

HIST3073 – U.S. History 1945 to the Present Fall 2008

Call # 36-153
MWF 11:15am-12:05pm
321 LeConte Hall

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The course syllabus is a general plan for the course, not a contract; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary

Welcome to HIST3073: U.S. History 1945 to the Present. In all likelihood you have already taken a “survey” course in American history since the Civil War – HIST2112 or something similar. HIST3073 is slightly different, in that we sacrifice breadth for depth. For the next fifteen weeks we’ll study a period of time only sixty years long – just a flash in the historical pan, so to speak. But those sixty years have seen some of the most chaotic, contentious, heartwarming, triumphant, important and fascinating events in the nation’s past: the greatest war the world has ever known, the Cold War (and several “hot” ones), the birth of the modern “hyperconsumer” lifestyle, the rise of the civil rights movement, feminism, the New Left and the counterculture, environmentalism, gay rights, the rise of the New Right and the national political shift from New Deal liberalism to conservatism and the Reagan Era, just to name a few. A lot can happen in six decades...

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES: As mentioned above, this class is an upper-level introduction to the history of the United States from World War II to the current day. It is not meant to be an utterly exhaustive, comprehensive class in which you will be taught everything you will ever need to know about those years. But we will explore the most important topics in more detail than we would in a typical survey class.

Stepping back for a moment...the operative word for this class is “WHY?” Contrary to what many people think, history is NOT simply about “what happened” – names and dates, memorization, etc. That’s the easy part. Anyone armed with Google can tell you *what* happened in history. The trick is explaining *why*. The answers require an understanding of multiple points of view and a keen sense of how historical events are linked together and influence each other. History is “ecological,” you might say – pick up one piece, and you find it hitched to everything else.

By the end of the semester, you should be confidently conversant about the major events, movements, and people of the era. You should also have an understanding of historical

trends, the ways in which ideas and beliefs have shifted over time. Finally, you should have a passing familiarity with some of the various historical “schools of thought” in postwar US history, and the issues that historians of the era still debate.

GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS: I expect all students to attend **all** classes, to take good notes, to read the assigned readings in their entirety, to turn in all written assignments when they are due, to arrive promptly for tests, etc.

Attendance and excused absences: Your attendance grade will be calculated by dividing the number of classes you attended by the total number of classes. Excused absences **will rarely be given**, and when they are, it will be on a case-by-case basis only. Specific excuses will **require considerable written evidence** to support them, i.e. doctors’ notes, University permission letters, obituaries, and the like. I cannot excuse absences for work, vacation plans, non-varsity sports, over-sleeping, and so on.

Participation in Discussions: It is very important that you participate enthusiastically and regularly in class discussions. **A decent chunk of your grade depends on your active engagement in classroom conversations – and I will be keeping track. It is nearly impossible to get an A without talking regularly!** If you’re shy or petrified of speaking in public, now is the time to conquer your fears. If you don’t speak at all, or rarely, you will likely receive a ZERO as a discussion grade, or a best a very low score.

Reading Load: the reading load **will be fairly heavy** and, as mentioned above, you are expected to read all assigned readings, and come to class **prepared to discuss them, generally on alternating Fridays.** Look ahead in the syllabus and **plan ahead** – know how much you have to read and when you have to be done, and adjust accordingly.

Paper: In addition to attending class, doing the readings and participating in discussion, you will write **one medium-length (6-8 page) paper**, on a topic to be announced approximately three weeks before the due date. Details about style and content will be forthcoming around that time, as well. A **late paper** will be reduced in grade by **10 percent a day (including weekends)**, beginning immediately after the class period in which it is due. As with attendance, excuses for late papers will rarely be accepted, and will require extraordinary evidence if they are.

Exams: There will be **two (2) in-class exams** – a midterm and a final - which will require bluebooks. The specific format – number of questions, etc – will be announced approximately a week before the test date.

REQUIRED READINGS: There will be no textbook for this class. In line with the class structure, the readings – six books and a selection on e-reserve – will be in-depth studies of particular time periods, movements, events, people, etc. Some books we will read in full, other only partially; see the page listings for the week each book is assigned.

- ***Richard M. Fried**, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*
- ***Melton McLaurin**, *Separate Pasts: Growing Up White in the Segregated South*
- ***Glenn C. Altschuler**, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'n' Roll Changed America*
- ***Michael Herr**, *Dispatches*
- ***Beth Bailey and David Farber, eds.**, *America in the Seventies*
- ***Ronald Story and Bruce Laurie, eds.**, *The Rise of Conservatism in America, 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents*
- ***E-Reserve readings:**
Robert Cohen, “Two, Four, Six, Eight, We Don’t Want to Integrate”

****NOTE: All of the books are available USED – and cheap! – from Amazon.com and so forth. I encourage you to do what you can to save yourself money. Three cheers for modern technology!**

GRADE BREAKDOWN: Midterm Exam – **25 percent**
Final Exam - **30 percent**
Paper – **25 percent**
Discussion Participation – **10 percent**
Class Attendance – **10 percent**

GRADING STANDARDS: Grading standards in this class are simple. With modern word-processing programs, spell-check, etc, there is little excuse for papers filled with grammatical errors or ones that fail to meet the minimum required length. A typical “C” paper, exam, or essay has few or none of these kinds of weaknesses. On the other hand, while it may be technically solid, typical “C” work does not show much distinction in clarity of argument, creativity, or originality of insight. It may be repetitive or rambling, or obvious, or it may simply have no real thesis or “point” to it. It may not support its arguments sufficiently or it may fail to address important issues. Severe problems along these lines will result in grades of “D” or “F.” On the other hand, a “B” paper or essay shows a good grasp of reading and lecture material, some creativity and “fresh thinking,” and uses good evidence and examples from both lectures and readings. It is well-organized, too. *An “A” paper or essay demonstrates deep, penetrating insight and unusually good verbal facility. It is the work of someone who has thought long and hard about the issues, grappled with them, pulled together diverse strands of evidence into a convincing argument, and in general has achieved a truly impressive level of coherence, clarity, and critical thinking.* Grading standards for tests are essentially the same as for papers, although I am not as concerned about tight organization or spelling. I understand the time pressures involved in an in-class exam. However, “A” exams will

still be expected to achieve a level of coherence and analysis far above a typical “C” exam.

****All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty," http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/culture_honesty.htm. Each student is responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.****

Finally, let me offer a few words on **PLAGIARISM**. In this class we will adhere to UGA’s University Honor Code and Academic Honesty Policy. Plagiarism – **the attempt to pass off another’s written work, from any source, as your own, without adequate reference or citation** — is strictly forbidden. Cheating on exams is forbidden as well. *If I discover a student in an act of plagiarism or cheating, I WILL initiate procedures to charge him or her with academic misconduct, and there is a serious possibility that I will request to the University that the student receive a zero in the entire course. I hate to sound vindictive, but plagiarism is a serious matter and I will not tolerate it.*

Okay, everything clear as mud? Well, away we go.....

Week One – August 18-22, 2008:

Introduction: Setting the stage: the 1930s and 40s

Week Two – August 25-29:

The Brave New Postwar World: The end of World War II, foreign policy in the early Cold War, the first stirrings of the Civil Rights movement

Week Three – September 3-5:

NO CLASS on September 1st - Labor Day

Commies Under the Bed: the McCarthy Era – Alger Hiss, the Rosenberg case, J. Edgar Hoover, HUAC and the civil rights crises of the 1950s

*****Discuss – Fried, *Nightmare in Red* [entire]**

Week Four – September 8-12

To Redeem the Soul of America: Civil Rights in the 1950s and early 1960s – The NAACP and *Brown v. Board*, the Montgomery bus boycott, Martin Luther King and the SCLC, the tragedy of Emmett Till, SNCC, sit-ins

Week Five – September 15-19:

Reactions to the Civil Rights movement: segregation, Little Rock, UGA, George Wallace and associates, and Massive Resistance

***Discuss – McLaurin, *Separate Pasts* [entire], and Cohen “Two, Four, Six, Eight, We Don’t Want to Integrate” [entire]

Week Six – September 22-26:

Cold War Discontents: strategies of containment, Cuba and the missile crisis, Berlin *redux*, and the beginnings of Vietnam

Week Seven – September 29-October 3:

The Fabulous Fifties?: Consumerism, conformity and tensions, Peyton Place, Betty Friedan, rock and roll, the Beats, and Walt Disney

***Discuss – Altschuler, *All Shook Up* [entire]

Week Eight – October 6-10:

Green Day Rising: Conservation, beginnings of environmentalism, Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*, test review

*****MIDTERM EXAM – Friday, October 10th

Week Nine – October 13-17

America’s Longest War: Vietnam

***Discuss – Herr, *Dispatches* [entire]

Week Ten – October 20-24

Old Liberals, New Left: Vietnam, Civil Rights, Students for a Democratic Society, the Free Speech Movement, and the assault on liberalism from the Left

Week Eleven – October 27-29

Turn on, Tune In, Drop Out: Birth of the Counterculture – Haight-Ashbury, Ken Kesey, the Grateful Dead et al., and “Lifestyle as Protest”

NO CLASS on Friday, October 31st - Fall Break

Week Twelve – November 3-7:

Things Fall Apart: Chicago 1968, the Black Panthers, the Weathermen, Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies, Altamont, COINTELPRO, and the Unraveling of Liberalism

Week Thirteen – November 10-14:

The Other Side of the Sixties: William F. Buckley, Barry Goldwater, Young Americans for Freedom, Richard Nixon and the southern strategy, the GOP triumph of '68 and the national swing to the Right

*****Discuss – *The Rise of Conservatism in America* [Part 1, pp. 35-74]**

Week Fourteen – November 17-21:

The 1970s: Watergate, *malaise* and the rejection of liberalism, Jimmy Carter and the Iranian hostage crisis, and the rise of Ronald Reagan

*****Discuss – *The Rise of Conservatism in America* [Part 2, pp. 75-121]
Farber and Bailey, eds., *America in the Seventies* [pp. 1-49,
107-208]**

*****THANKSGIVING BREAK – November 24-28*****

Week Fifteen – December 1-5

The 1980s and 90s: the Reagan presidency, end of the Cold War, the Iran-contra scandal, and the triumphs and trials of conservatism

*****Discuss – *The Rise of Conservatism in America* [Part 3, pp. 122-65]**

Week Sixteen – December 8 and 9

1990s to the present: Bush/Clinton, from Cold War to the War on Terrorism, class wrap-up

Tuesday=Friday in Effect