

History 4473-01W

Recent America: The United States Since 1945

Fall 2017

Instructor: Dr. Dan Williams

Office Hours: TLC 3207

T, Th, 9:30-10:30am

Wed., 10am-12pm, 2-5pm

(Additional office hours available by appointment)

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Class Location:

Pafford 208

T / Th, 2:00-3:15pm

Description:

This course will offer you an opportunity to analyze important societal trends in the United States from 1945 to the early twenty-first century, and will equip you to assess the central influences that have shaped recent American history. In this course, we will discuss race relations, gender roles, cultural and intellectual trends, technological developments, the economy, politics, religion, literature, the media, family life, youth culture, education, immigration, demographic changes, attitudes toward crime and poverty, changes in popular understandings of morality, and many other aspects of postwar American life.

Classes will consist mainly of interactive lectures and class discussions. I encourage all students to participate by asking questions during lectures and making comments in discussion sessions. There will also be opportunities for short student presentations on designated days throughout the semester.

This is a Discipline Specific Writing (DSW) course, so writing assignments, including a research paper, will be a central component of this class.

Learning Outcomes:

The exams and writing assignments in this course will require students to demonstrate:

- 1) Content knowledge of US history since 1945 (assessed through exams).
- 2) The ability to analyze primary and secondary sources for their historical context and interpretations (assessed through research paper assignment and CourseDen book summary posts).
- 3) The ability to research according to historical methods (assessed through research paper assignment).
- 4) Writing skills that reflect persuasive historical arguments based on evidence and proper citation (assessed through research paper assignment).

Assessment:

Students' final grades will be determined as follows:

Midterm exam	20%
Research paper	30%
Class participation / CourseDen posts	15%
Class presentations	15%
Final exam	20%

There will be no opportunity for extra-credit assignments in this course.

Grading Methodology: This university does not use a plus / minus grading system, but during the course of the semester, I will use plus / minus grades, as well as split-letter grades (e.g., an A- / B+), in order to evaluate students' written work with precision. In computing final course grades, I convert all grades into numeric scores according to the following system:

A = 95

A/A- = 94

A- = 92

A-/B+ = 90

B+ = 88

B+/B = 87

B = 85

B/B- = 84

B- = 82

B-/C+ = 80

(A similar pattern is used for grades in the C-range and D-range).

In computing final course grades, a grade average of 89.5 or higher converts to a course grade of A, a grade average between 79.5 and 89.49 converts to a course grade of B, and a grade average between 69.5 and 79.49 converts to a course grade of C. A grade average of 59.5, which converts to a D, is the lowest possible passing grade in the course.

A-range grades, including the grade of A-/B+, are reserved for work that is of exceptional quality. In order to receive an A-range grade on an essay assignment, a student's essay must show evidence of original thinking and the ability to synthesize information from a wide variety of sources, as well as an accurate understanding of the material and good writing technique. Papers that receive a grade of 90 or above must be cogent and persuasive in their argumentation, and they must be well written and tightly organized around a strong thesis. In short, a paper that receives an A-range grade not only meets the basic requirements for the assignment, but also demonstrates that a student has mastered the interpretative, analytical, and writing skills expected for a course at this level.

B-range grades are given to essays that demonstrate a student's accurate understanding of the material, adequate use of the assigned documents, and competence in writing. They rarely contain the sophisticated analysis required for an A-range essay, but they meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

C-range grades are given to essays that contain factual inaccuracies, errors in interpretation, inadequate use of the assigned documents, or poor writing technique, even though they usually meet most of the basic requirements for the assignment.

D-range and failing grades are assigned to work that fails to meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

Exams: There will be an in-class midterm exam and a take-home final exam. The midterm exam will consist of essay questions and I.D. terms, and will emphasize broad themes presented in the lectures, discussions, and readings. One week before the exam, you will receive a study guide that will give you more information about the material covered on the test. I will give a make-up exam only in cases of a pre-arranged, excused absence for which documentation must be provided, or in cases of a legitimate health or family emergency that must be documented with a doctor's note, dean's note, or similar measure of proof. In all other cases, a make-up exam will not be an option.

The take-home final exam will consist of essay questions. I will give you the exam questions on November 30, and you will have until 11:59pm on December 5 to write 8-10 pages in response to the essay questions.

Research paper: The most important assignment of this course is an 8-12 page research paper. Consult the online guidelines for research papers for more information about this assignment.

For all writing assignments, please consult the writing guidelines that the history department has posted on the College of Arts & Humanities' website for DSW courses (http://www.westga.edu/dsw/index_10083.php), as these guidelines will be used as a standard to evaluate work produced in this course.

Plagiarism policy: Plagiarism, which is the presentation of someone else's words or ideas as your own, is a serious offense that will not be tolerated. It should go without saying that all papers that you write in this course must be your own work. Any students who are caught copying words or ideas from another student's work, a website, a textbook, or any other source, and presenting these words or ideas as their own work without proper attribution, will be charged with plagiarism. Students who have engaged in academic dishonesty will automatically fail this course and will be reported to the university administration for possible further disciplinary action. Please look at the course website to find guidelines on proper footnoting procedures, tips for avoiding inadvertent plagiarism, and a detailed explanation of what constitutes plagiarism. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to properly cite sources, please ask, because I will be happy to provide explanations. Ignorance is not an excuse for plagiarism; it is your responsibility to read the materials on plagiarism that are posted on the course website and to take all necessary steps to avoid plagiarizing someone else's work.

The UWG history department's policy on plagiarism can be found here: http://www.westga.edu/~histgrad/academic_honesty.html. As this document states, "Any use of the ideas, information, or words of anyone else, including paraphrasing of the words and ideas,

without crediting them is plagiarism and is a crime. A direct quote of the words (even only a few words) of someone else must be in quotation marks as well as have a note indicating its source.”

More information about the university’s honor code and the consequences for violating it can be found here:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf.

All of your written work for this class must be original; you are not allowed to submit essays that you have written for other courses or that you have completed prior to this semester.

Class participation: Your class participation grade will be based primarily on your CourseDen book summary posts and your participation in class discussions.

As part of your class participation, you should write short summaries of each of the four assigned books and post those summaries on CourseDen. Each book summary should consist of at least two paragraphs that briefly summarize the book, highlight an idea that you found particularly interesting or provocative, present an observation that will lead to further discussion, and suggest at least one intriguing question for the class to discuss. I will not assign these CourseDen posts a letter grade, nor will I evaluate them on the basis of grammar or structure, but I will instead treat them as I would comments that you make in class, and I will consider their content when I formulate class participation grades at the end of the semester.

Your class participation grade will also be based on your level of engagement in our class discussions. Most classes will consist of interactive lectures, which will give you a chance to ask questions and discuss the ideas presented in the readings.

Students can earn an A for class participation if they submit thoughtful summaries on all assigned books and miss no more than four classes during the course of the semester. (These absences include excused absences unless special arrangements are made). Students who submit at least three CourseDen book summary posts and miss no more than eight classes can earn a B for class participation. Students who submit two CourseDen summaries can earn up to an 80 if they attend class regularly or a C-range grade if their attendance record is less than stellar. Students who submit only one CourseDen post can earn up to a 70 for class participation, depending on their attendance record.

Class presentations: You are required to give three informal primary source presentations, each lasting approximately 3-5 minutes. For each presentation, you should choose a *New York Times* article, magazine advertisement, or movie from the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s, and give a short presentation analyzing what you can learn about cultural, social, or political attitudes during that decade from that one source.

Class communication: I may send out periodic email communiqués to students in this course, so please check your UWG email account regularly. The university administration has stipulated that all email communication between faculty and students should take place on UWG email accounts, so please use your UWG email account for all electronic communications that you send me.

To protect students' privacy rights, I will not return graded papers or exams to any third party (e.g., a student's friend or relative who asks to pick up a student's work on that person's behalf) unless a student gives me permission in writing (e.g., an email) to do so. There are occasions when I must disclose a student's grade to university administrators, other history department faculty (e.g., the department chair), or athletic coaches who need to know the academic status of students on their team, but in all other cases, I will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of students' grades.

I would like to do whatever I can to help you succeed in this course. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have a question about any subject pertaining to this class. I make it a priority to respond promptly to emails from students, and I am happy to talk with students during my office hours, so please feel free to stop by my office to introduce yourself and discuss any concerns that you may have about this course. I believe that this will be an excellent semester, and I'm pleased to welcome you to this class.

Required readings:

The following books are available for purchase in the college bookstore or online book dealers, and are required:

Katie Hafner and Matthew Lyon, *Where Wizards Stay up Late: The Origins of the Internet* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998). ISBN: 978-0684832678.

Faith S. Holsaert et al., *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012). ISBN: 978-0252078880.

Matthew W. Flamm and David Steigerwald, *Debating the 1960s: Liberal, Conservative, and Radical Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007). ISBN: 978-0742522138.

Matthew Avery Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 2013). ISBN: 978-1457611100.

Class Schedule:

- 8/10 Introduction: Postwar America
- 8/15 Postwar American Liberalism
- 8/17 The Cold War: Foreign Policy
- 8/22 The Cold War: Politics, Culture, and the Economy
CourseDen discussion post on *Where Wizards Stayed up Late* due by 12pm
- 8/24 Religion and Morality in the 1950s
- 8/29 Families in an Age of Affluence
- 8/31 Youth Culture in the 1950s
Primary source presentations on the 1950s
- 9/5 The Quest for Civil Rights in the 1940s and 1950s
- 9/7 The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s
- 9/12 Poverty in Postwar America
- 9/14 Sixties Liberalism: John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson
- 9/19 The Vietnam War
- 9/21 No class (instructor speaking at University of Oklahoma)
- 9/26 The New Left, the Religious Left, and the Reaction against the Vietnam War
- 9/28 Black Power and Backlash
- 10/3 Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement
CourseDen post on *Hands on the Freedom Plow* due by 12pm
- 10/5 No class (fall break)
- 10/10 Sixties Conservatism: Goldwater, Reagan, Buckley, and YAF
- 10/12 Second-Wave Feminism
- 10/17 The Sexual Revolution, Rights Consciousness, Secularization, and Morality
- 10/19 Assessing the 1960s

Primary source presentations on the 1960s
CourseDen discussion post on *Debating the 1960s* due by 12pm

- 10/24 Feminism of the 1970s and the Debate over Abortion and the ERA
- 10/26 **Midterm Exam**
- 10/31 An Era of Limits: Environmentalism, the Energy Crisis, and Stagflation
- 11/2 The Culture Wars of the 1970s
First draft of research paper due
- 11/7 From Nixon to Carter
Primary source presentations on the 1970s
- 11/9 Reagan and the New Conservatism
CourseDen post on *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right* due
- 11/14 Neoconservatism, Neoliberalism, and the Economics of the Reagan-Clinton Era
- 11/16 Immigration and Globalization
- 11/21 & 11/23 No class (Thanksgiving break)
- 11/28 9/11, the Financial Crisis, and the Challenges of the 21st Century
- 11/30 America in the Age of Obama and Trump
- 12/2 **Final version of research paper due via CourseDen by 11:59pm**
- 12/5 **Final exam essay due via CourseDen by 11:59pm**