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Spring 2009

HIST 152

U.S. HISTORY 1877-PRESENT

WEDNESDAY, 6:00-8:50 PM – UNIV 219

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"The past is never dead; it's not even past."

- Gavin Stevens (William Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun*)

Welcome to History 152, a survey of the second half of the history of the United States from the Gilded Age through the end of the Cold War. Throughout the semester we will highlight changes in American society, politics, and culture. Together, we will track the pulse of the 'American Idea' and surf the waves of "-isms" that have shaped and redefined that idea since the late nineteenth century. We will travel from Daniel Burnham's shimmering White City to Ronald Reagan's 'City on a Hill,' from a South of 'Strange Fruit' trees to a new high-tech Sun Belt, from the righteous imperialism of the late nineteenth century to the Imperial presidency of the late twentieth. Through this course you will develop new critical thinking skills, will be introduced to the historian's craft, and will see how our past necessarily shapes our present and our future. As Robert A. Heinlein's Lazarus Long said, "A generation which ignores history has no past — *and no future.*"

In order to make the course as varied – and interesting – as possible, we will incorporate lectures, film clips, music and discussion of reading materials.

TEXTS:

REQUIRED

- ❖ Weekly Readings [Online]
- ❖ E.B. White, *One Man's Meat* [279pp]
- ❖ John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me* [208pp]

OPTIONAL

- ❖ Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People, Volume 2 : From 1865*

WEEKLY READINGS:

In addition to the two books for this course, each week you will be reading short selections – some are published essays, some excerpts of popular books – to help illuminate our topics and, hopefully, spur discussion. In this way I hope to introduce you to a much wider, and more diverse, array of writing than would otherwise be possible without overburdening you.

JUST HOW WILL YOU PASS? (OR, WHAT IS THE GRADE SYSTEM LIKE?):

- (3) Three Take Home Exams 100 Points Each (300)
- (2) Two Short Book Responses 50 Points Each (100)
- (5) Five Short Reading Responses 20 Points Each (100)

485-500 = A+
465-484 = A
450-465 = A-
435-449 = B+
415-434 = B
400-414 = B-
385-399 = C+

365-384 = C
350-364 = C-
335-349 = D+
315-334 = D
300-314 = D-
0-299 = F

The exams for this course will be take home, given to you one week in advance of their due-date. They will consist of short, topical, questions which will require you to think critically about lectures, weekly readings, and films that we have watched.

In addition to exams, there will be two, short (3-5pp), responses to the books by E.B. White and John Howard Griffin. More than just “book reports”, these responses will require you to think creatively and critically, applying what you are learning in the course to what you have read. Response questions will be given approx two weeks in advance of due dates.

Finally, although you are expected to read the weekly assignments regardless, you will choose to write short responses (1 to 2 pages responding to questions that I will provide) on five of the weekly readings. You can choose which weeks you'd prefer to write on and turn them in that week.

Make-Up Exams will be given only if you have an authorized excuse for illness or travel.

ATTENDANCE:

Since the material you will be tested on comes from lectures and other class presentations, regular attendance is in your best interest – in fact, you probably cannot pass the course unless you come regularly. My suggestion is to make an effort to come as often as you can, bring some soda (or other caffeinated beverage of your choice) and a snack if you need it! Although attendance will not count against you, those with an exemplary attendance record may receive a small extra-credit boost to their grades.

EXPECTED BEHAVIOR:

This is college – a Big Ten University in fact – and, as such, you will be expected to behave as adults. Don't pass notes, talk when someone else is speaking, play games on your laptop or cell-phone, text message your significant other, read the paper, do Sudoku or the *New York Times* crossword puzzle, or sleep. In other words, respect me and respect your peers. As for exams and essays: DON'T CHEAT! DON'T PLAGIARIZE! These infractions will result in a zero grade and will be turned over to the Dean's Office for further discipline.

COURSE WEBSITE:

Material and commentary for this course will be on both an outside website (<http://www.thepayoffpitch.com/H152>) as well as Web-CT Blackboard Vista. Both sites will contain all of the weekly reading assignments (in PDF format) and other interesting tidbits relating to this course. Bookmark them and check in often!

FINALLY, TO BORROW A PAGE FROM A FORMER TEACHER, THE MOST CRUCIAL THING...

...to remember about this course is that you are an active participant and ultimately you will decide the quality of this particular learning experience. In the evening, after a long day, it is all too easy to just drop by, hunker down, and let it all just wash over you. In this course you will be exposed to a variety of materials and experiences – readings, lectures, videos and discussions – it is up to you to master and integrate these into a meaningful whole. That is hard work, and passivity on your part will not get it done. This can be a *fun, rewarding*, course – but only if you actively work to make it so.



"How often have you asked yourself, 'What can I do to fight Communism'? Well, sir, you can fight Communism by making capitalism work, and you can make capitalism work by buying this new model."

CLASS SCHEDULE

DATE	LECTURE	DISC. READING	OUTSIDE & OPTIONAL READING
WEEK 1 Jan 14	Intro What is History? The American Idea
WEEK 2 Jan 21	America's Yellow Brick Road: The Gilded Age, 1877-1900	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 16-18, 19
WEEK 3 Jan 28	Metropolis Rising The Outsiders	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 18-20
WEEK 4 Feb 4	The Age of Great Dreams The Great War	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 21-23 White, <i>One Man's...</i>
WEEK 5 Feb 11	Jazz, Gin and Mass Men: America in the Twenties	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 24 White, <i>One Man's...</i>
WEEK 6 Feb 18 EXAM 1 Due	Crash, Crisis, and Dust A New Deal For America	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 25-26 White, <i>One Man's...</i>
WEEK 7 Feb 25	Depression, Dictatorship, and Dissent: 1933-1941	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 26-27 White, <i>One Man's...</i>
WEEK 8 Mar 4	From The Last Good War to the Cold War: Entering the Atomic Age	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 28-29
WEEK 9 Mar 11 B1 Due	The Ike Age: Blonde Bombshells, Backyard BBQ & Invaders from Mars	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 30 Howard, <i>Black...</i>
WEEK 10 Mar 18	SPRING BREAK HAVE FUN!
WEEK 11 Mar 25 EXAM 2 Due	The Light of Freedom: Civil Rights and Movement Culture 1955-1965	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 31 Howard, <i>Black...</i>
WEEK 12 Apr 1	From Camelot to Chicago: The Crucible of Liberalism, 1960-1968	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 31 Howard, <i>Black...</i>
WEEK 13 Apr 8	Vietnam and The Other Side of the Sixties	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 31-32 Howard, <i>Black...</i>
WEEK 14 Apr 15	America in Nixonland	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 32-33
WEEK 15 Apr 22 B2 Due	Did Anything Happen?: From Watergate to the Crisis of Confidence	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 33
WEEK 16 Apr 29	The Age of Reagan & Beyond	TBA	Brinkley Ch. 33-34
FINAL EXAM	TBA...

*B1 = Book Assignment re: E.B. White's *One Man's Meat*

*B2 = Book Assignment re: John Howard Griffith's *Black Like Me*