evaluate what you may have gotten from course materials. You have shown no evidence of understanding historical analysis and writing. (I have never given an F+.)

F = You have to work very deliberately to earn an “F” in this course. You neglect turning in written work, your discussions are sketchy and unrelated to course materials. The writing is nearly impenetrable, because it is seriously flawed by grammatical and organizational errors. You show no evidence of having read the books, attended lectures, or both. You have copied your essays directly from the internet, from another student in the class, or you have barely disguised your intellectual pilfering from these sources.

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be taken every class period. Poor attendance will not result in grade reduction, but outstanding attendance (3 or fewer absences through the semester) may result in enhancement of your final grade.

Academic Honesty

Every student in this class will be working with a limited number of original materials. Your essays about these materials must be your own work. If you copy someone else’s work—**And that includes copying and pasting information from the Internet, Wikipedia, on-line essays, etc--**or take the main ideas and change a few words here and there, you will be guilty of plagiarism.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course—it is considered a form of academic dishonesty. When it happens purposefully, it means that you are taking someone else’s work and passing it off as your own; such intellectual thievery is unacceptable. Penalties for plagiarism may range from the failure of an assignment to failure of the class and notification of the Dean.

If you copy from a classmate, the teaching assistants and I will be unable to determine who actually did the work and who copied; therefore, if any instances come to our attention, we will assume both parties have engaged in academic dishonesty.

If you have a question about how to use the work of other scholars (not classmates), when to quote, when to paraphrase, or how to cite previous scholarship, please consult one of the instructors in the course.

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

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.