

# ***Interpreting American History***

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His 316-01 | SOEB 202 | T/Th 12:30-1:45

Instructor: Dr. Susan W. Thomas | email: [swthoma3@uncg.edu](mailto:swthoma3@uncg.edu)

Office Hours: T/Th 2-3:00, or by appt. | MHRA2114

## **Overview:**

This course is required for students who plan to seek secondary social studies licensure and is open to students seeking licensure in the middle grades social studies. It will introduce students to broad coverage of the entirety of American history while addressing some of the major themes and interpretive problems historians address in their work.

We will devote class periods to tracing the thread of American history by analyzing primary sources and addressing their use as tools for teaching. We will concentrate as well on the historiographic debates that surround particular events and address questions of periodization. Additionally, all students will sign up for team teaching one class during the semester.

## **Required Texts:**

Davidson, James West and Mark Hamilton Lytle. *After the Fact: the Art of Historical Detection*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010.

Loewen, James W. *Teaching what Really Happened: How to Avoid the Tyranny of Textbooks & Get Students Excited About Doing History*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2010.

Supplemental articles and websites related to the teaching of history will be posted on Blackboard.

## **Electronic Devices:**

Because a part of our class period will sometimes be devoted to the evaluation of web sites and online information, I encourage you to bring your laptop. I expect that all phones and iPods will be turned off and put away when class begins.

## **Participation and Attendance:**

Regular and punctual attendance is required. I allow three absences with or without an excuse. Beyond that, without a documented excuse, you will lose one point off your final grade per excessive absence.

## **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a serious offense of the academic code and is treated as such by faculty. You must do your own work and clearly cite any sources you rely upon for your information. You may view the university's academic integrity policy for further information. <http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/>

## **Learning Disabilities:**

If you have a documented learning disability, it is your responsibility to provide the proper documentation in order to receive accommodations for your specific needs. You may find further information at the Office of Accessibility and Resources. <http://ods.uncg.edu/student-services/>

**Course Assignments and Grade Distribution:**

- ✓ *Primary Source Analysis* (3) = 30%

The syllabus is divided into three chronological periods. For these three assignments, you will each locate an additional primary source related to the period studied and complete both a worksheet and a written evaluation of the source.

- ✓ *Team Teaching* = 30%

During the last third of the semester, students will begin team teaching lessons related to the weekly readings in *After the Fact*. I will randomly create groups of at least 5 students and you may choose the week you wish to present your lesson. I have scheduled several days for you to meet and plan during class period. I will provide a separate handout with further information regarding this assignment during the first weeks of the semester.

- ✓ *Take home exams* (2) = 30%

You will complete two take home exams that will require you to discuss both the history and the interpretations that we cover in class. I will give you the question a week in advance and you will submit your response via Safe Assign on BB on the due date.

- ✓ *Participation and Attendance* = 10%

While only 10% of your grade, participation in this class will determine the degree to which you succeed in mastering the material and meeting the expectations outlined in the syllabus.

**Grading Scale:**

A (93 and above), A- (90-92); B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82); C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72); D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62); F (less than 60, unacceptable work)

**Late Policy:**

Students are expected to submit assigned work on the due dates. Any assignments received beyond that will lose one letter grade per class period.

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**Dates to Remember**

**Sept 17: Primary Source Assignment One Due**

**Oct 10: Exam One Due to Safe Assign**

**Oct 22: Primary Source Assignment Two Due**

**Nov 26: Final Exam Due to Safe Assign and Primary Source Assignment Three Due in Class**

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**Schedule of Classes**

**Unit One: Colonial to Revolution**

**Week 1: Talking About History**

- **T/Aug20: Introduction to Course**
- **Th/Aug22:** Read Loewen, Intro and Ch. 1; Davidson Prologue; BB Teaching with Primary Sources and "Evaluating Web Pages"

**Week 2: Historiography**

- **T/Aug27:** Read Davidson, Ch. 1, "Contact"; Loewen Ch. 2, "Expecting Excellence"; BB Teaching History

- **Th/Aug29:** Read Davidson, Ch. 2, “Serving Time in Virginia”; Loewen, Ch. 3, “Historiography” BB CHNM

**Week 3: Historical Thinking**

- **T/Sep3:** Read Davidson, “Past and Present” (p 51) and Ch 3, “The Visible and Invisible Worlds of Salem”; BB Historical Thinking Project and “Student Guide to Historical Thinking”
- **Th/Sep5:** Read Loewen Ch. 6, “Why did Europe Win?” And “Ch. 7: The \$24 Myth”; BB Historical Thinking Matters

**Week 4: Interpretive Frameworks**

- **T/Sep10:** Read Davidson, Ch 4, “Declaring Independence”; BB “Developing Critical and Historical Thinking Skills in Middle Grades Social Studies”
- **Th/Sep12:** Read Davidson Ch. 5, “Material Witness”; BB Five Essential Questions and the “Nine Cs of Historical Thinking”

**Unit Two: Revolution to Civil War**

**Week 5: Fields of History**

- **T/Sep17:** Read Davidson “Inside the Information Revolution” (123) and Ch. 6, “Jackson’s Frontier—and Turner’s”; BB “American History—Right and Left”  
**PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS ONE DUE IN CLASS!**
- **Th/Sep19: No Class—Planning Day for Team Teaching**

**Week 6: Periodization**

- **T/Sep24:** Read Loewen Ch. 8, “Teaching Slavery”; BB “Conceptual Frameworks”
- **Th/Sep26:** Readings on BB from *The American Civil War: A Literary and Historical Anthology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Ian Frederick Finseth, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013)

**Week 7: Context and Sources**

- **T/Oct1:** BB Primary and Secondary Source Analysis
- **Th/Oct3:** Read Davidson, Ch. 7 “The Madness of John Brown”

**Week 8 Doing History**

- **T/Oct8:** Read Loewen, Ch 4, “Doing History”
- **Th/Oct10:** Read Loewen Ch 9, “Why did the South Secede?”  
**EXAM ONE DUE TO SAFE ASSIGN!**

**Week 9: Fall Break**

- **T/Oct15: Fall Break**
- **Th/Oct17: No Class—Planning Day for Team Teaching**

**Unit Three: Civil War to Present  
Team Teaching**

**Week 10: Reconstruction and Depression**

- **T/Oct22:** Read Ch. 8, “The View from the Bottom Rail”  
**PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS TWO DUE IN CLASS**

- **Th/Oct24:** Read Davidson “Whose Oral History?” (201-202) and Ch. 9, “The Mirror with a Memory”

**Week 11: Progressivism or Regression?**

- **T/Oct29:** Read Davidson Ch. 10, “USDA Government Inspected” and Loewen, Ch. 10, “The Nadir”
- **Th/Oct31: No Class—Planning Day for Team Teaching**

**Week 12: Team Teaching Week One**

- **T/Nov5:** Read Davidson, Ch. 11, “Sacco and Vanzetti”
- **Th/Nov7:** Read Davidson “The Mending Wall” (282-83) and Ch. 12, “Dust Bowl Odyssey”

**Week 13: Team Teaching Week Two**

- **T/Nov12:** Read Davidson Ch. 13 “The Decision to Drop the Bomb” OR Ch. 14 “From Rosie to Lucy”
- **Th/ Nov14:** Read Davidson Ch. 15, “Sitting-In”

**Week 14: Team Teaching Week Three**

- **T/Nov19:** Read Davidson, Ch. 16, “Breaking into Watergate”
- **Th/Nov21:** Read Davidson Ch. 17, “Where Trouble Comes”

**Week 15: Wrap Up**

- **T/Nov26: Last Day of Classes**  
**FINAL EXAMS DUE TO SAFE ASSIGN AND THIRD PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE IN CLASS**

**Note:**

This syllabus is intended as a guide for our semester together. While I will make every effort to adhere to it, I may need to either change or eliminate specific readings. Should this be the case, I will announce the change in advance and will never increase the workload outlined herein.