

**History 340-01, Fall 2006**  
**The United States Since World War II**

Professor Thomas Jackson

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 5-6; Wednesday, 1:30-3:00, Thursday, 5-6, and by appointment

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**T, Th, 11:00-12:30**

HHRA 2209

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This course examines major events, decisions, and trends in the political, social, and cultural history of United States since World War II. Because the United States emerged from that war as the world's dominant economic and military power, and because it struggled to maintain that position throughout this period, this course also aims to internationalize US history. Our main focus will be the decisions and historical forces that make our familiar world understandable.

This may be inherently the most controversial field of history you will study, because our current dilemmas emerge directly from its legacies. As a result, the subject is fascinating, fun, and hugely relevant. But it poses unique challenges to those who aim to bring historical method and reasoning to as yet unresolved and still politicized issues. Our political and moral convictions will inevitably shape the kinds of questions we ask and might push us toward preordained conclusions. But past actors deserve to be understood on their own terms first, in light of their fears, worldviews, possibilities, and choices, before we can evaluate them. They cared about things we may no longer care about, and thought in ways that might seem alien. The past is foreign country to us all, even, you will be surprised, the recent American past. And we must understand the world as it is, not as we would like it to be. Nevertheless, I think we all have a responsibility to rise above mere opinion to the level of confident and settled convictions backed by reliable evidence (NOT the same as arrogant adherence to rigid points of views).

History at its core is a form of knowledge and explanation that arranges evidence and detail into a narrative or argument that makes sense -- better sense than other competing interpretations. Treat this class as an extended set of exercises in bringing evidence to bear on different interpretations that seem plausible and compelling because the weight of evidence leads you to that conclusion. Generally, Tuesdays will be spent developing an adequate knowledge base: 1) to familiarize you with key issues and developments in U.S. political, cultural, and social history, and 2) to highlight developments and decisions that will help you have a more informed opinion, if not a settled conviction, on an issue being explored or debated by historians. The final 10 minutes of Tuesday will be spent framing questions or analytical problems that the Thursday class will address. On Thursdays we will deal in a more dialectical or Socratic style with arriving at an interpretation and story that feels "right" (not the same as good or comforting).

### **Learning Goals**

At the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Identify and explain the significance of major events and developments in US political, social, and cultural history since 1941.
2. Analyze competing truth claims and interpret evidence in four major issue areas of your choice, as reflected in four coherent, grammatical, well-documented papers. Your grade will reflect above all your ability to rise above description to the level of assessing interpretations in light of evidence.
3. Through comparison, develop your own interpretation of how organized social movements of the left, center, and right have affected American political development and the relative status of various social groups, such as African-Americans, working-class whites, welfare-reliant mothers, veterans, et cetera.
4. Assess the impact of the national security state and the welfare state on American political and social development.
5. Understand key changes in the international arena that have affected the composition and texture of American society and the relative power of the United States in the world.

### **Required readings**

Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep: the United States since World War II*, Third Edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

Doug Rossinow and Rebecca Lowen, *The United States since 1945: Historical Interpretations* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007)

Chapter 6, "Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It," in Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Fifth Edition (Bedford St. Martins, 2007). Available on Blackboard for this course. History majors should definitely buy and learn this entire manual thoroughly.

PDF files available on Blackboard for this course as cited below, either under reserves or in Course Documents.

Documents from web sites as cited below or as recommended in the Rossinow and Lowen reader.

**Jackson Library Course Page (for Research):** Library -> Subject Guides -> History -> 340  
[http://library.uncg.edu/depts/ref/bibs/his/his340\\_us\\_since\\_1945.asp](http://library.uncg.edu/depts/ref/bibs/his/his340_us_since_1945.asp)

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Participation 10%

Midterm 20%

final 25%

papers: 45%

**Reading and Preparation:** For this class to work, everyone must consistently prepare and be willing to share your insights verbally. You will be responsible for reading 60-80 pages per week, plus extra reading for four exercises in individual research and writing. As this reading is often very detailed, I have kept the volume quite limited. You must however read this with care and active attention to detail that is relevant to interpretive problems.

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. *You must email Ms. Bratyansky in advance if you will miss class, or, in case of emergency, within 24 hours after class.* We can excuse absences only on the grounds of personal or family illness or serious emergency (not conflicting work schedules, appointments, oversleep, or extracurricular activity). More than three unexcused absences and your final grade will go down 2 points for every day missed. Three *consecutive* unexcused absences constitute grounds for withdrawing you from the course.

**Participation (10%):** Several elements can constitute good participation. Essential is your thoughtful contribution to discussion on the days for which you write papers. Posing good questions and offering pertinent evidence when we have clear issues under discussion will earn you points. Try to stay on topic and respond to the questions we have before us. Raise questions as to the relationship between interpretation and evidence. Balance listening and talking. If you are relatively quiet in class, you can raise questions or make comments on the Blackboard discussion board, where you will find questions and announcements from us as well. Though these are not required on a weekly basis, good entries on Blackboard will definitely inform class discussion and raise your participation grade.

**Midterm (20%); Final (25%):** you will have to write identifications and essay questions. I will post a list of identifications and possible questions, and you will find a subset of these on the exams.

**Papers (45%):** four 4-5 page papers will be due on days (usually Thursdays) THAT YOU CHOOSE when we examine interpretive controversies. These will draw in part on assigned readings and in part on one or more additional points of view recommended by Lowen and Rossinow in "Further Reading" and "Primary Sources," or by Boyer in "Selected Readings," or by me and Ms. Bratyansky. If pertinent and relevant, we will reward your own discovery of relevant material available through the Jackson library scholarly search engines (count on reading 50 extra pages for those days when you choose to write a paper). Say, 50% of your paper should rely upon your own research, 50% on the arguments and evidence from the assigned readings. Carefully select more than one RELEVANT source that sheds light directly on one of the controversies or issues raised by the interpretive readings in the Rossinow and Lowen reader, or by my supplemental assigned essays. Your papers will be graded on the basis of their coherent focus on an issue or problem, not simply on your ability to summarize an array of arguments. You will sign up in advance for all of these, and I will rely upon those who write for a given day to be my discussion "interlocutors" for that day. Unexcused late papers, failure to show up and contribute insights, or a decision to switch topics after you commit yourself, will be penalized by at least one grade. I cannot overstress the importance of preparation in advance, since you must read the entire assignment and locate

additional readings that shed light on a core issue. Then you must arrive at the class in which we are discussing these issues and contribute.

Two of these papers should rely PRINCIPALLY on scholarly secondary sources: books that are published by scholars in University Press form that have been reviewed by peers; articles by scholars available through EBSCO or JSTOR that have also been peer-reviewed. Don't rely on some journalistic hack job, or worse, some anonymous commercial web site: anything that cites or draws material from "about.com" or "wikipedia" or comparable sources will be handed back to you immediately. Under no circumstances will I accept any quotation or extensive reference to the introductory essays by Rossinow and Lowen. They keep you brief synopses only of the arguments under review and are not sufficient in and of themselves to explain arguments made by authors directly available to you in their reader. Neither will I accept any quotes or evidence drawn directly from Boyer. I am asking you to write essays that reflect your own discovery and conclusions drawn in part from the assigned interpretive essays and from several scholarly sources that are NOT assigned for that day.

Two of these papers should rely PRINCIPALLY on primary sources. There are many recommended web sites in the reader and on the library web pages for the history department and for this course. Official documents, news reporting of the day (not recent), oral histories, primary documents drawn from archival collections of microfilm or from LEXIS-NEXIS or from reliable web sites, all constitute good primary sources.

**Academic Honor Code:** I remind you that the URL for the University's Academic integrity policy is <http://saf.dept.uncg.edu/studiscp/Honor.html>. If you have not read it, please do so thoroughly. See Rampolla, *Guide to Research*, chapter 6, for more information. Our own library, Dartmouth College and Georgetown University each have superb websites on the nuances of plagiarism. Beware of copying without citing sources; this is a special danger with respect to the Internet, a wonderful tool that has also contributed to the proliferation of plagiarism (and the ease of catching it). If you "cut and paste" even one sentence -- even if you rearrange some words -- and do not use quotation marks appropriately *and* cite the source, you are plagiarizing, cheating and cheapening the value of honestly written work done by your peers. The university requires me to impose a range of punishments depending on the infraction: failure on an assignment or failure in the course with a permanent record of the violation in the Office of Academic Affairs. People accused of plagiarism are entitled to an Honor Board hearing. Recall that university expulsion is automatic for repeat offenders with a documented record of plagiarism.

### Schedule of Readings and Assignments

**[Sign up for the Days That You Write Papers. I may substitute some readings if I find better ones].**

(Recommended readings and PDF files can be found on Blackboard under each of the weekly topics. I may make some substitutions if I discover more exciting or relevant material).

**8/15: Introductions**

**8/17: The Past Is a Foreign Country to Us All: Thinking Historically**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 15.

Discussion of the relevant facts and interpretations of the past that informed (or should have informed) the US government's explanation for and response to 9/11.

**8/22: World War II**

Boyer, ch. 1, 4-32.

**8/24: Air War, Atomic Diplomacy?**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 1., 3-19.

John Dower, "Three Narratives of Our Humanity," from *History Wars*, eds. Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, 63-96 [if delayed in getting placed on reserves, definitely read this brilliant piece for next week].

**8/29: Inevitable Conflict? The Early Cold War**

Boyer, chapter 2, 35-63.

Read the July 23, 1946, letter from Henry Wallace to Harry Truman, and the Truman Doctrine speech at the web sites listed by Rossinow and Lowen under "Primary Sources", p. 46.

**8/31: Cold War: Leadership, Responsibility, Global Reach**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 2, 22-45.

**9/5: Labor-Liberalism Derailed in the 1940s -- The Failure of the Fair Deal**

Boyer, chapter 3, 65-95.

**9/7: McCarthyism, Trumanism, Hooverism**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 3.

Robert Griffith, "American Politics and the Origins of 'McCarthyism'" in Chafe and Sitkoff, *A History of Our Time* pp. 62-73.

**9/12: The Fabulous 50s?**

Boyer, parts of ch. 4, 97-107, 115-126, and ch. 5, 132-147, "Conclusion" 157 -58 (37)

**9/14: Cold War Consumer Culture and the Middle-Class Home**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 4.

Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, ch. 2, pp. 23-41.

**9/19: Anti-Communism and Political "Consensus" from Eisenhower to Kennedy**

Boyer, 107-115, chapter 6, 160-183.

**9/21: The Heyday of Liberalism: Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society**

Boyer, chapter 7, 185-212, 314-317.

**9/26: War on Poverty: Success? Failure? Aborted Launch?**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 8, 169-186.

George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition*, ch. 5, 117-144. (26)

**9/28: "Civil Rights" and Black Insurgency**

Boyer, 72-75 (1940s); chapter 5, 148-157 (1950s), chapter 8, 214-252.

**10/3: Black Freedom and Power**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 5, 105-126 (21)

Thomas Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Search for Economic Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 2006), chapter 6 selection on March on Washington.

**10/5: Midterm**

Possible identifications and possible essay questions available on Blackboard in advance.

**Fall Break**

**10/17: The Vietnam Quagmire**

Boyer, chapter 10, 263-280 (26), chapter 11, 299-306 (8)

Lyndon B. Johnson, "Peace Without Conquest, April 7, 1965," in Cohen, ed., *Vietnam*, 108-112.

Hans J. Morgenthau, "Realities of Containment, June 8, 1964," in Cohen, ed., *Vietnam*, 100-102.

**10/19: Imperial Defeat: Causes and Consequences**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 188-201 (22)

Chester J. Patch, Jr., "And That's the Way It Was: The Vietnam War on the Network Nightly News," in David Farber, ed., *The Sixties* (Chapel Hill, 1994), pp. 90-118.

**10/24: More Movements Than Movement**

Boyer, chapter 9, 252-261, 263, chapter 10, 280-81, 284-288 (20), 292-299, chapter 12, 322-335.

**10/26: The Strange Life and Death of 1960s Radicalism**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 6, 128-152 (24)

SDS, "The Antiwar Movement Should Seek Radical Change in America," National Action Brochure, 8/1/69, 192-196; Sam Brown, "The Antiwar Movement Should Seek to Influence Mainstream America," Washington Monthly, 8/70, 197-203.

William Dudley, ed., *The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego: Greenhaven, 1998)

**10/31: "What Did He Know and When Did He Know It?" or, "What The Heck Happened to the Presidency?" -- Nixon and Watergate**

Boyer, 282-283, 335-347. (14)

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 10, 204-221. (18)

**11/2: Feminism**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 7, 153-166 (14)

TBA

**11/7: Dazed and Confused: The Seventies**

Boyer, chapter 11, 307-319; chapter 13, 353-381 (41)

**11/9: Right Wing Rising: Race and the "Values Issues"**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 11, 227-247 (21)

Thomas J. Sugrue, "Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964," *Journal of American History* (September, 1995): 551-2; 564-78.

**11/14: Reagan Bush**

Boyer, chapter 14, 384-422

**11/16: Reaganomics**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 12, 250-273

**11/21: Who Won the Cold War?**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 13, 276-294

Meyer, David S. "How the Cold War Was Really Won: The Effects of the Antinuclear Movements of the 1980s." In *How Social Movements Matter*, edited by Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly, 182-203. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1999.

**11/28: Clinton and Corporate Populism**

Boyer, chapter 15, 426-476 (50)

**11/30: "Brave New World" – Globalization and Mass Immigration**

Rossinow and Lowen, ch. 16, 296-314.

Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism* ch. 9-10.

**Final Exam 12/12, 12 Noon-3:00**