

U.S. History To 1865

History 2111H
320 LeConte Hall

Professor J. Steffen
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This course is designed to help students understand how American ideas, ideals and institutions developed. The course will **not** present history as a series of chronologically or even topically arranged anecdotes, but rather as a series of problems which will be used to examine many of our institutions and why they developed as they did. Perhaps on our learning journey we can draw some conclusions about the ability of humans to solve national problems. Does the historical record show that people are proactive or reactive when dealing with national problems? On a much broader level, do people make history or does history make people? Is history nothing more than a record of people rationalizing pleasure and avoiding pain? Is American history all that different from that of any other nation?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. If you miss four classes your grade will be dropped by a 1/3 (Example: B+ becomes a B). If you miss five classes your final grade will be dropped by 2/3 (Example: B+ becomes a B-). If you miss six classes your final grade will be dropped a full letter grade, (B+ becomes a C+). Strong class participation gives me a little wiggle room to adjust the above criteria.

Reading and Discussion

I expect students to do the reading listed below and to be prepared to discuss the material in class. During most weeks, I will lecture two days and set aside one class period for discussion.

Exams:

There will be three take home essay exams which includes the final exam. The three exams along with the book review essay discussed below will be weighted equally (25% each). I will give students a sheet of three questions a class period before the exam due date. You will answer two of the three questions and turn them in on the due date. By essay questions, I mean questions which are designed to be written on over a fifty minute period if it were an in class exam.

Make Up Exams

Make up exams do not come from the same sheet of questions mentioned above and you will have no prior review sheet before the exam. Therefore it would be in your interest to take the exam when it is originally scheduled.

Book Review Essay

Each student will write a three to five page (double spaced, one inch margin, 12 pt. font). **I must approve your choice of books.** A book review **IS NOT** a book report. This assignment is designed to help you gain an appreciation for reading material critically. I will pass out a separate sheet listing the criteria for the book review essay. **Acts of plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" for this course**

Required Reading

James Roark, et.al. The American Promise: A Compact History

**Hollitz, John Thinking Through the Past: A Critical Thinking Approach to U.S. History
Vol. I 3rd Edition**

Peter Kolchin, American Slavery 1619-1877

Harry Watson, Liberty & Power

January 9 Orientation

January 12,14,16 European Preconceptions of Non-European People and Places

Introduction

Roark, 2

January 21,23 Mercantilism and the Establishment of the North American Colonies

January 19 MLK Holiday

Roark, 3,4,5

January 26,28,30 New World Colonial Settlement: Attempts to Transplant Old World Culture

Roark, 3,4,5

Hollitz, 3

February 2,4,6 Mercantilism and the Colonial Crisis: War of Restoration

Roark, 6,7

Hollitz, 4

February 9,11,13

Review and Handout Take Home Exam February 9

February 16,18,20 Articles of Confederation and the Constitution

Roark, 8,9

Take Home Exam Due February 16

Hollitz, 5

February 23,25,27, March 2,4,6 Political, Social and Economic Change in the Early 19th Cent.

Roark, 12

Watson, **Liberty and Power**

March 9,11,13

SPRING BREAK

March 16,18, 20
Early 19th Cent. Reform

Roark, 11

Hollitz, 7

March , 23,25,27

Review & Handout Take Home Exams March 23

March 30, April 1, 3

Manifest Destiny and the Acquisition of trans-Mississippi West Territories

Roark, 12

Take Home Exams Due March 30

April 6,8,10 The South

Roark, 13

Hollitz, 11

April 13,15,17 Slavery

Kolchin, **American Slavery**

Roark, 13

Hollitz, 10

April, 20,22,24 The Civil War

Roark, 14,15

Handout Final Exam Take Home Exam April 22

April 27,29

Take Home Exam Due April 29

SOME WAYS PEOPLE SEARCH FOR ORDER IN THEIR LIVES WHEN THE AMERICAN DREAM SEEMS TO BE IN JEOPARDY

1. Religion

Some look to new forms of worship; updating God

Some try to restore what are thought to be older more stable forms of worship thought to be lost to modernism

2. Intellectual Awareness

Educational reform as a result of general feeling that there is a decline in educational standards in America

Common belief that higher education leads to more money and happiness as well as a slot in the upper echelons of American society. (status consciousness and the American Dream)

3. Health, Diet and Exercise Fads

Diet and exercise fads as a way of gaining an edge in the quest for the American Dream

Example: high fiber diet fads in the 1840s, in the early 20th century and finally, the present day

4. Pseudo-Science Fads

Non-mainstream science become more popular as tool to achieving the American Dream

Examples: Phrenology (1840s) Eugenics (early 20th century) and lord knows what in the present day.

5. Equality Movements

Race, ethnicity, gender, age, the under represented and those who pursue alternative live styles.

Temperance, feminist & abolitionist movements (early 19th century); temperance, feminist & labor movements (early 20th century); and in the past forty years, temperance, feminist, and civil rights movements.

6. Cleansing Movements

Common categories: alcohol, drugs, unacceptable sexual practices, unwanted people and all kinds of "isms" i.e. socialism, communism and capitalism.