

# War, Society, and Reform: America, 1896-1945

## History 339-01

MW 3:30-4:45

Classroom: MHRA 2207

Dr. Mark Elliott

Office: MHRA 2125

Office Hours: MW

10:30-11:30

## 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) racial 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- Students will improve their ability to analyze and interpret historical documents, and to place ideas in their historical contexts.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.

## COURSE POLICIES:

### Attendance:

A student who is not present to sign the attendance sheet when it circulates at beginning of class will be marked “absent.” No students will be allowed to sign the sheet at the end of class. 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 a “B-,” your fifth will make it a “C+,” your sixth will make it a “C,” etc.). Missing a total of 14 or more classes for any reason (one-third of the semester) will result in an automatic “F” for the course. No exceptions. We do not accept doctor’s notes or other excuses. Please use your three un-penalized absences wisely by

saving them for emergencies or severe illness. Students are responsible to complete on time all work assigned or due on days in which they are absent.

### **Participation:**

You must take notes during class lectures and 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! Cell phones should be muted or turned off and stored away. No talking, texting, twittering, e-mailing or internet surfing during class.

Your participation grade will be based on the overall *quality* of your contributions—not the quantity of contributions you make. Please make your contributions informed, intelligent, and constructive.

### **Quizzes:**

There will be regular in-class quizzes on the readings to encourage you to keep up with the readings and films. 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 two or three students. Each team will be asked to do one 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 6 to 8 questions for class discussion. During presentation times, the class will be divided into sections for roundtable discussions. Each member of the presenting team will be given the task of making a presentation and leading a discussion on the readings for 20 minutes.

### **Written Work:**

There will be one term paper of 1500-1800 words in length (app. 5 pages). You may write your term paper on one of two assigned topics. If you choose **Topic #1** your paper is due on **February 25**; if you choose **Topic #2** your paper is due on **April 22**. Late papers will be marked down one grade for each day they are late. If you miss the deadline for **Topic #1** by one week, you must choose **Topic #2**. An assignment sheet with the term paper topic questions will be distributed in class two weeks before the due date. In order to pass this course you must hand in all written work and complete all assignments. You will be required to take your paper to the Writing Center for help revising it before the due date.

### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

All work submitted in your name must be your own original work for this class with proper citation or credit given to all sources. All papers will be turned in using the “Safe Assignment” function on Blackboard which automatically scans your paper for plagiarism. Each student

should be familiar with the Academic Integrity Policy, and the penalties for plagiarism. Refer to this address on the UNCG website for more details:

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

### **Final Grade:**

Your final grade will be based on the following formula:

- 20% Class participation including oral presentation on readings
- 20% Quiz grade average.
- 20% Term Paper
- 20% Midterm exam.
- 20% Final exam.

### **Readings:**

Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: Rise of Modern America 1877-1920*.  
Kennedy, *American People in the Great Depression*.  
Argersinger, *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History With Documents*  
Moran, *The Scopes Trial: A History With Documents*  
Adams, Michael C.C. *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*

### **Week 1. INTRODUCTION**

**Jan. 10. America in 1896**

**Jan. 12 From Laissez-faire to Progressivism**

**Reading:** Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, Chapter 1.

### **Week 2.**

**Jan. 17 NO CLASS (MLK Day)**

**Jan. 19 The Populist Challenge of the 1890s**

**Reading:** Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, Chapter 2, 4-5.

Films: "The Populists" and "Freedom: A History of U.S. Episodes 9&10."

### **Week 3.**

**Jan. 24 Empire-Building: Wars with Spain and the Philippines**

**Jan. 26 Nationalism and Empire**

**Reading:** Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 1-80.

Film: "Crucible of Empire: The Spanish American War."

Student presentations: Team #1

**Week 4.**

**Jan. 31            The Age of Jim Crow Segregation**

**Feb. 2             White Violence and Black Protest**

**Reading:**        Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, Chapter 3; Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law in America” (1900); and W.E.B. Du Bois, “On Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others.” (1903)

Film: “The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow. Part. 2”

Student presentations: Team #2

**Week 5.**

**Feb. 7             The Age of Reform**

**Feb. 9             Women and Progressivism**

**Reading:**        Selections from Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*. William James, “The Moral Equivalent of War.”

Film: “One Woman, One Vote.”

Student presentations: Team #3

**Week 6.**

**Feb. 14            The New Freedom vs. The New Nationalism**

**Feb. 16            Progressivism in the Cities**

**Reading:**        Argersinger, *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History With Documents*, all.

Film: “New York: A Documentary History, Episode 4. 1898-1914.”

Student presentations: Team #4

**Week 7.**

**Feb. 21            The Apex of Progressivism**

**Feb. 23            World War I and American Life**

**Reading:**        Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, Chapters 6, 7, and Conclusion.

Film: “Woodrow Wilson, Part 2.”

Student presentations: Team #5

**\*First Paper Due Date, Friday, February 25 at 5 pm**

**Week 8.**

**Feb. 28            The Treaty of Versailles and the New Internationalism**

**March 2            Midterm Exam**

**SPRING BREAK MARCH 7-11**

**Week 9.**

**March 14           Politics and Culture in the 1920s**

**March 16           Darwin and the Culture Wars**

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

Film: "Inherit the Wind"

Student presentations: Team #6

**Week 10.**

**March 21           Stock Market Crash, and the Great Depression**

**March 23           Hoover's Policies**

**Reading:**        Kennedy, *The American People*, Chapters 1-3.

Film: "New York: A Documentary Film, Episode 5."

Student presentations: Team #7

**Week 11.**

**March 28           The New Deal**

**March 30           Roosevelt and the Great Depression**

**Reading:**        Kennedy, *The American People*, Chapters 4-9.

Film: "New York: A Documentary Film, Episode 6."Week !!

Student presentations: Team #8

**Week 12.**

**April 4            The End of the New Deal and the Coming of WW II**

**April 6**            **Surviving the Great Depression**  
**Reading:**        Kennedy, *The American People*, Chapters 10-13.  
**Film:**            “The Grapes of Wrath”  
Student presentations: Team #9

**Week 13.**

**April 11**           **The Second World War**  
**April 13**           **Myth and Memory**  
**Reading:**        Adams, Michael C.C. *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*  
  
Film: “Flags of Our Fathers.”  
Student presentations: Team #10

**Week 14.**

**April 18**           **Atomic Bombs and the New World Order**  
**April 20**           **Victory and Its Consequences**  
Borgwardt, “A New Deal for the World”  
Film: “The War: Episode 7.”  
Student presentations: Team #11

**\*Second Paper Due Date, Friday, April 22 at 5 pm**

**Week 15.**

**April 25**           **Last Class**

**Week 16.**

**May 4**             **Final Exam, 3:30-6:30 pm.**