

Syllabus
History 212-05/08: History of the United States Since 1865
Fall Semester 2007

Instructor Information:

Dr. Justin Nystrom

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Office Hours: T/R 10:30-11:30 and by appointment. Available generally except Friday.

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Teaching Assistants:

Jennifer Scism

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Course Objectives:

There are two main objectives in this course. The first of will be to present a narrative, or “story” of American history from the end of the Civil War to the present. The second will center on a series of significant themes or “big ideas” from the same period of inquiry. It is my hope that you will leave this course with not only a better grounding in the common *story* of American history, but also be more *literate and understanding* of our nation’s past. Moreover, I hope you find the material that we cover to be relevant to your life.

Required Texts:

- *Give Me Liberty! An American History, Vol 2.* by Eric Foner (text)
- *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, by James Wheldon Johnson
- *Seldom Disappointed: A Memoir*, by Tony Hillerman
- *Contending Voices: Biographical Explorations of the American Past*, by John Hollitz

Note: the above books are all available at the campus bookstore. You should, however, be able to find less expensive used copies online (Amazon, Half, ABE books, etc.)

We will also view 2 films and 1 documentary on an out-of-class basis. They will screen in the evening at specific points in the semester. (See schedule for details) If you are unable to view the films on the screening night, you may need to rent or purchase them individually. The documentary is much more expensive and will probably be something you will want to attend when screened.

- *Ragtime* (Paramount, 1981)*
- *The Best Years of Our Lives* (MGM, 1946)*
- *Settin’ the Woods on Fire: George Wallace* (PBS Video: The American Experience)

* Both of these films are available from Netflix and Blockbuster Online. Plan ahead.

Lecture Attendance Policy (Mondays & Wednesdays)

I will not take attendance in the lecture hall. If you are sick, stay home. I do not want you spewing phlegm on your neighbors, or more importantly, on me. BUT, before you sit on that soiled futon of yours to watch a “Baywatch” re-run instead of coming to class, be aware that past student experience has shown that coming to class has a direct correlation to grade outcome in my class. That said, you *can* miss class from time to time, but it is a calculated risk. Even if you plan on coming to every lecture, however, I encourage you to employ the “buddy system” (see below) Whatever you do, avoid being LATE. (see also below)

A Special Note for Reservists and National Guardsmen: If you are called to active duty, I will do everything possible to ensure that you will be able to complete your semester's studies. Make an appointment to see me and bring a copy of your orders or a letter from your CO.

Note Taking and the Buddy System

I encourage you to be in class to take your own notes. My lecture style sometimes requires that you actually listen to the presentation in order to have a full understanding of it. Often, another person's notes will be useless. That being said, I also strongly encourage at the beginning of the semester to make at least two friends in this class and exchange information with them. If you happen to be sick or have to miss for some reason, you can then rely upon one another to get missed notes. **I will NOT supply you with notes from missed classes.**

Why it is Bad News to be Late for Lectures

While I am not bothered by your not attending, I find lateness disruptive. *Habitually late* is rude and simply unacceptable. I will warn you only once if you are habitually late to class, and will at that point encourage you to arrive on time in the future. **Failure to mend one's ways will result in a non-negotiable letter grade reduction.** What is "habitually late?" Showing up 5 or more minutes late, 4 or 5 times before the first test would qualify. I do, however, understand that emergencies arise that may cause you to be late.

Discussion Sessions (Fridays)

This class meets on Fridays in break-out sections. There will almost always be a reading assignment that you will need to complete before coming to class on Friday and discussions will stem from these assignments. Your Teaching Assistant is the BOSS in the discussion session. They will determine 100% of your discussion session grade, which is 20% of your overall grade. How they arrive at that 20% is completely at their discretion, but may include pop quizzes, reaction essays, etc. Attendance at discussion session is mandatory.

Discussion Session Attendance (Fridays)

There are not any "excused" absences for discussion sessions. Make-up work is at your TA's discretion, but as professor, I will counsel against unwarranted generosity on their part. There will only be 13 discussion session meetings this semester. Therefore, upon your 5th absence, the *maximum* grade you may receive for a discussion session grade is 1/2, or 10 out of 20 possible points, and that is only if the rest of your work is A+ quality. On your 6th absence from discussion session, you will receive a zero (0) for your discussion session grade.

Testing and Grading Policy:

Your grade in this course will come from four equally-weighted tests given over the course of the semester plus 1 equally weighted discussion grade. (20% each.) See the course schedule for tentative test dates. Each test will cover only the material since the previous test. For instance, test 2 will only include material covered in class since test 1. There is nothing special about your final exam. It is merely test 4 – over all material covered since test 3. There is no cumulative exam. Each test is 20% of your grade and each will be roughly of equal length and degree of difficulty. Tests are made up of any combination of multiple choice, matching, short answer, and "longer" short answer. Tests will include material used in the course, including the text, lectures, films, supplemental readings, and discussion session readings. Being that there is no cumulative exam, be prepared for each of the quarterly tests to be difficult and detailed.

Exam Make-Up Policy:

There are three acceptable reasons for missing an exam: 1) Death in the family. BRING me an obit from the paper. This sounds really harsh, but you would not believe how many uncles and grandmothers drop dead around exam time. 2) Significant illness. Bring a note from your doctor. 3) A school-approved reason (athletics, basket-weaving tournament, etc.) Bring documentation for your absence.

** Make-up exams will be given at the END of the semester when it is generally more inconvenient and difficult for you to do well. Make every effort to be in class on exam day.

Extra Credit:

There is no extra credit in this class. It breeds begging, and begging is unattractive.

Academic Honesty:

All universities have an academic honesty policy. I suggest you reflect on UNCG's at the university web site.

Electronic and Wireless Devices:

During exams all phones, PDA's, iPods, laptops, etc. MUST be off and out of sight. You know to have your phone turned off in class, so I will not even remind you of that fact.

Standards of Etiquette and Decency:

Chatting with your neighbor during class is a big no-no. Your instructor has sustained damage to his hearing and outside noise is particularly bothersome to him. And, of course, don't be late!

Blackboard and the Web (important!)

Your instructor will maintain most of his resources on his own website: <http://www.uncg.edu/~janystro>
Some static items (like this syllabus) will be on Blackboard.

Students with Disabilities:

Please contact me outside of class with any required paperwork and to discuss whatever special needs you may have so that we might address them satisfactorily. Please do this EARLY in the semester.

Contacting Me:

If you are struggling in this class, make an appointment to see either your TA or myself. Make sure it is sooner rather than later. The sooner you seek help, the better the outcome, generally speaking. Email is the #1 most preferable method of contact. I also use AIM as a way to offer extended e-office hours. This is best for quick questions.