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HIS 511A, Fall 2017: The “American Century”: Powerful Coalitions, Transformational Movements, and Decisions that Defined a Nation, 1892-2017 (WI, SI)

This class will help you refine skills of research, comparative source analysis, dialogue, writing, and oral presentation. As the “capstone” course of the history major, this seminar offers you the opportunity to do original research on a question you care about. We will move from general group discussion – brainstorming questions -- to smaller subgroup discussion and individual inquiry. This will culminate in a paper or script of 22-25 pages (about 6000 words, excluding endnotes) and oral report. The research question and end product will be uniquely yours.

Think of it as the capstone to an important door at the apex of the arch between where we have been as a people and what we may become. At its best it will help you bring your skills of historical thinking and writing into a new arena. First, we’ll survey social, cultural, and political “milestones” that marked our national path, reading a recent scholarly synthesis by Glenda Gilmore and Thomas Sugrue. How did powerful elites and ordinary Americans debate and define the boundaries of American citizenship and belonging, in the arenas of immigration and civil rights? At various levels and branches of government, how did the state mobilize citizens to achieve national purposes in times of war, reform, economic, or environmental crisis? How did Americans defend and redefine their liberties in the face of these challenges and decisions?

Within several weeks, I will organize you into subgroups of 3-5 students who will collaborate to lay the groundwork for individual projects. Possibilities (see attached list): Anti-German propaganda in World War I; immigration restriction in 1924; New Deal work relief projects and popular protest; the dramatic move from isolationism to internationalism around World War II; the internment of Japanese Americans; the swift move from cooperation to confrontation with the USSR in 1945-46; the massive crackdown on real and imagined Communists in government in the 1950s, and the responses of gays and lesbians caught in its net; the “Negro Revolt” of 1963; 1960s civil rights, black power, feminist and gay rights movements as they sought to liberate themselves and oppose the Vietnam War; “middle Americans” opposing court-ordered school busing in the 1970s; the Nuclear Freeze and the end of the Cold War; the War on Poverty and successive Wars on Drugs and Terrorism.

Though the class will range widely, individuals will within six weeks choose a person, decision, or debate, immersing yourselves in primary sources. Use secondary sources and scholarship to guide you to questions and primary sources, but be sure that your final product relies principally on your direct encounter with the evidence in primary sources. You can then either write a formal paper mixing narrative and explanation; or upon approval, you can write a script for a documentary film or museum exhibit, with references and hyperlinks to online edited film, video, music, and/or photographs. In either case, statements must be well illustrated, with citations. And the whole should cohere, i.e. follow a sustained development of an idea or a solution to an interpretive problem. Some students, especially those considering the value of a “senior thesis” to graduate school or other applications, may wish to follow up with a Spring Semester independent study that deepens the sources, context, and presentation. **Note:** If you have already written something for another class that you want to develop, don’t shortchange the first weeks. I urge everyone to take on something fresh. If you have done research in any area under the scope of the class, I’ll need to see what you wrote.

Required Reading (Available in Campus Bookstore and Amazon at a Discount)

Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth, and Thomas J. Sugrue. *These United States: A Nation in the Making, 1890 to the Present*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015. *Make sure you order the hardback popular edition, not the more expensive student paperback!*

The themes of the book nicely follow questions the whole class will touch upon, to varying degrees determined by student interests:

- 1. The great upside-down bell curve of inequality**, reaching heights of concentrated wealth in the 1890s and 2010s. Wealth was equalized in the middle decades of the 20th century, with tax and wage and union policies instituted during the Great Depression, World War II, and the immediate post-World War II "social accord" that helped sustain a robust middle class. Question: was this "New Deal social accord" an historical "accident" (Gilmore and Sugrue, xvii)?
- 2. African-American History as American History**. African Americans have historically exposed the flaws and hypocrisies of American democracy and some of the most egregious inequities of racialized capitalism. People in social movements and powerful allies have had to actively bend the historical "arc of justice."
- 3. Two waves of massive immigration, before World War I, and since 1965**, both profoundly transformed the social and cultural landscape of the country. Examining the debates about immigration and immigration restriction reveal some of our deepest social divisions and ideological conflicts, about American national identity, and the preconditions for opportunity for all.
- 4. The search for gender equality, in voting, work, and family**, and the related struggle for gay rights, revealed deep ideological divides, both within rights movements, and within society, over sex roles and sexuality, mutual obligations, and scope of freedom men and women should enjoy. They have exposed sharp differences over the centrality of family to individual and national health.
- 5. The expansion of, and repeated political conflicts over, social welfare guarantees for all Americans and for historically oppressed groups** were underlain with conflicts over how much "individual responsibility" and market capitalist values can and should govern the distribution of social goods. What do we owe each other? Has public policy complicated or disrupted or made fairer the calculus of "winners" and "losers" in the economy and culture?
- 6. Debates over America's role in the world** -- the wisdom of colonies, military alliances, and interventions -- involved disagreements over the effectiveness of diplomacy and war, over whether and how freedom and democracy can and should be promoted abroad, and over how much prosperity at home required promotion of liberal democracy and capitalist development in the world.

Student Learning Objectives for HIS 511A

Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate skills of historical reasoning, written, and oral expression:

- **Exercise Information Literacy**. Master several of the relevant historical search engines and databases available through Jackson Library subscriptions (Archives Unbound; ProQuest Congressional; ProQuest Historical Newspapers; America History and Life; EBSCO; iPoll – Roper Center). Locate, evaluate, and

share evidence from online curated document collections (Presidential libraries; civil rights institutes; PBS; ProQuest database materials digitized from microfilm collections).

- **Pose Research Questions.** Formulate and refine questions that lead to focused, researchable, interesting, and original writing. Inspiration comes from reading primary source documents, considering historians' interpretations, examining your own inherited assumptions, and questioning narratives present in the culture.
- **Analyze Secondary Sources.** Locate and evaluate scholarly sources that have addressed clear questions. Identify and analyze their concepts, methods, sources, evidence, conclusions and accuracy. Employ evidence-based reasoning to improve your questions and approaches.
- **Analyze Primary Sources.** Identify, locate, and contextualize primary source documents and interpret different types of primary sources. Make **inferences**. Consider competing interpretations of limited or ambiguous sources. Evaluate sources in terms of **plausibility, trustworthiness, and accuracy**. **Corroborate** facts and points of view by comparing primary sources with other sources. **Extract useful evidence** from sources through careful note taking, through summary, paraphrase, selective quotation, and commentary, with the purpose of answering a clear question, solving a problem of interpretation. Avoid plagiarism.
- **Explain and Use Historiography for Research.** Explain how historical understanding has advanced through testing old interpretations against new evidence, or reinterpreting old evidence in light of new questions and theories. Debate interpretation and evidence openly and ethically. Recognize valid and invalid revisionism. Explain how scholarly point of view can shape interpretations and research methods. [Recent discussion among History faculty may lead to de-emphasis on this skill, something mastered only in graduate schools].
- **Write Up and Revise Research Findings.** Synthesize evidence and communicate research findings effectively in writing and orally. Take useful notes that are guided by clear questions. Mix summary, paraphrase, and careful quotation. ALWAYS cite sources in full.
- **Critically evaluate the work of your peers.**
- **Deliver Oral Reports (Speaking Intensive Requirement):** Organize, condense, and deliver clear and engaging spoken presentations, informal and formal, that reflect your understanding of concepts and discovery of evidence on focused and researchable questions.

Policy on Electronic Devices. Sometimes, laptops and cell phones will be quite useful for research exercises. So bring either or both of you have one. At other times – for example when students are presenting, or when I sense that electronics are distracting people or diminishing attention– I will ask that all devices be stowed and paper and pens be the only technology.

Get Help: University Writing Center (www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/; tel: 43125): An excellent place to get help with paper structure, grammar, style, etc. University Speaking Center (<http://speakingcenter.uncg.edu>): The place to go for help with all oral presentations, whether individual or group.

Email Etiquette and Efficiency – Required Subject Line “HIS 511A Question”

Please address questions to me via email regarding assignments, appointments, mishaps. **Subject line:** “HIS 511A question.” I have a filter and deal with them all at once. If you don't hear back from me in 24 hours (weekends excepted), please try me again.

FORMAL GRADED REQUIREMENTS

I. Participation and Peer Review, cumulative all semester 10%

II. Groundwork, Weeks 1-6, Writing and Speaking, Cumulative Grade 20%

- III. Proposal! 4 page written PLUS 3 page annotated bibliography of sources. Total 6-8 pp. OCTOBER 2: 10%
IV. "Second" Draft for Feedback and Peer Review (with oral progress reports). 10%
V. Final Draft after Serious Revision, 50%

I. Participation and Peer Review, cumulative all semester 10%

This class works best when everybody prepares and contributes. So be concise and respond to each other as much as to me. Individual projects benefit enormously from group discussion and evaluation by members of smaller "affinity groups." This is a "rolling" cumulative grade based upon my periodic evaluation of your "class citizenship." Speaking in an informed way and staying on topic is a key element, but so is listening and thoughtful questioning. Mix appreciation and honest constructive criticism. Expect to supply written critiques of another student's proposal, draft, and final paper.

II. Collective Groundwork, Weeks 1-6, Writing and Speaking, Cumulative Grade 20%

A. Canvas Discussions, first five weeks: Reader Reactions and Informed Questions, 10%: Each set of readings presents actual people, decisions, and events that shed light on the general themes outlined above. Pick an issue or episode that intrigues you the most. List 2 others that you considered. In 200-400 words, reflect upon 1. How does your case exemplify the themes outlined above? 2. What *informed* question does the reading suggest in this focused case? Is the question sufficiently focused and historically researchable? (General questions such as the desirability of school desegregation over 30 years don't go very far in the direction of deeply understanding the past or laying down a plan for a one semester dive into the evidence).

Written and oral contributions will be evaluated after each class through Canvas's discussion grading, but the posts are due an hour before class. Though you may have a topic in mind something, this is an essential part of the course. Each member needs to be sufficiently well-informed to engage others in diverse topics, and the process of transforming topics into research problems must be shared and practiced. From the experience of teaching this course 12 times has shown me, this stage of group brainstorming opens up many exciting possibilities for individuals that they may not have considered.

B. Source exercises 10%: (sign up for each assignment in advance. If you don't complete the assignment by class time, you will receive an "F" for the assignment, because sharing the fruits with of your thinking with the class are 50% of the purpose of these exercises, and the class will need to hear your analysis):

One primary source (provided) 2-3 pages max: Paraphrase and select quotations that capture the essential points of an historical text. Venture an explanation with reference to its *subtexts* of meanings and *contexts* of power and purpose. (I want to see how you write and contextualize). **Sign ups:** Under each week in the Google Document 511 Source Report Signups, under Primary Source Reports, find dates and sources where you'll sign up. In a number of cases I have found documents that the textbook refers to very selectively, and the class would benefit from deeper understanding.

One secondary source, either a scholarly article on an issue or a chapter in a biography 2-3 pages max: Synopsis and oral presentation (5 minutes) of the key analytical claims, methods, and evidence. Teach the class something we don't know that the text takes a position upon. In the case of a biography, target a section of the book with a sharply focused question that informs the class of relevant details or statements or points of view not mentioned in the text. (See the many sources cited in the attached Suggestions for Research and consult the footnotes in the text, perform red box and America History and Life searches).

A Note on Moving From Topics to Questions:

There is no right way to come upon an informed question. Sometimes a testable hypothesis leaps out at you from the pages of scholarship. Sometimes you see something surprising in a primary source that may have been cited before, but whose meaning takes a different shape in your eyes. Accordingly we will be reading both primary sources and scholarship from the get go.

Booth, Wayne C, Gregory G Colomb, and Joseph M Williams. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Ebook available. In the next couple weeks read pp. 46-48.

III. Proposal! 4 page written PLUS 3 p. annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources. Total 6-8 pp: Your Road Map! 10% Students may email me drafts a week in advance. This is a sacred deadline, because a day after you will pitch the idea to the class. Due OCTOBER 2, 24 hours ahead of class.

A fully-fledged 4 page written *proposal* with attached annotated bibliography of no more than 3 pages, outlining a sharp set of questions that can be answered with *readily available secondary and primary sources*. Your proposal also states a *working hypothesis*, justifies the research in terms of what we don't know and should care about, and is followed by an annotated bibliography of *selected* secondary and primary sources.

Annotations should not provide general or exhaustive summaries, rather focused synopses of key claims and evidence discernible in the sources, pertinent to your questions.

Proposals should reflect serious immersion in a topic-as-problem. I encourage everyone to get going by week 5 even though all possible topics have not been exhausted. A Draft is due one month and four days later, and the Final Draft is due one month after that!!

Right here is the Rubric and Proposal Guidelines. In carefully written prose, organize in a way that makes sense but touch on the following:

1. State a *problem* needing explanation. Proposals often open with a compelling "hook" that creates curiosity, embodies the question or mystery, and gives the reader a sense of the people involved and what is at stake.
2. *Justify* in light of interpretations in the secondary source scholarship and possible pertinence to current debate. Has someone looked at this differently, with different sources? What mysteries remain, lines of investigation unexplored? Suggest its *significance* in terms of what many would recognize was an important public issue then, one that may or may not have implications for today.
3. Convince the audience or reader that it is sufficiently *focused* and *researchable* as to be achievable within a standard article length format aiming at a 6000 word draft. Reference the body of primary sources that are likely to provide evidence, facts, data (but save details for the annotated bibliography).
4. Give a "**working hypothesis**" or a framework of *informed questions* that clearly relates to the problem and has *coherence* (i.e. don't ask wildly ranging separate, unconnected questions). This should incorporate your key concepts, as well as assumptions that you feel should be made explicit at the outset, that might be confirmed or disconfirmed.
6. Attach a **bibliography** whose annotations are brief but *specific* and *related* to the questions they are likely to answer or evidence they are likely to provide. Don't give a book summary, rather share a specific quote, a paraphrase, or a claim made by an author. Be as specific as you can regarding the subject matter in primary sources relevant to the questions you have posed (no, you haven't done the depth research, but you have previewed the material and know it has rich evidence).

IV. Draft for Feedback and Peer Review (with oral progress reports). 10% See canvas rubric. Due November 6. 15-18 pages with notes.

V. Final Draft after Serious Revision, 50%. Due December 7 at 6:30 PM in My Office 2141 MHRA AND Online in Canvas

I will make as explicit as I can in initial feedback just how much revision is necessary. Please be aware that a good grade on the "second" draft does not mean that you have done all the work. Individual conferences of one half hour minimum will help clarify expectations for revision, expansion, focus and editing. Professor and student will agree on a rough checklist of intended revisions.

Some Rules and Resources:

The Google Drive Folder (Central Repository for everything I've been able to digitize for the class).

Links are in the Canvas Assignments pages for each day (titles parallel this syllabus) and I will take the opportunity to add worthy material by subject. Browse around! I put extra materials there. Here you will find a mix of all three sources: historiographical essays; articles and chapters of cutting edge scholarship; and primary sources (autobiographical writings, journalism, government reports, speeches).

Zotero! This is a powerful records and bibliographic management software, an add-in to Firefox (or stand alone) that allows for cloud based collaboration of research "Groups." Much of my primary research on several of these topics, especially my newspaper databases and my growing bibliography of books and articles, can be transferred to a Group, once you settle on a topic. This is OPTIONAL but potentially very powerful for you.

Skills Guides Digitized for You (Google Drive or library ebooks):

The following sources have proven quite valuable. Check the Google Drive folder for those and more. **A few excerpts will be assigned to individuals or the class as I get a clear picture of your proficiencies.**

Marius, Richard, and Melvin E. Page. *A Short Guide to Writing About History*. 8th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2012, or 7th ed. New York: Longman, 2010. This is great for examples but quirky!

Storey, William Kelleher. *Writing History: A Guide for Students*. 4 edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Elder, Dr Linda, et.al. *Student Guide to Historical Thinking*. Tomales, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2011. An inspiring and clear pamphlet.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Seventh Edition edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. What most professors assign. Great on things like citation and plagiarism, not so much on information search strategies.

Booth, Wayne C, Gregory G Colomb, and Joseph M Williams. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Ebook.

A note on Strategic Reading: Practice strategic reading, i.e. *preview* and *highlight* main ideas and turning points evident in paragraph transitions and sub-headings. Find that paragraph early on that encapsulates the structure of the whole. Understand the questions they are asking and paraphrase them for yourself. **Especially preview the conclusion of any writing, which is meant often to restate the puzzles and contradictions and offer an at least partial resolution.** If the reading is long and time is short, *skim* and *scan* for details that answer a question.

Time Commitment: Generally the University expects two hours for every one hour of class time. So that means officially I can ask you to spend six hours outside of class per week preparing and producing. **Block that time out in your calendar.** Be clear on the questions we are asking and the results that might satisfy you and others, and you will do well.

Email Etiquette and Efficiency – Required Subject Line "HIS 511A Question"

Please address questions to me via email regarding assignments, appointments, mishaps. **Subject line:** "HIS 511A question." I have a filter and deal with them all at once. If you don't hear back from me in 24 hours (weekends excepted), please try me again! Use your UNCG account to make sure you don't end up in Spam.

Attendance and Participation:

This class has a strong collaborative dimension, though we do not meet every week. Attendance is mandatory (any unexcused absences will hurt your grade, and any absences will deprive you of participation credit – excuses are limited to medical or family emergency, not competing work obligations, travel plans, or extra-curricular conflicts).

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious offense of the academic code and is treated as such by faculty. 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. Familiarize yourself with the responsibilities of the instructor and the options I have: <http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integritypolicy/> I will report violations of the honor code to the Dean of Students through one of the two paths explained on the website, both of which involve conferences with me, agreed penalties or mediation of the Academic Integrity Board.

Watch: Plagiarism 2.0: Information Ethics in the Digital Age [Plagiarism 2.0 Video](#)

(Beware specifically "Patch Writing" a form of plagiarism that plagues undergraduates, starting at 4:30 in the video).

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). We will assign points on a 1000 point scale to comprise the several components of assessment that follow.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND DUE DATES

[Note: After Fall Break, the schedule be tailored by what I conclude that you need to work on in terms of specific research and writing skills]

8/15: Introductions and Introduction to Sources, Questions, and Research Methods

Members will introduce each other after 5 minute interviews. Review of syllabus and requirements. Introduction to suggested research questions. Proficiency profiles (self-assessments at the outset). Demonstrations of the most productive on line search engines (active student contributions welcome): Red box, America History and Life, JSTOR, EBSCO, HathiTrust.org, ProQuest Historical Newspapers (UNCG and UVA), ProQuest History Vault (digitized microfilm); Archives Unbound.

8/22: Gilded Age, Imperialism, Progressivism, the Great War

Gilmore and Sugrue, *These United States*, 1-130.

Sign up on Canvas for your biographical report and your primary source report.

**8/29: Triumphant Nativism, Prosperity, Depression, New Deal, Isolationism, Pearl Harbor
Interwar Crisis of Capitalism and Origins of the Welfare State**

Gilmore and Sugrue, *These United States*, 130-244.

9/5: World War II, Internment, Power, Freedom, and the Leviathan State

Gilmore and Sugrue, *These United States*, 245-370

9/12: Liberalism, Liberation, and Reaction: Civil Rights, The 60s, Vietnam, Conservative Backlash

Gilmore and Sugrue, *These United States*, 371-503.

9/19: Economic Shocks, Military Defeat, Political Polarization, the Rise of the Right

Gilmore and Sugrue, *These United States*, 503-625.

9/26: No class—Conferences with the Professor Will Be Scheduled Through Google Calendar

10/2: Proposal is Due by 3 PM, in CANVAS and paper, 24 hours before your pitch to the class, to give professor and peer reviewer time to read.

10/3: Oral Presentations of Project Proposals

These will take the form of a "Research Grant Sales Pitch" in which students make the case to the class for funding one project (\$50,000) and a "runner up" (\$20,000). **Criteria:** Focused Questions on a Problem of Interpretation, Researchability, Significance to History and Possible Contemporary Relevance.

Each will follow the format outlined by Booth, et. al. *The Craft of Research*

1. I am working on the topic of . . . (posed as questions or mysteries)
2. Because I want to find out . . . (what you don't know or what we should learn in addition to what we know)
3. In order to help my reader understand better . . . (why you want your reader to know and care about it— the rationale and the bigger implications and the answers to the "so what" question).

10/10: No Class – Fall Break

10/17: No class—Research and Write—Student-Professor Conferences by Appointment

10/24: Status Updates and Affinity Groups

You may not have finished your research, but you are writing up your most solid and interesting findings. You should be able at this point to share a fairly firm conclusion about a core piece of your emerging argument. 1) Analytical statement: was your working hypothesis confirmed by evidence you are examining, complicated by it, or have the basic terms of one of your claims changed in light of evidence and counterargument? 2) Discuss the evidence, what it clearly shows, and how you found it. 3) Field questions from your peers.

Keeping the end in view: Good History Essays and Good Writing:

Read: Marius and Page, *Short Guide to Writing about History 6e*, Basic Principles for History Essays," pp. 9-23, and "Modes of Historical Writing," 55-78, and "Simple and Direct Writing," 151-63.

10/31: Working with and Citing Sources

Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, ch. 7 "Avoiding Plagiarism."

Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, ch. 7, "Quoting and Documenting Sources," 106-147 (more complete).

Extraordinarily valuable section on when, why, and how much to quote! Think also about how professors have evaluated your use of quotes in the past according to the guidelines. Write several sentences about how you have used quotes well and poorly in the past.

There may be a short quiz on the main style of citation for several different kinds of sources.

NB: In writing, the ratio of paraphrase and summary to direct quotation varies, but don't quote more than 25% to 30% directly. Pick only the quotes that have unique language that vividly convey (as paraphrase cannot) the consciousness of the historical subject.

11/6: Drafts Due to me and peer reviewer. Peer reviews posted by class time on Tuesday. 15-18 pages with notes. 10%

11/7: Affinity Groups Meet for Discussion of Peer Reviews, and then Reports on Progress

If needed, further conferences with professor, to define plans of revision.

Approximate Date: 11/10: Plans of Revision in 1 page bullet point form after feedback from peers and conference with professor

11/14: No Class—Revision of Drafts

11/21: Oral Presentations of Findings (These are not exhaustive but highlight your best analysis and evidence, and allow for Question and Answer on the Revision Process). DO NOT BOOK THANKSGIVING TRAVEL PLANS THAT CONFLICT WITH THIS CLASS.

11/28: Oral Presentations of Findings

12/7: Final Paper Due at 6:30 PM in My Office 2141 MHRA AND Online in Canvas (Where you should look for feedback through the evaluation rubric for the final paper).

12/8: Peer reviews of final papers due.