

**History 212-09 (WI), Fall 2008**  
**The United States Since 1865**

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"Only now is the child finally divested all that he has been. His origins are become remote as is his destiny and not again in all the world's turning will there be terrains so wild and barbarous to try whether the stuff of creation may be shaped to man's will or whether his own heart is not another kind of clay."

-- Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian* (1985)

This course examines, through "intensive" reading and writing, how individual lives and historical forces intersected in the United States since 1865. "Collective biography" offers an excellent method to study how history shapes the lived experience of ordinary and extraordinary people. We can also study how people actually make history in concert or conflict with others. It *has* been a wild and barbarous 143 odd years, in which people were often driven beyond their knowing or even imagining to act against others in hostile and violent ways. Yet often they also acted in courageous and redemptive ways. The quest for freedom, for mastery of our individual and collective destinies, recurs as a major motif in this country's history. To riff on Cormac McCarthy's metaphor, our forbearers bequeathed us clay mixed with the blood of conflict as much as the honey of cooperation. Itself conquered terrain, the United States became the home and the destination of an astounding array of the world's peoples. They arrived on these shores driven by varieties of hope, economic necessity, and in the case of African Americans, by brutal force. The country has consequently been riven with regional, class, racial, religious, and cultural divisions. Yet often in the heat of conflict at home and abroad -- such during as the labor union drives of the 1880s and 1930s, or during World War II -- we also find extraordinary acts of inclusion and cooperation across racial-ethnic lines.

We begin with a study of the continuing civil war within the South during the Reconstruction period, after the Civil War ended in 1865. We end with a nation at war halfway around the world and at odds with itself internally. We are about to manage these conflicts nonviolently in what will almost certainly be an historic presidential election. The United States was a nation built upon ideals of freedom, equality, openness to newcomers, and resistance to imperial tyranny. We must also appreciate that it was built upon the shoulders of millions of unfree, coerced, and exploited laborers. This is true with most nations. In curious and unique ways the United States excluded and segregated its diverse peoples as much as it included and integrated them. Indeed these processes of exclusion and inclusion have been bound up with each other. Some people have been welcomed into the circle of "We the People" even as others were pushed out -- only to fight their way into the circle later.

Our own 21st-century rendezvous with destiny can be put simply. Can this nation achieve peace and cooperation with other nations at the same time that we resolve our political conflicts with the rough democratic tools inherited from our forbearers? Can we retool our own means of production and consumption in a way more consistent with a sustainable biosphere? History, as seen through the eyes of those who made it -- and through our own trained minds -- can be an invaluable tool in shaping the historical clay that you will give to your own children.

This course gives you lots of freedom of choice in the selection of questions and topics to write about. Its success or failure depends on your individual and collective willingness to stretch your minds beyond comfortable and predictable ways of thinking and working. Sometimes it may feel like a creative writing

class I hope. You will have many questions. Unlike physics or biology, history has no standardized body of accepted "facts" that exists apart from historians' interpretations of evidence, evidence that is constantly being discovered and reevaluated. In your papers, I am asking you to begin to think, research, and write as an historian. So please expect a bit of confusion, be willing to ask questions, and try to accept the inevitable sense of "disorganization" that occurs when a group of people comes together to explore common questions from diverse vantage points of experience and thinking. This will not and should not be a lecture course where everyone takes the same tests, everyone writes the same papers, and the professor counts up points based on right or wrong answers. It's a different beast. It's a writing intensive group-centered process of guided inquiry! So with that appreciation, read the following Learning Outcomes required of every university syllabus.

**When this course is over, you should be able to:**

- 1) Understand the language and "voices" of past actors.
- 2) Demonstrate your ability to place these expressions in the historical context that gives them sense and meaning.
- 3) Better than you do currently, write sensible sentences, paragraphs, and essays. In history, this craft involves your ability to balance paraphrase and quotation; and to construct paragraphs that "flow" logically and build upon one another to a conclusion that is clear and confident.
- 4) Identify and explain the significance of crucial events, decisions, and historical forces that contributed to the making of modern America.
- 5) Through your writing and discussion, reflect upon the contemporary meanings of these past events, decisions, and social processes. *Change* and *continuity* are the basic concepts historians use. "History repeats itself," some people pronounce with confidence. "Never before have we done so much," another chimes in.

**Required Reading:**

James Roark, et. al., *The American Promise: A History of the United States, Volume II: from 1865*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, VALUE edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008). (Any fourth edition will do -- this is the least expensive -- but it is your responsibility if you get another version to sync up the pages for yourself).

John Hollitz, *Contending Voices: Biographical Explorations of the American Past, Volume II: Since 1865*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007) (The first edition has most of the essays, but you will be responsible for borrowing or photocopying the three extra biographical profiles that the second edition provides).

Occasional optional and required electronic reserves available on Blackboard for this class. Most of them in .pdf format available under "Course Materials" in Blackboard.

**Assignments and Evaluation**

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. *You must email me in advance if you will miss class, or, in case of emergency, within 24 hours after class.* I 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.

**In-class participation. 10%.** Reading, writing, and discussion all reinforce each other. Respond to questions, pose questions, comment on other students' in-class remarks or "blogs" on Blackboard. This is not

a class where you can be anonymous and safely quiet. Writing Intensive classes are always more interactive, collaborative, and loosely structured than other courses.

**Blackboard and Hard Copy Free-Writing Exercises. 30%.** These will be mainly discussion threads that I will create, intended as informal but substantive exercises in "free" writing anywhere from 100 to 300 words each week. I will be looking for ideas and not polished writing here. Quotation marks and page references are expected. If you reference news articles, provide adequate citation. Look for instructions and suggestions for writing on Blackboard a week in advance. Sometimes I might simply ask you to identify the best example of writing offered by the week's reading. What is good writing? Other times I might ask you to compare "then and now," observing how much has changed in this nation, and how much has not changed, in areas like presidential campaigning or foreign policy. We will also examine and compare some contemporary and historical *New York Times* reporting on political campaigns.

**Three 4-5 page Formal Papers, 10% Each. 30%. Select three "Paper Options" identified throughout this syllabus.** Answer one of the significant questions that come up in the course of reading each week. On Blackboard I will continually be making suggestions. Also, both texts provide provocative questions at the end of their chapters that you are free to select. That's right. You pick it, it's *your* history. Sign-ups are coming next week for the entire semester. So think about the Paper Option you might want to investigate and write about. Pick one essay topic in September, one in October, and one in November. Hand them in before Thursday class and be ready to share some of your thoughtful conclusions with the rest of the class!

**FUN CHALLENGE OPTION:** For October, write one of your essays on how McCain's and Obama's personal histories and their knowledge of history shapes how they address the issues of the presidential campaign. If you do this, hand it in by Halloween in time for the election! Know that this will require a bit more work, as you will be expected to do the class readings as you independently research each man's memoirs, statements, or policy positions, as well as journalism.

**Final Essay, Due the Day of the Final Exam. 10 pages. 30%.** This can be a substantial revision and expansion of something you wrote before, one of the papers on which I will give you feedback. It can also be something fresh. Focus upon one or two individuals who lived history in a way that sparks *your* imagination. Check biographies or historical monographs out of the library. Find scholarly articles or biographical profiles in the online databases. How did history shape these peoples' lives and how did they try to shape history? Focus upon a decision they made or a body of beliefs they held. Try to get evidence about their personal history and their consciousness of broader historical change, evidence that will help you explain *why* they did or said what they did. For example: "Roy Wilkins opposed Black Power because he and his organization had been using legal means to achieve racial desegregation for 40 years and Black Power carried connotations of street violence. Like his forbearers in the NAACP, he dreamed of a country without color consciousness or group identities . . ." This builds on one of the chapters we will read and that you might write on as one of the formal papers you select to write.

**Course policy on sustainability:**

UNCG recently began a sustainability initiative. Campus-wide policies are being adopted that require students, staff and faculty to act in ecologically conscious ways while at UNCG. What is sustainability? So says the UNCG web site: "Sustainability is an approach to discovering and implementing a balance of economic and social equity with ecological awareness in order to minimize damage to the environment caused by human activity." While in the classroom and while performing required course activities, students must strive to act in ecologically conscious ways. This means that you need to: recycle plastic bottles or bring filtered or tap water in reusable bottles; turn off lights and projectors; recycle office paper, newspapers, and cardboard; if possible, turn papers in to me on two-sided paper; and email papers instead of driving to deliver them if that would require a separate trip. Many of the writing assignments will be posted on Blackboard and your feedback will be electronic, which saves paper. Of course there is no grade, no points for this, just the grade the biosphere gives us at the end of the third millennium!

Here are a few links to sustainability information at UNCG, including a recycling guide.

<http://sustain.uncg.edu/>

<http://www.uncg.edu/student.groups/uncgreen/index.htm>

<http://www.uncg.edu/rcy/index.htm>

### **Course policy on use of electronic devices in class:**

All cell phones must be turned off unless you are a caretaker or emergency responder. No text messaging will be permitted. All laptops must be used for activities exclusively related to class. If I find anyone surfing the web or checking e-mail, they will be asked to leave the room and their laptop will not be permitted back for the rest of the semester. (If this sounds extreme, it is. TAs and faculty are telling me stories of students spending class hanging out on Facebook and only occasionally paying attention to what's going on, occasionally asking a question to get the grade. Your class, your classmates, and your professor deserve no less than your undivided attention).

### **UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy** (<http://saf.dept.uncg.edu/studiscp/Honor.html>).

Violations of this policy include, but are not limited to 1.) Cheating 2.) Plagiarism: (see link below).

Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy will be handled in accordance with procedures detailed at:

<http://saf.dept.uncg.edu/studiscp/Honor.html>

Penalties can range anywhere from having to redo the assignment, to receiving an F on the assignment or even the course, to expulsion from the University (in cases of repeated violations).

Plagiarism as exhaustively delineated: Memorize the library's definition and then take the research tour!

<http://library.uncg.edu/depts/ref/tutorial/integrate/plagdef.asp>

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 if you rearrange some words -- and do not use quotation marks appropriately *and* cite the source, you are plagiarizing and cheapening the value of honestly written work done by your peers.

## **Schedule of Class Meetings And Reading Assignments, Subject to Tweaking**

### **8/26: Introductions**

Syllabus, quoting and citing sources, an exercise in note taking and paraphrase and the social context of historical evidence.

### **8/28: History and Lived Experience**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 31, pp. 1025-1038 only. This covers the United States since 2000.

**First Assignment!** Contribute to a Blackboard thread, with 200-300 words. Answer: How has "history," as recorded and organized by our venerable textbook historians, impacted your personal life? I want you to *paraphrase* the words of our authors. Use *concepts* (like globalization or technological innovation) and give us concrete *illustrations* from your life, the news, or books you've read.

### **9/2-9/4: Reconstruction -- The Radical Promise of Biracial Democracy**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 16, pp. 473-506.

Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 1.

**Writing Exercise -- Paraphrase and Quotation.** I would like to see how you write right off the bat. Write 2 pp. 400-500 words (on paper) on what freedom meant to the freedmen and women who attempted to seize its blessings during Reconstruction. You will obviously have to limit your essay to what you think were the core rights and privileges that African Americans hoped to win and secure. By no means do I want you to *quote* the historians (Hollitz and Roark, et. al.). Rather *paraphrase* them and use their insights to structure an essay that samples the voices of past actors (who you will *quote* and *cite* with page references).

**Supplemental readings:** check blackboard each week with attached questions, usually primary sources related to those Hollitz gives us in each of the paired biographical sketches.

### **9/9-9/11: Industrial Capitalism -- Corporate Titans and Laboring Masses**

**Blackboard Exercise** -- "Then and Now": write 1-2 pp. on what aspects of politics in the late 19th century seem most like today, and those that seem most unlike today. *Paraphrase* the points made by our historians, Roark, et. al. *Quote* if you like the "voices" of historical actors who *lived it*.

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 18, pp. 540-573; ch. 19, pp. 576-612

Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 2, 22-43. Craftsmen and Buccaneers, Terence Powderly and Jay Gould.

**Paper Option** -- How did these two men represent the social ethics of labor and capital in the late 19th-century? Were the assumed "rights" of laborers and capitalists fundamentally at odds?

### **9/16-9/18: Farmers, Laborers, Imperialists -- Upheavals and Conflicts of the Watershed 1890s**

Catch up if you have fallen behind in the textbook reading because the challenge to laissez-faire in the 1890s was profound.

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 20, pp. 613-646.

Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 3, 44-63, on farmers, Tom Watson and Henry Grady.

**Paper Option** -- on these two men; see guidelines on blackboard and see chapter questions.

**Paper Option extra reading** -- You may also write on the imperialists and the anti-imperialists, among them William Jennings Bryan, whose writings and speeches are brought together in a marvelous web site: "Anti-Imperialism in the United States." See blackboard.

### **9/23-9/25: Progressive Men and Women -- Managerial Efficiency, Social Responsibility, and a "New Freedom"**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 21, pp. 647-682.

Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 4, 64-85, on Emma Goldman and Ellen Richards, domestic science and sexual freedom.

Victoria Bissell Brown, "Jane Addams, Progressivism, and Woman Suffrage: An Introduction to 'Why Women Should Vote' (and Text by Jane Addams)." In *One Woman, One Vote*, pp. 179-203, (read Addams' essay *first*; it comes after Brown's commentary). Then read Brown's commentary, skimming parts that repeat other readings. How can both efficiency and social democracy be realized by enfranchising immigrant women?

**Paper Option** -- any angle on the above. See Blackboard for further suggestions.

### **9/30-10/2: World War I, Dissent, and the Manufacture of Consent**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 22, pp. 684-716.

Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 5, Randolph Bourne and George Creel, 86-105.

Randolph Bourne, "Transnational America," from *War and the Intellectuals* on blackboard.

**Paper Option** -- When does public information become propaganda? When does a war for democracy abroad and at home become repressive of democratic freedoms? To what degree was war an instrument of controlling capitalism in the service of national purpose, and to what degree was it an exercise in controlling the working class in the interest of national cohesion?

### **10/7-10/9: Battling for the Soul of America: Cultural Fractures of the 1920s and The Coming of The Great Depression**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 23, pp. 718-751.

Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 6, 106-128, on William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow.

**Paper Option** -- Was the Scopes trial really about science versus religion, the city versus the country, or were there deeper processes of change and social-political conflicts that an examination of the trial can reveal? Consult a few articles from the *New York Times Historical* database.

### **10/14-10/16: The New Deal and the New Social Contract**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 24, pp. 753-788.

Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 7, 129-147 on Upton Sinclair and Louis B. Mayer.

**Paper Option** -- on Upton Sinclair and perhaps other left challengers to Roosevelt such as Huey Long.  
**Paper Option Extra Reading** -- Selected letters to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt collected in Robert McElvaine, *Down and out in the Great Depression* on Blackboard.

**10/23: World War II Transforms America**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 25, pp. 790-825.  
Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 8, 148-166, 18 pages on Japanese internment.  
**Paper Option** -you could write about race or the Japanese in particular.

**10/28-10/30: Into the Cold War**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 26, pp. 827-856.  
Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 9, 167-187, on James Byrnes and Henry Wallace. **Paper Option.**

**11/4: Election Day -- No Class -- VOTE!**

**11/6: The 1950s**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 27, pp. 858-889, on politics and culture of abundance in the 1950s.  
Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 10, 188-210, on Joseph McCarthy and Margret Chase Smith. **Paper Option.**

**11/11-11/13: Liberalism and Liberation in the 1960s**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 28, pp. 891-929.  
Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 11, 211-230, on Roy Wilkins and Fannie Lou Hamer and the MFDP and black power.  
**Paper Option.** This would be a superb larger research projects -- the MFDP challenge as seen from multiple vantage points. You will have no dearth of source materials.

**11/18: Modern Feminism**

Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 13, 253-272, on Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem  
Pat Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework," and other statements from radical feminism.  
**Paper Option.**

**11/20: Vietnam: Fighting for Freedom Abroad, Fracturing Consensus at Home**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 29, pp. 931-963.  
Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 12, 231-252, on Robert McNamara and Jan Barry, managing the unmanageable war.  
**Paper Option.**

**11/25: The 1970s as Seedbed for the New Right**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 30, pp. 965-1000, 34 pages on Nixon to Reagan.  
Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 14, 273-291, 18 Pages on Edward Abbey and James Watt, Western Individualism and economic growth.  
**Paper Option.**

**12/2: The End of the Cold War and the End of History?**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 31, pp. 1001-1012.  
Supplemental reading: TBA.

**12/4: Bill Clinton, Neoliberalism, Growth Gospels, Environmentalism , and Globalization in the 1990s**

Roark, et. al., *The American Promise*, ch. 31, pp. 1012-1025.  
Hollitz, *Contending Voices*, ch. 15, 292-314 on the Irving Kristol and Ralph Nader. **Paper Option.**