HIST 152: US History Since 1877

Spring 2026 — Online Asynchronous

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Office Hours: By appointment on Zoom

Course Description

This course investigates the United States from **1877 to the present**, centering labor and social transformation as key frameworks for understanding modern American history.

We examine how the shift from **agrarian → industrial → post-industrial capitalism** reshaped society, work, and everyday life. Topics include:

- The Gilded Age and industrial capitalism
- Mass production and welfare capitalism
- The New Deal and changing state-labor relations
- Postwar deindustrialization
- Civil rights, migration, and gendered labor
- Neoliberalism and the restructuring of American life

We focus particularly on how **ordinary people**—workers, farmers, immigrants, migrants—**experienced, shaped, and resisted** these transformations.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Trace the political and social experiences of U.S. communities and how they shaped modern society.
2. Analyze major historical transformations in the U.S. from 1877 to the present.
3. Understand connections between labor movements and broader social movements.
4. Critically evaluate primary sources documenting everyday life in the U.S.

Required Texts

Primary Textbook

- **Michael McGerr, Camilla Townsend, et al.**
  Of the People: A History of the United States, Volume II: Since 1865 with Sources (5th Ed., 2021).
  Ebook available for purchase.

Secondary Survey Text

- **Melvyn Dubofsky & Joseph McCartin**
  Labor in America: A History (10th Ed., 2025).
  Ebook available for purchase.

Recommended / Supplementary Materials

- *Who Built America?* (Open educational resource)
- **Eileen Boris & Nelson Lichtenstein**, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers* (2003)
- **James R. Green**, *The World of the Worker* (1998)

Course Requirements

Weekly Assignments (75% of Final Grade)

- Ten total primary-source-based assignments; you choose **five** to submit.
- Each assignment is worth **15 points** (5 × 15 = 75 points).
- Assignments must integrate material from:
  - Recorded lectures
  - Readings
  - Course texts

Final Essay (25% of Final Grade)

- Worth **25 points**

- Must be submitted on the designated due date

Deadlines

- You may submit your five weekly assignments **anytime before April 21** without penalty.
- **The final essay must be submitted by its due date**—no extensions unless approved in advance.

Grading Scale

A+ = 96.5–100%
A = 92.5–96.5%
A- = 89.5–92.5%
B+ = 86.5–89.5%
B = 82.5–86.5%
B- = 79.5–82.5%
C+ = 76.5–79.5%
C = 72.5–76.5%
C- = 69.5–72.5%
D+ = 66.5–69.5%
D = 62.5–66.5%
D- = 59.5–62.5%
F = <59.5%

FERPA Notice: Grades cannot be discussed via email.

Course Schedule: Modules and Weekly Topics

MODULE 1: Rise of Industrial Capitalism (1865–1914)

Week 1.1

- Course Introduction and Thematic Outline

Week 1.2

- Compromise of 1877 / Wormley Agreement
- Great Railroad Strike of 1877
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

Week 2.1

- Industrializing Work: Craft to Mass Production
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

Week 2.2

- Big Business vs. Labor Unions
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

Week 3.1

- Gilded Era State, Corporations, and the "Labor Problem"
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

Week 3.2

- Progressivism and the Struggle for Civil Liberties
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

MODULE 2: Checks in the Monopoly of Capital (1914–1942)

Week 4.1

- World War I and the Great Migration
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

Week 4.2

- Wilsonian Democracy

Week 5.1

- Consumer America and Immigration Act of 1924
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

Week 5.2

- The Great Depression and the New Deal
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

MODULE 3: A New World Order (1940s)

Week 6.1

- World War II and Labor Concessions

Week 6.2

- Industrial Strikes and the GI Bill ("New Bill of Rights")

Week 7.1

- Taft–Hartley Act of 1947; AFL-CIO Merger
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

MODULE 4: New Solidarities and Differences (1950–1980)

Week 7.2

- Postwar Liberalism and Civil Rights
- **Assignment:** Primary Source Analysis

Week 8.1

- The New Right & New Left in the 1960s

Week 8.2

- Recession Politics and the Rise of Neoliberalism
- **Assignment:** Final Essay

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and cheating are serious violations.
Submitting AI-generated text as your own counts as plagiarism and will have **the same consequences**, including:

- Possible automatic failure of the course
- Referral to the Dean of Students

Review Purdue's Academic Integrity policy.

AI Use Policy

AI tools may not be used to generate or complete assignments.
You may not submit text you did not write.

Grief Absence Policy (GAPS)

Purdue allows excused absences for bereavement.
Students must contact the instructor and follow GAPS procedures.

Students with Disabilities

If you require accommodations:

- Contact your instructor within the first 3 weeks
- Contact the **Disability Resource Center**:
  Email: drc@purdue.edu
  Phone: 765-494-1247

Nondiscrimination Policy

Purdue prohibits discrimination based on:
race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other protected categories.

Violent Behavior Policy

Threats, intimidation, or violent behavior are prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.

Mental Health and Well-Being

If you feel overwhelmed, depressed, or in crisis:

- **CAPS** (Counseling & Psychological Services)
  Phone: 765-494-6995
  Available during/after hours, weekends, and holidays

Please reach out—support is available.

Syllabus Updates

This syllabus may be updated as needed.
Announcements will be posted on **Brightspace** and emailed