

History 468
Recent American History
Spring 2011

T/Th 12:00-1:15
UNIV 301

Professor Darren Dochuk
Office: University Hall 125
Email: ddochuk@purdue.edu

Office Hours: T/Th 3:00-4:00
(or by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides a thematic and roughly chronological approach to post-1940s United States history. Recognizing the incredibly complex and diverse nature of historical development in this period, our class time will be spent focusing only on a few of the most significant shifts in American politics, culture, and society. As such, the course will encourage us to think more deeply about issues and movements related to Cold War politics and culture, the rise and decline of New Deal liberalism, the power shift to the suburbs and Sunbelt, social movements of the Left and the Right, the triumph of marketing and consumer culture, societal struggles with notions of self and community, and the emergence of cultural politics. We will engage questions such as: How did World War II and the Cold War reshape American political culture and popular culture? How have civil rights, feminism, environmentalism, the Christian Right, and other grassroots movements/interest group politics changed American society? Why is the "war" metaphor so popular in American domestic policy? Were the Seventies more important than the Sixties? How did the ideology of American exceptionalism overcome the "Vietnam Syndrome"? How are Latinos and other new immigrant groups changing contemporary politics? Are the "culture wars" finally over? Did the 1990s really mark the triumph of the "new economy"?

While selective and episodic in its examination of particular themes, therefore, this course will be deliberately historical in its approach. Indeed, through its choice of readings, lectures, discussions, documentaries, movies, and music this course will challenge its participants to understand particular themes in terms of broader, sequential changes in society and to think critically about how each of these themes are related. What it means to research and write "good history," moreover, will be as central to our agenda as absorbing historical "facts and figures."

FORMAT:

This course will be multifaceted in its methodology. The instructor will provide historical context to each week's readings and discussions, but the majority of class time will be spent in a less formal, collective engagement with the readings, film clips, and music selections. In this sense, students will be required to acquaint themselves with general historical developments in the period through survey textbooks and/or the internet (there are numerous resources on both of these fronts). Moreover, all students will be expected to attend class and to do so prepared to discuss the required readings.

REQUIRED READING:

You are required to purchase and read the following books (in whole or part, according to the schedule). From time to time you will also be responsible for shorter readings that I provide.

- David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Religion* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004)
- Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (W.W. Norton, 2010)
- Jeffrey Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet: The Anglo-American Fight for Aviation Supremacy* (Harvard University Press, 2007)

- Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945* (University of California Press, 2005)
- Frederick Downs, Jr., *The Killing Zone: My Life in the Vietnam War* (W.W. Norton, 2007)
- David Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story* (Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* Harper Perennial, 2002)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Breakdown of Grades (total of 300 possible points):

80 Points:

Class Involvement

[40 points Attendance and Discussion]

[40 points Group Work/Progress Report/Research Presentation]

80 Points:

Two Review Essays

[40 points Review #1]

[40 points Review #2]

140 Points:

Research Paper

Participation and Films:

Students are expected to be present at all lecture, discussion, and workshop sections, and to be prepared to participate actively in these settings.

Writing Assignments:

Please be aware that this will be a reading- and writing- intensive course. As such:

- All students will be required to write **two short review papers (4-5 pages double spaced)** that analyze the assigned books. These are to be short, concise opinion pieces that pinpoint the key themes of the readings, assess the type and quality of the research, and critique the arguments presented. The goal of these papers is to show how you, as an informed reader and interpreter of the literature, are able to engage the ideas, issues, personalities, and developments of the modern era on a critical level. Students will be **required to hand these review papers in before class on their assigned day and to help lead class discussion that day. Students assigned to lead discussion on the same day will be expected to collaborate with each other; meeting before class to plan a course of action will be highly encouraged.**
- All students will be required to write **a research paper 22 pages in length.** The essay will be due in my office by **5:00 May 3.** Through a process of consultation with me and with classmates, students will design and carry out primary and secondary research on a major topic of their choosing. Throughout the semester class time will be set aside for research, writing, and work-shopping. The latter will require you to come to class ready to share parts of your writing with classmates and to discuss possibilities for improvement.

OTHER EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS:

Late Policy:

Essays and review papers turned in late will be penalized a half-letter grade per overdue class-day (except for those who have documented proof of medical issues, special needs, or family tragedy).

Keeping in Touch:

Open communication between the members of the class, including me, is of vital importance in making this experience work. If at any point in the semester you think that this course could be improved, please don't hesitate to talk to me. We can set up an appointment if my office hours are not good for you.

A Note About Plagiarism:

Any violation of the following principles in students' completed work constitutes plagiarism which is normally considered a major offense. The penalty is, thus, failure in the course.

1. All written work submitted for credit is accepted as the student's own work; it may not, therefore, have been composed, wholly or partially by another person.
2. The wording of written work is taken as the writer's own. Thus one may not submit work that has been copied, wholly or partially, from a book, article, essay, newspaper, another student's paper or notebook, or any other written or printed or media source. Another writer's phrases, sentences, or paragraphs may be included only if presented as quotations and the source acknowledged.
3. The ideas expressed in a paper or report are accepted as originating with the writer. Written work that paraphrases any written or printed media material without acknowledgement may not be submitted for credit. Ideas from books and essays may be incorporated in the writer's work as starting points, governing issues, illustrations, and the like, but in each case the source must be cited.
4. Students may correct and revise their writing with the aid of reference books. They may also discuss their writing with peer writing groups or with peer tutors. However, students may not submit writing that has been revised substantially by another.
5. No written work may be submitted for credit that has been used to fulfill the requirements of another course, in whatever department, unless permission to coordinate work has been granted by both teachers.

Course Schedule/Calendar:

What follows is a rough estimate of our schedule for the next several weeks. Please keep in mind that some alterations might be made to the schedule as the semester unfolds.

"*Handout*" denotes articles/excerpts that will be provided for class in advance of discussion

Week One: Locating the Origins of Modern America

Assigned Reading:

- *Handout*

Assignment:

- Short Reflection Piece Due Thursday
Tuesday, Jan. 11 Course Introduction
Thursday, Jan. 13 **Discussion:** Origins of Postwar America (*Handout*)

Week Two: Science, Technology, and the Suburbanization of America

Assigned Reading:

- Oshinsky, *An American Story*
Tuesday, Jan. 18 New Deal Legacies and Mid-Century Societal Turns
Thursday, Jan. 20 **Book Discussion:** Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*

Week Three: Cold War America

Assigned Reading:

- *Handout*

Assignment:

- Brainstorm research interests
Tuesday, Jan. 25 The Gunbelt and Cold War Political Culture
Thursday, Jan. 27 **Discussion:** Origins of the Cold War (*Handout*)
Workshop: Brainstorming and Framing the Research Question

Week Four: The Politics of Anticommunism, Aviation, and the New Frontier

Assigned Reading:

- Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet: The Anglo-American Fight for Aviation Supremacy*

Tuesday, Feb. 1 From Eisenhower to Kennedy, Kerouac to Hayden
Thursday, Feb. 3 **Book Discussion:** Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet*
Week Five: Civil Rights

Assigned Reading:

- Handout
- Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*

Tuesday, Feb. 8 The Civil Rights Movement
Thursday, Feb. 10 **Book Discussion:** Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*

Week Six: The Great Society and Liberalism's Misfortunes

Assigned Reading:

- Handout

Tuesday, Feb. 15 The Rise and Fall of Johnson's Liberal Society
Thursday, Feb. 17 **Research Day (no class)**

Week Seven: Vietnam

Assigned Reading:

- Frederick, *The Killing Zone: My Life in the Vietnam War*

Assignment:

- Research Paper Prospectus Due Tuesday

Tuesday, Feb. 22 Vietnam
Thursday, Feb. 24 **Book Discussion:** Downs, *The Killing Zone*

Week Eight: The "Me" Decade

Assigned Reading:

- Handout

Tuesday, Mar. 1 The Big Chill
Workshop: Research Paper Prospectus
Thursday, Mar. 3 Carter's Malaise

Week Nine: Middle Eastern Encounters

Assigned Reading:

- McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945*

Tuesday, Mar. 8 America Confronts Islam, Terrorism, and the Middle East
Thursday, Mar. 10 **Book Discussion:** McAlister, *Epic Encounters*

SPRING BREAK

Week Ten: The Rise of the New Right

Assigned Reading:

- Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*

Assignment:

* Research Paper Outline and Introduction Due Tuesday

Tuesday, Mar. 22 The Rise of the Right
Thursday, Mar. 24 **Book Discussion:** Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*

Week Eleven: America's Right Turn

Assigned Reading:

- Handout

Tuesday, Mar. 29 Ronald Reagan's America
Workshop: Research Paper Outline and Introduction
Thursday, Mar. 31 **Research/Writing/Consultation Day: No Class**

Week Twelve: New Global Orders

Assigned Reading:

- *Handout*

Assignment:

- First Draft of Research Paper Due Tuesday
Tuesday, April 5 *America and Globalization*
Thursday, April 7 **Book Discussion:** Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*

Week Thirteen: Research and Writing

Assignment:

- Read and Workshop First Drafts
Tuesday, April 12 **Workshop:** Research Paper First Draft
Thursday, April 14 **Writing Day (no class)**

Week Fourteen: Research and Writing

- Tuesday, April 19 **Writing Day (no class)**
Thursday, April 21 **Writing Day (no class)**

Week Fifteen: Class Presentations

Assignment:

- Student Presentations of Research
Tuesday, April 26 Class Presentations
Thursday, April 28 Class Presentations

May 3 Final Papers Due in Office by 5:00