I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical.

Thomas Jefferson, 1787

History is an argument without end.

Peter Geyl, 1950s

Dr. Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie
Office: 224C McIver tel.: 334-5205 email: jkerr Ritchie@juno.com
Off. hrs.: M,W, 12:00-2:00, Th, 2:00-4:00

Description:
This class is about little rebellions by ordinary Americans over the last three centuries. It offers an alternative social history of politics rather than the traditional U.S. history survey of political parties, great personalities, and national progress. The course aims include: provoking intellectual curiosity about the past; learning how to read primary documents and evaluate secondary sources; and to encourage critical thinking skills.

Requirements:
All students are required to attend lectures. More than two unexcused absences will result in grade deduction. Each student is required to write FIVE papers. These must include at least TWO document tests and TWO essay tests. They may be chosen from any of the weekly questions listed below. Limit each paper to 3 typewritten double-spaced pages. Each counts for 20 percentage points. They are due on the dates specified. Late papers will not be accepted.

Readings
There are four books which are required reading for this course.
Howard Zinn, A People’s History of the United States, 1492-Present (1980; Perennial, 2003)
Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America (Harvard, 1998)
Paul A. Gilje, Rioting in America (Indiana, 1996)
William E. Gienapp, ed., The Civil War and Reconstruction (Norton, 2001)
The reading should be done weekly before lecture. Bring the text and documents to class. The documents are on Jackson Library e-reserve.

Lectures

Week 1: Introduction
READ: Zinn, 1-22, 683-688; Gilje, 1-11; DOCS: Columbus,1494; Las Casas, 1542
Jan. 10: History as Perspective
Jan. 12: Columbus’ “Truth”
Tests
1/ Explain the traditional viewpoint and its critique?
2/ Examine ONE document and answer the questions below it.
Week 2: Slavery’s Beginnings in North America
READ: Zinn, 23-38; Berlin, 15-46, 109-176; DOC: Virginia laws; Stono, 1739
Jan. 19 Societies with slaves to slave societies
Tests 1/ Explain the shift?
2/ What do the Virginia laws tell us about race and slavery in the C17th?

Week 3: Class in the Colonies
READ: Zinn, 39-58; Gilje, 12-34; DOCS: Mittelberger, 1750; Sprigs, 1756
Jan. 24 Poor Laborers
Jan. 26 The Propertied Rich
Test 1/ Why did people riot in colonial America?
2/ What do the two documents reveal about indentured servitude?

Jan. 26 FIRST PAPER DUE

Week 4: Making Americans
READ: Zinn, 59-75; Berlin, 177-194; DOCS: Slave petition, 1774; Paine, Adams, 1776
Jan. 31 Class War & the Mob
Feb. 2 Against the British
Test 1/ Describe the myth of the American Revolution and its critique?
2/ Explain the rudiments of republican ideology?

Week 5: Wars of Independence
READ: Zinn, 77-89; Berlin, index, “Am. Rev.,” 490
Feb. 7 Politics of War
Feb. 9 Age of Revolutions
Test 1/ The Year is 1778. The place is the southern colonies. You are either a/ a patriot or b/ a loyalist or c/ a slave. Why are you on the side you are on? Describe wartime life? What do you hope to achieve?

Week 6: The Genius of the U.S. Constitution
READ: Zinn, 90-102; Gilje, 51-59; DOCS: US Constitution, 1787; Shay, 1786
Feb. 14 Little Rebellions
Feb. 16 Government of Property?
Tests 1/ The U.S. Constitution: work of genius or protection of property?
2/ In what ways did post-revolutionary rebellions exemplify the American mob tradition?

Feb. 16 SECOND PAPER DUE

Week 7: Invisible Women
READ: Zinn, 103-124; DOCS: Lowell mill worker, 1836; New York Herald, 1845; Women’s Rights, 1848*; Sojourner Truth, 1851
Feb. 21 Women workers
The politics of women
1/ Examine ONE document and answer the questions below it.
2/ In what ways did American women act politically during the 1830s-1840s?

Week 8: The other Civil War
READ: Zinn, 211-251; Gilje, 60-84; DOCS: Lakier, 1857; Lowell, 1847 in Gienapp
Feb. 28 Capital
Mar. 2 Labor
Tests 1/ What were the new political riots?
2/ How have historians traditionally treated the Jacksonian era? What’s the critique?

SPRING BREAK!!!

Week 9: American Slavery
READ: Zinn, 172-210; Berlin, 217-357; DOCS: Garrison, 1831; Anti-Slavery Convention, 1833; De Bow, 1861; Harper, 1838, in Gienapp
Mar. 14 Political Economy
Mar. 16 The Great Debate
Tests 1/ Outline the key features of the political economy of American slavery?
2/ Summarize the main points of the abolitionist and proslavery arguments. Which do you find most persuasive and why?

MAR. 16 THIRD PAPER DUE

Week 10: American Empire
READ: Zinn, 125-170; DOCS: Cherokee Treaty, 1817; Monroe, 1823; Black Hawk, 1833; O’Sullivan, 1845
Mar. 21 Manifest Destiny
Mar. 23 Mr. Polk’s War
Tests 1/ Explain the case for Indian removal? What was its critique?
2/ What were the arguments against war with Mexico?

Week 11: Civil War Origins
READ: Gienapp, 27-68
Mar. 28 Free or Slave Territories?
Mar. 30 House Divided
Tests 1/ What role did territorial disputes play in the coming of the Civil War?
2/ How and why did North Carolina secede from the Union?

Week 12: War Front
READ: Gienapp, 235-248, 219-234
Apr. 4 The experience of war
Apr. 6 Who freed the slaves?
Test 1/ The year is 1863. You are either: a/ a confederate soldier or b/ a Union soldier or c/ a slave or d/ a woman. Why are you fighting? What are military conditions like? What do you hope to accomplish from this war?

APR. 6
FOURTH PAPER DUE

Week 13:
Home Front
READ: Gilje, 84-94; Gienapp, 179-218
Apr. 11 Document discussion
Apr. 13 The Civil War in Global Context

Week 14:
Reconstruction I
READ: Gienapp, 317-376
Apr. 18 Overview
Apr. 20 Political
Tests 1/ What was radical about republican reconstruction?
2/ Examine 2 documents and discuss their historical significance?

Week 15:
Reconstruction II
READ: Gienapp, 377-392; Gilje, 87-100
Apr. 25 Economic
Apr. 27 Social
Tests 1/ Discuss shifting property rights in man to property rights in labor?
2/ Examine 2 documents and discuss their historical significance?

May 2 Rethinking U.S. history

MAY 2 FIFTH PAPER DUE