

War, Society, and Reform: America, 1896-1945 (SI/RI)

History 339-01
MW, 2:00-3:15
Classroom MHRA 1213
Spring 2009

Dr. Mark Elliott
Office: MHRA 2125
Office Phone: 256-8562
Office Hours: W F
10:15-11:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines major events, decisions, and trends in the political, social, and cultural history of United States from 1896 to 1945. This period witnessed the birth of modern America in several distinct ways: 1) the United States was transformed from a minor player within the international community to a global superpower with a design to shape the world political economy in its image; 2) the modern bureaucratic state emerged from two periods of reform, and two world wars, which forged a new relationship between the state, the economy, and individual citizens; 3) a commercialized mass culture came to define “American-ness” and transform social values 4) the relation of “whiteness” to citizenship was inscribed into law, but contested by multicultural visions of America that would achieve full articulation for the first time. The course focuses upon the four themes describe above, and examines their interrelation in the birth of Modern America.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Students will establish a strong foundation of knowledge in the historical period 1896-1945, and learn to conceptualize the period around the themes of nationalism, state power, and democratic citizenship.
- Students will improve their ability to analyze and interpret historical documents, and to place ideas in their historical contexts.
- Students will improve their ability to make historical arguments, and to assess those made by others.
- Students will improve their ability to express themselves in front of others, and to lead discussions.
- Students will develop their skills in making both formal and informal presentations, both individually and as part of a group.

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance:

A student who is not present when his/her name is called at the beginning of class, will be marked “absent.” More than three absences will lower your final grade by one-third of a grade for each subsequent absence (that is, your fourth absence will cause a “B” to become an “B-,” your fifth will make it a “C+,” your six will make it a “C,” etc.). Missing a total of 9 or more classes (one-

third of the semester) will result in an automatic “F” for the course. No exceptions. Please use your 3 absences wisely. Students are responsible to complete on time all work assigned or due on days in which they are absent. Your participation grade will be based on the overall *quality* of your contributions to the class—not the quantity of contributions you make.

Participation:

You are expected to complete each week’s reading before class so that you can participate constructively in a class discussion and be informed for the lectures. You must be attentive and awake during class. Sleeping in class will cause you will be marked “absent”—so do not bother coming to class if you cannot remain conscious! Leaving class early without permission will also cause you to be marked absent. Cell phones should be turned off and stored away. No talking, texting, e-mailing or internet surfing during class.

Quizzes:

Every week, there will be in-class quizzes on the readings to encourage you to keep up with the reading. Quizzes will take place at *the beginning of class*. If you miss a quiz due to lateness or absence, you must do a short paper as a replacement or else receive a zero for the quiz. No more than two quizzes can be made up.

Presentations:

Each student will be assigned to a team of four or five students. Each team will be asked to do two in-class presentations based on the assigned readings. When it is their turn, each team will prepare a handout that identifies the main issues addressed in the readings in a one-page outline, and raises 4-6 questions for class discussion. During presentation times, the class will be broken up into their teams for roundtable discussions. Each member of the presenting team will be given the task of making a 7-10 minute presentation to one roundtable, and then leading a ten minute discussion on the readings. Each team will conduct presentations twice over the course of the semester.

Finally, a team of two students will make a formal presentation on their own research in the second half of the semester. A list of approved topics with detailed instructions will be distributed in class. After identifying a topic (no later than **February 9**), students will be expected to collect primary and secondary sources that will become the basis of their final research paper. A bibliography will be due on **March 23**. Your presentation will be made on a date in April assigned by Professor Elliott.

SEE PRESENTATION GUIDELINES for more details.

Final Grade:

Your final grade will be based on the following formula:

- 15% Class participation.
- 15% Quiz grade average.
- 15% Midterm exam.

- 15% Final exam.
- 20% Oral presentations on readings.
- 20% Research Presentation.

Readings:

Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice

Neil Maher, *Nature's New Deal*

Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World*

Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness*

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House

Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible*

Jeffery Moran, *The Scopes Trial: A History with Documents

William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture.*

***May be available in the UNCG Bookstore. If not, please purchase these books from amazon.com or another internet source.**

Week 1. INTRODUCTION

Jan. 21. America in 1896

Week 2.

Jan. 26 From Laissez-faire to Progressivism

Jan. 28 Women, Work, Social Welfare

Reading: Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice*, 1-138.

Sample presentation: Dr. Elliott

Week 3.

Feb. 2 Empire-Building: Wars with Spain and the Philippines

Feb. 4 Nationalism and Empire

Reading: Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 3-97, 139-265 and Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 1-80.

Student presentations: Team #1

Week 4.

Feb. 9 Immigration and Urban Life

Feb. 11 The Settlement House movement

Reading: Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 1-173, 196-206, 229-252.

Student presentations: Team #2

Week 5.

Feb. 16 The Age of Jim Crow

Feb. 18 The Culture of Segregation

Reading: Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness*

Student presentations: Team #3

Week 6.

Feb. 23 The New Freedom vs. The New Nationalism

Feb. 25 World War I and American Life

Reading: Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice*, 139-294.

Student presentations: Team #4

Week 7.

March 2 The Treaty of Versailles and the New Internationalism

March 4 Midterm Exam

SPRING BREAK MARCH 7-15

Week 8.

March 16 The Culture of Consumption in the 1920s

March 18 Revolt against Victorianism

Reading: William Leach, *Land of Desire*, xii-12, 225-390.

Student presentations: Team #5

Week 9.

March 23 Politics and Culture in the 1920s

Research Bibliography Due

March 25 Darwin and the Culture Wars

Reading: Jeffery Moran, *The Scopes Trial*, 1-72, 87-93, 139-214.

Student presentations: Team #1

Week 10.

March 30 **Stock Market Crash, and the Great Depression**

April 1 **The New Deal**

Reading: Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice*, 295-417.

Student presentations: Team #2

Week 11.

April 6 **The New Deal** (One Formal Presentation)

April 8 **Environmentalism and the New Deal** (One Formal Presentation)

Reading: Neil Maher, *Nature's New Deal*

Student presentations: Team #3

Week 12.

April 13 **World War II and American Society** (One Formal Presentation)

April 15 **Nationalism during the New Deal and WW II** (One Formal Presentation)

Reading: Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 128-237

Student presentations: Team #4

Week 13.

April 20 **The United Nations and the New World Order** (One Formal Presentation)

April 22 **American Internationalism** (One Formal Presentation)

Reading: Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World*, 1-86, 114-140, 250-304.

Student presentations: Team #5

Week 14.

April 27 (Two Formal Presentations)

April 29 (Two Formal Presentations)

Week 15.

May 4 (Three Formal Presentations)

Week 16.

May 13

Final Exam, 12:00-3:00 pm.

PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Professionals in all fields are called upon to give formal and informal presentations in a wide variety of settings. The ability to communicate information within a set time limit in a manner that is both engaging and appropriate for the occasion is an invaluable skill. The presentations you will be making in this class will provide an opportunity to work on this skill. In order to make your presentation successful, please abide by the following guidelines.

PRESENTATION STYLE: When it comes to formal presentations, style counts! Do not read word-for-word from a sheet of paper, in an inaudible voice, with your eyes averted from your audience. Poor presentation styles not only distract audiences from absorbing the information presented, they create a bad impression of the competence of the presenter.

As a rule, presenters should make eye contact with their audience regularly, making an effort to look around the room so that each member of the audience feels that the presenter is aware of their presence. Words should not be spoken too quickly, but at a reasonable pace and in a voice loud enough for all to hear. Presenters should be thoroughly familiar with their material, projecting to the audience a mastery of their own presentation. The presentation should be well-timed and should not either ramble on beyond the time allotted, or cut off mysteriously short of the anticipated length.

Beyond the basics, there is no single “correct” style of presentation. Some effective presentations may be mellow and thoughtful, others may be dynamic and energizing. Some may use humor effectively, while others may rely upon a passionate or urgent appeal. Choose a style that is correct for your subject matter and that fits your personality. To prepare, it may help to put yourself in the place of your audience. Think of presentations you’ve witnessed of the same type that you’ve been asked to deliver. Borrow from styles that you thought were effective and that feel right for you. Always try to focus on your audience as you deliver your information, being attentive to their response to what you are saying, and look for opportunities to connect with them.

GROUP PRESENTATION CONTENT: Your team presentations in this class will be based on the weekly readings. Each presentation should accomplish the following tasks:

- 1). Meet as a group outside of class to prepare your presentation. Practice presenting the material to each other. Your presentation should be prepared in bullet points, or as an outline, on note cards. You may not read from a piece of paper during your presentation.

2). Your presentation should provide a **concise** summary of the thesis, argument and/or methodology of the book. Remember, when you are presenting on the common reading for the week, your classmates have also read the book. It is never worthwhile to take the class on a chapter-by-chapter tour of the contents of the book. Do not quote from the book. You should simply try to clarify the overall arguments in your own words, and make an attempt to assess its contribution to our understanding of the past. You also may want to discuss some particularly salient points or examples from the book to illustrate how well the author supported his or her arguments.

3). Your presentation should provide your own critique of the reading. What alternative perspective can you offer? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the argument? What did the author leave out that might have challenged or revised her argument? Were you satisfied with it or not? Why?

4). Your presentation should last between seven and ten minutes. No more, no less. You will then lead a 10 minute discussion. The presentation team should craft 4-6 questions for class discussion. These questions should be designed to spark debate or discussion. Your questions are the basis for the discussion—but you must go beyond the questions and foster a genuine exchange of ideas that builds on the response you get to the prepared questions. Allow a discussion to unfold in a natural and spontaneous way.

4). Each student will evaluate their presenter's performance in a feedback form.

FORMAL PRESENTATION CONTENT: Your formal presentation in this class will be based on independent research. Each presentation should accomplish the following tasks:

1). Meet with your partner outside of class to prepare your presentation. Practice presenting the material to each other. Your presentation should be prepared in bullet points, or as an outline, on note cards. You may not read from a piece of paper during your presentation.

2). Each formal presentation will be made by a team of two students. Topics will be distributed in class. Each presenter will make a 7-10 minute presentation. Ten minutes will be allowed for questions and answers following the presentation.

3). Your team will be expected to collect primary sources and secondary sources that relate to your topic. You must provide your own interpretation of the event, as well as summarize those made by leading scholars.

4). You will be expected to prepare a Power-point slide show as a visual aid for your presentation.

5). Each student in the class will evaluate your presentation in a feedback form. One grade will be given by the professor for the presentation as a whole (including question/answer).

