**HIST 651: Problems in Modern American History**

**Spring 2017**

**Wednesday, 6:30-9:20**

**UNIV319**

Dr. Brownell

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This seminar examines key themes and topics of United States history in the post-Civil War period. The seminar will cover a wide variety of topics, so the course is suitable for those wishing an overview of the field, as well as for those thinking forward to preparing for their oral exams and teaching the second half of the survey course in American history. The primary focus is on the interpretive literature that investigates issues relevant to the evolution of political, cultural, social, and economic matters over time. Major attention will be directed to the shifting idea of national identity and the function of the state and its relationship to citizens as well as the impact of war, race, gender, memory, media, liberalism, and conservatism.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

Students in the class are responsible for obtaining copies of all the books below, whether via online venders, bookstores, Purdue/local libraries, or Interlibrary loan. The complete list of books has also been emailed to you. Materials with a \*\* will be made available on Blackboard. You may use paper or electronic versions of the assigned readings, but you are expected to bring to class your copies of the week’s assigned readings, whether in digital or paper form. These assigned works are to be read in their entirety unless otherwise noted. As a member of this seminar, you are expected to attend every class, ready to engage this assigned material. Each week, you should be ready to speak about the author and his/her work and raise relevant questions and comments for further examination by the class.

**REQUIRED BOOKS**

Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation.* University of North Carolina Press, 2016. ISBN-13: 978-1469629896

David Atkinson, *The Burdens of White Supremacy: Containing Asian Migration in the British Empire and the United States.* University of North Carolina Press, 2017. ISBN-13: 978-1469630274

Lisa McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State.* W. W. Norton, 2016. ISBN-13: 978-0393353525

Brooke Blower, *Becoming Americans in Paris: Transnational Politics and Culture Between the World Wars.* Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN-13: 978-0199927586

Douglas Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America.* Harper, 2016. ISBN-13: 978-0062089236

N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of the Jim Crow South Florida.* University of Chicago Press, 2014. ISBN-13: 978-0226115146

Margaret O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley.* Princeton University Press, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-0691166674

Margot Canaday. *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America.* Princeton University Press, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-0691149936

Eric Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City,* University of Pennsylvanian Press, 2011, ISBN-13: 978-0812221800

Wendy Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women’s Health in the Second Wave.* University of Chicago, 2010. ISBN-13: 978-0226443089

Shane Hamilton, *Trucking Country: The Road to America’s Wal-Mart Economy,* Princeton University Press, 2014. ISBN-13: 978-0691160924

Lily Geismer, *Don’t Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party,* Princeton University Press, 2014, ISBN-13: 978-0691157238

Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture.* Belknap Press, 2012.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Assessments will be based on the following assignments:

* Weekly Reading Responses
  + Worth **50%** of final course grade
  + These weekly reading responses are due in my mailbox on Tuesday by 5PM. These 2-3 page responses should discuss the argument of the book, how the author situates himself/herself into the historiography of the particular topic, and an analysis of the methodology and sources used. You must complete 10 of these over the course of the semester, which means you may select two weeks to not turn in an assignment
* Regular participation and involvement (including careful preparation) in all class discussions
  + Worth **50%** of final course grade
  + Ongoing throughout semester,beginning with our first class meeting and ending with our last session on April
  + This includes **submitting two discussion questions with your reading response by 5PM on Tuesday**. I will select the strongest questions to circulate to the class to help you prepare for discussion on Wednesday.

General notes re: grades:

* Final grades in the course **will** be assessed according to the plus/minus scale.
* Neither exam grades nor final grades in the course will be provided or discussed via email. If you would like to discuss your grades and/or your coursework in general, please do not hesitate to see me during office hours. I will be happy to go over your grades with you at any point in the semester.
* **You must complete all assignments to pass the course. This includes participation.**

**FORMAT, PROCEDURES AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

* All written work in the class should be double-spaced, with 1 inch margins, and Times New Roman 12 pt. font. These are not recommended guidelines but mandatory formatting requirements.
* Any footnoted citations should follow Chicago Manual of Style guidelines, as detailed in Chapter 7 of Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 8th Ed.
* All deadlines, as listed on the syllabus, are to be considered hard and fast due dates. Please do not ask for extensions in this course, as they will not be granted. Late work of any sort will not be accepted, nor will I grant “incompletes” as final course grades.
* Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class or via email, as circumstances allow.
* This class is intended to encourage open, informed discussions and I hope to protect and foster a classroom atmosphere that will encourage an open and enlightened discourse in the class. Ultimately I would hope that you take those ideas and informed discussions with you beyond the classroom. **Respect, open-mindedness and tolerance will be the standard for all classroom discussions.**
* Email will be the preferred mode of contact outside of regular classroom hours and office hours. Please feel free to contact me directly (i.e., not via Blackboard’s email option) at any point. I will also create a class email list which I will use to send course-related announcements as needed. **For this reason, I expect you to check your Purdue email account at least once a day.**
* In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes as necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Any necessary changes will be announced via email and/or the class Blackboard page.
* During the last two weeks of the semester, you will be provided an opportunity to evaluate this course and my teaching. You will receive an official email from evaluation administrators with a link to the online evaluation site, and you will have two weeks to complete this evaluation. I consider your feedback vital, as does Purdue University. Your professors have access to these online evaluations only after grades are due.
* As a student in this class and at Purdue, you are expected to uphold the standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will be treated as such in this class.  You are expected to produce your own work and to accurately cite all necessary materials.
* Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: the use of papers or books not authorized by the instructor during examinations, quizzes, and other written assignments; giving or receiving answers during or in preparation for examinations and quizzes; and failing to cite sources employed for writing assignments.
* Those who engage in such practices should expect to fail the course and have their behavior referred to the Dean of Students. This is non-negotiable: if I find that you have plagiarized, you will fail the assignment and potentially will fail the entire course—period. Please do not put yourself in this situation.

**Student with Disabilities:**

* If you need any special accommodations to participate fully in class, please see me as soon as possible. I will keep all discussions confidential as long as the situation permits. Please not that, in order for Purdue University to accommodate your needs, you will need to provide appropriate written documentation and have it on file with Student Services. Students should be aware that Services for Student Disabilities are available at 494-1247 if you need further assistance.

**READING AND DISCUSSION SCHEDULE**

Week 1: January 11: Course Introduction

Week 2: January 18: The Legacy of the Civil War

* Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*
* David Blight, “Fifty Years of Freedom and Reunion” in *Race and Reunion,* (2001) \*\*
* Seminar Guest: Dr. Caroline Janney

Week 3: January 25: Race, Immigration, and Empire

* David Atkinson, *The Burdens of White Supremacy*
* Kornel Chang, “Circulating Race and Empire: Transnational Labor Activism and the Politics of Anti-Asian Agitation in the Anglo-American Pacific World, 1880-1910.” *Journal of American History.* (2009) \*\*
* Seminar Guest: Dr. David Atkinson

Week 4: February 1: The Progressive Era

* Lisa McGirr,*The War on Alcohol*
* Stephen Skowronek , *Building the New American State: The Expansion of the National Administrative Capacities, 1977-1920,* Part I \*\*

Week 5: February 8: Cultural Developments in the Early Twentieth Century

* Brooke Blower, *Americans in Paris*
* T.J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self- Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930,” in *Culture of Consumption* edited by Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (1983)\*

Week 6: February 15: Race, Space, and Capitalism

* N.B.D. Connolly *A World More Concrete*
* Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Post-War Oakland,* introduction (2004) \*\*

Week 7: February 22: Economic and Environmental Development

* Douglas Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*
* NOTE: No Class on Wednesday, February 22. Students should prepare for the book discussion with Douglas Brinkley from 3:30-5PM on Monday, February 27. Discussion questions and responses are due in Dr. Brownell’s office by Monday morning at 9AM.

Week 8: March 1: NO CLASS

* In place of class on **March 1st and 8th**, students are expected to attend at least two panels at the conference held at Purdue on March 2-3, “America’s Newest History: The Nineties in Historical Perspective.” Students should submit a 5-page response to the discussion and themes discussed during the conference by March 8th. I understand that your schedules may limit the amount of time you can spend at the conference, so if there is a significant conflict, please notify me in advance and we can arrange a substitute reading and assignment.

Week 9- March 8: NO CLASS

Week 10- March 15: NO CLASS: Spring Break

* Read ahead

Week 11- March 22: Making the Cold War State

* Margaret O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*
* Margot Canaday, *The Straight State*
* Elaine Tyler May, “Cold War, Warm Hearth: Politics and the Family in the Postwar America,” in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order,* (1989) \*\*

Week 12- March 29: The Incarceration State

* Eric Schneider, *Smack*
* Heather Thompson's "Why Mass Incarceration Matters" *Journal of American History*,(2010).

Week 13- April 5: Feminism and the Sexual Revolution

* Wendy Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge*
* Judith Walzer Leavitt, “Birthing and Anesthesia: The Debate over Twilight Sleep,” *Women: Sex and Sexuality*, (1980). \*\*
* Seminar Guest: Dr. Wendy Kline

Week 14- April 12: Modern Conservatism

* Shane Hamilton, *Trucking Country*
* Alan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism,” *American Historical Review,* (1994)
* Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors,* introduction. (2001) \*\*
* Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority,* introduction (2006) \*\*
* Bethany Moreton, “Why is there so much sex in Christian conservatism and why do so few historians care about it?” *Journal of Southern History,* (2009) \*\*

Week 15- April 19: Modern Liberalism,

* Lily Geismer, *Don’t Blame Us*
* Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order,* introduction (1989) \*\*
* Seminar Guest: Dr. Lily Geismer

Week 16- April 26: Contemporary America

* Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*
* David Greenberg, “Creating Their Own Reality: The Bush Administration and Expertise in a Polarized Age,” in *The Presidency of George W. Bush: A First Historical Assessment*, (2010) \*\*