

US History to 1877

Spring 2026

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Office Hours: By Zoom Appointment

Caveat: I retain the right to adjust this syllabus within a reasonable amount of time and will let you know if I do.

William Faulkner- *"The past is never dead. It's not even past."*

John Muir- *"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."*

James Baldwin- *"The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it...history is literally present in all that we do."*

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to some of the major social, economic, political, and cultural developments of the United States. Our timespan runs from Indigenous America through 1877. This course will run chronologically in a narrative format. While some themes and topics may appear as singular subjects, the overarching design of this course weaves together a variety of themes to posit a story about how the America we know today came to be as we see, as well as to give some historical context to current events.

Learning Outcomes

1. Identify key events and trends in American history that have shaped the country through 1877.
2. Be able to craft a historical argument and use evidence to support said argument.
3. Learn to evaluate source material and connect it to larger themes and discussions of the course.
4. Develop and improve your written communication skills.

Course Materials: I have been in your shoes and know that textbooks can be very expensive, plus they are a drag to carry around. So, I am assigning an online textbook that is available for free online and may also be downloaded.

Required Texts

The American Yawp: Volume I- <https://www.americanyawp.com/>

Documentary Reader- <https://www.americanyawp.com/reader.html>

Other assigned readings and materials will be found on Brightspace.

Course Delivery and Methods: Students will access course materials in three different ways; textbook readings, primary source readings, and recorded lectures. All course materials are required to be read/listened to each week.

Readings: Weekly readings are posted in the course schedule, and each textbook chapter has a corresponding chapter of primary sources, both of which are found online. Your textbook readings will provide the base for lecture, while the primary source readings will offer you a window into the lives of past peoples, as well as provide answers to your homework assignments and exam questions.

Email Courtesy: Be sure to type a subject heading and phrase your emails respectfully. I am here to help however I can!

Assessments: Students will be assessed in the form of quizzes, discussions, two course evaluations, and a final project that has various intermediate steps. As there are no mandatory attendance or in-person meetings, it will be important for students to keep track of due dates. Students may work ahead, but all due dates are “hard” due dates unless an extension is granted prior to the assignment being due.

Assignments

Quizzes: Multiple-choice quizzes will serve as a way to make sure you stay up to date on the material and follow along, as well as helping you prepare for the final project.

Course Evaluations: In 1-2 pages tell us what you know about American history in this time period, and then what you learned throughout the class that helped you understand more.

Oregon Trail Assignment: You will play one of the most famous historically based video games, Oregon Trail. This will let you get on the ground and see what it was like for settlers to move west and the things they had to consider.

Discussion Board 1: The first discussion board will be a basic introduction of yourself to the class. Share who you are, what you are studying, some of your interests, etc. Given this is an asynchronous course, it is my hope that these discussion boards will help facilitate a sense of belonging and being in class as best as possible.

Discussion Board 2: This discussion board will consist of you discussing potential ideas or topics that you want to engage in your final creative assignment. Make sure to talk with your classmates in the discussion boards to build ideas and find something you are passionate to work on! We can discuss your interests and how you can express them through the class and this assignment.

Discussion Boards: These other discussion boards will have you engaging with prompts, themes, ideas, and topics from readings and lectures for the week. You will have until Friday to write an initial post of a minimum of 300 words (recommended you do this one by Wednesday) and then respond to two others with at least 100 words (please make it more than “I agree with you.” Make sure you cite materials correctly. Make it the name of the document in parentheses and italicized at the end of the sentence you use the quote or material. (ex: “We the people of the United States...” (*U.S. Constitution*)).

Annotated Bibliography: An important part of what historians do is research for sources, and research will be important in your final project. For the annotated bibliography, you will find **five sources**. After each Chicago Style Citation, I want you to write a paragraph of what that source is about and how it applies to your project.

Progress Report: This is part of your creative assignment. **This step is not the actual creation of the project.** This is to help give you an outline of where you should be throughout the end of the semester. More details to follow.

Unessay Assignment: This assignment is open ended and allows you great creative control over how you answer. I recommend playing to your strengths. You could write a short story, make a podcast, a longer poem or collection of poems, music, art, film, cook a dish from a specific time period, or design a video game. In any case, so long as you engage with ideas, themes, events, and/or topics of the class you have direction here. I want you to create something that shows your understanding of the material in a format you feel comfortable working in. Have fun with it!

Showcase: Towards the end of the semester, you will post your project to replicate an in class forum and discussion of your work.

Ponder with the Professor: At the end of the semester we will do “ponder with the professor.” You will submit questions anonymously, and it is entirely for your benefit. You can ask me any questions you have ranging from “what did you think of Season 2 of House of the Dragon” to “can you clarify how the Civil War started?”

Grade Makeup

Course Evaluations: 2 at 10 points each

Introduction Discussion: 1 at 10 points

Brainstorm Discussion: 1 at 10 points

Other Discussions: 2 at 10 points

Check-In: 2 at 5 points

Annotated Bibliography: 1 at 20 points

Progress Report: 1 at 10 points

Showcase: 1 at 10 points

Quizzes: 7 at 10 points each

Oregon Trail: 1 at 10 points

Unessay Project: 1 at 50 points

Final Grade: Your grade will be out of a total 240 points and be reflected on the scale below.

Grade scale: A+ = 98-100; A = 93-97; A- = 90-92; B+ = 88-89; B = 83-87; B- = 80-82; C+ = 78-79; C = 73-77; C- = 70-72; D+ = 68-69; D = 63-67; D- = 60-62; F = 0-59

Missed or Late Work

If you miss a paper assignment, you can still turn it in, however, 10% will be deducted off the final grade you would have received for each day it is late. (Ex: 1 day: 10%, 2 days: 20%, etc.) Reach out to me about late assignments.

Course Schedule

Dates	Topics	Reading	Assignments Due
3/9-3/16	Indigenous America Collides with Europe	Chapter 1, 2, 3	Course Evaluation, Introductions, Quiz 1, Brainstorm
3/16-3/21	Spring Break		
3/22-3/29	Colonial Society to The United States	Chapter 4, 5, 6	Quiz 2, Check-In, Discussion Board
3/29-4/5	The Early Republic and Market Revolution	Chapter 7, 8	Quiz 3, Annotated Bibliography
4/5-4/12	Democracy in American and Religion and Reform	Chapter 9, 10	Quiz 4, Check-In 2
4/12-4/19	The Cotton Revolution and Manifest Destiny	Chapter 11, 12	Oregon Trail, Progress Report, Quiz 5
4/19-4/26	The Sectional Crisis to Civil War	Chapter 13, 14	Quiz 6, Discussion Board, Showcase starts
4/26-5/3	Reconstruction	Chapter 15	Second Course Evaluation, Showcase continues, Quiz 7
5/4-5/9	Exam Week		Unessay due date TBD

Discussion and Response Rubric

Criteria	Poor (0%)	Below Average (50%)	Sufficient (70%)	Good (90%)	Excellent (100%)
Insightfulness (20%)	There is no obvious arguments, or they do not answer the question.	Vague arguments that oversimplify the answer.	Interesting point(s); not well-connected to the question.	Your arguments address the question, but your answer overlooks some more important points.	Good point(s); relevant to the question.
Evidence (20%)	There are no specific examples, or they all undermine the arguments.	One example is well chosen and explained, but the others are vague or undermine the arguments.	Existing facts, but not for all arguments, and/or not directly relevant.	Good choice of examples, but they are not well explained.	Good selection of facts that speak both to the argument and the question.
Writing style and word count (20%)	Inappropriate language and/or insufficient word count.	Writing style is too casual. Some grammatical and spelling mistakes.	Needs proofreading, and/or needs to break down the post in paragraphs. Sufficient word count.	Writing style is mostly at the academic level. No grammatical or spelling mistakes.	Easy to read and understand. Sufficient word count.
Proper citation (20%)	Used someone else's words and ideas without proper acknowledgment. 1st offense = 0 on the assignment. 2nd offense = 0 on the assignment + report to the Dean of	Attempted to cite and quote, but did not provide enough information to track down the source(s).	Attempted to properly cite and quote for some part of the essay but did not fully attribute all paraphrases or quotes	Properly cited and quotes for most of the essay, but missed to fully attribute all paraphrases or quotes.	Great job! You've properly acknowledged the original sources of your paraphrases, citations and quotes

	Students.				
Feedback on your peers' post (20%)	No feedback on another post, or provided feedback under the word limit	Your feedback is superficial, only addressing grammar and spelling	Your feedback only addresses one peer or initial post, when you're expected to submit two replies	Your feedback is relevant but vague or not as insightful as it could be.	Provided sufficient feedback to two peers.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Protect Purdue Plan: The Protect Purdue Plan, which includes the Protect Purdue Pledge, is campus policy and as such all members of the Purdue community must comply with the required health and safety guidelines. Required behaviors in this class include: staying home and contacting the Protect Purdue Health Center (496-INFO) if you feel ill or know you have been exposed to the virus, wearing a mask in classrooms and campus building, at all times (e.g., no eating/drinking in the classroom), disinfecting desk/workspace prior to and after use, maintaining proper social distancing with peers and instructors (including when entering/exiting classrooms), refraining from moving furniture, avoiding shared use of personal items, maintaining robust hygiene (e.g., handwashing, disposal of tissues) prior to, during and after class, and following all safety directions from the instructor.

Students who are not engaging in these behaviors (e.g., wearing a mask) will be offered the opportunity to comply. If non-compliance continues, possible results include instructors asking the student to leave class and instructors dismissing the whole class. Students who do not comply with the required health behaviors are violating the University Code of Conduct and will be reported to the Dean of Students Office with sanctions ranging from educational requirements to dismissal from the university.

Any student who has substantial reason to believe that another person in a campus room (e.g., classroom) is threatening the safety of others by not complying (e.g., not wearing a mask) may leave the room without consequence. The student is encouraged to report the behavior to and discuss next steps with their instructor. Students also have the option of reporting the behavior to the Office of the Student Rights and Responsibilities. See also Purdue University Bill of Student Rights.

Related Considerations:

1. A listing of recommended safe practices for the specific class or laboratory setting (other PPE or safety behavior) can be found at the links below.

- Overarching SOP for Classrooms, Instructional Laboratories, and Experiential Courses

2. References Supporting Protect Purdue Compliance:

- Office of the Dean of Students Protect Purdue Compliance Plan: Ask, Offer, Leave, Report

- Office of the Dean of Students Managing Classroom Behavior and Expectations

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism refers to the reproduction of another's words or ideas without proper attribution. University Regulations contains further information on dishonesty. 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. Cheating, plagiarism, and other dishonest practices will be punished as harshly as Purdue University policies allow. Any instances of academic dishonesty will likely result in a grade of F for the course and notification of the Dean of Students Office.

Nondiscrimination Statement: Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. More details are available on our course Brightspace table of contents, under University Policies.

[Nondiscrimination Policy Statement](#)

Accessibility: Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247. More details are available on our course Brightspace under Accessibility Information.

Mental Health: If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try WellTrack. Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time.

If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact or see the Office of the Dean of Students. Call 765-494-1747. Hours of operation are M-F, 8 am- 5 pm.

If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc. sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell. Student coaches can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is completely free and can be done on BoilerConnect. If you have any questions, please contact Purdue Wellness at evans240@purdue.edu.

If you are struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available.

For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office in the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

Emergency Preparation: 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. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis. **Related Considerations and Guidelines**

1. If you experience any symptoms of COVID-19 or suspect you may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 stay home and call the Protect Purdue Health Center at 765-496-INFO.
2. Keep your cell phone on to receive a Purdue ALERT text message.
3. Log into a Purdue computer connected to the network to receive Desktop Popup Alerts.
4. If you have a "no cell phone" in class policy, allow one or two students who have signed up for Purdue ALERT to keep their phones on to receive any alerts.
5. A two-page supplement (see Appendix B) at the end of this document provides resources to communicate or engage with your students in case of unexpected emergencies that affect the West Lafayette campus. Emergency notification is vital! Please consider allowing one or more of the options below to ensure you are notified of an emergency.