

HISTORY 130 – HONORS

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

CSU-Chico
Fall 2009

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Class Meets:
MWF 9:00-9:50 pm, Glenn 210
Office Hours: MW, 1:00-3:15 pm;
& by appt.

Themes -- Our foray into the past will focus on the question: “What is an American?” This may appear to be a simple question with an equally simple answer, yet it has often been (as it is today) a terribly contentious one. In examining American identity (identities?), we’ll pay particular attention to how Americans have grappled with issues related to:

- ethnicity and immigration
- political and social ideals (such as liberty and equality)
- personal and community values (involving ideas about morality, sexuality, gender roles, and families)
- America’s place in the world

Objectives -- This course is designed to help you:

- *Learn History* -- gain a greater knowledge of the basic “facts” and especially of the significant questions and themes of American history.
- *Recover History* -- practice the detective work of history by examining a variety of historical sources.
- *Think Historically* -- learn to understand the past on its own terms, while recognizing how our views of it are shaped by our own experiences.
- *Connect to History* -- appreciate how your own experience relates to the nation’s past.
- *Hone Skills* -- develop reading, writing, and speaking skills that will serve you well always.

Other Important Information

- Class Sessions -- I will offer lectures that set out key themes and historical arguments, but I always encourage questions and comments. Class will occasionally be devoted to discussions of reading assignments during which you will have a greater opportunity to share your insights and ideas with the rest of the class. Because class sessions and discussions are so central to the course, absences should be avoided. Discuss any planned absence with me in advance.
- Readings – Reading is central to this course. You should complete each week’s reading before the first class meeting of that week. All of the following books are available for purchase at the AS Bookstore. It is very important that you not fall behind in the course reading.

William Cronon, Changes in the Land

Anne Moody, Coming of Age in Mississippi

Jules Tygiel, Ronald Reagan and the Triumph of American Conservatism

In addition to these books, we’ll also read some primary documents (those created by persons in the past that historians use to write history) as well as interpretive pieces by historians. Some of these items are available on Blackboard Vista and others may be available on e-reserve. Here’s how to access items on e-reserve: (1) Go to <http://www.csuchico.edu/library/llo/>, (2) type in “HIST 130H,” where it asks you to “Search by Course,” (3) on the next page, select the reading by clicking, (4) then on the next screen you’ll need to type in your Username and Password (same as for your campus e-mail account). Next, (5) it will ask for a password (I’ll provide this later). The reading should appear and you can read it there (and take notes) or print it out.

Note: I may hand out additional readings for some class meetings or make some available via Blackboard Vista.

- Exams and Quizzes – There will be a midterm exam and a final exam, each consisting of at least one essay and multiple objective questions (e.g., fill-in-the-blank, identification, short answer, etc.). Please make a note of the exam dates: they can’t be moved, so make travel plans accordingly. In addition, there will be several short quizzes (could be multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, identification, etc.).

Quizzes will cover material discussed in class as well as the readings. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped, and there will be NO MAKE-UP QUIZZES.

- Book Commentaries – See pp. 4-5 of this syllabus for information.
- Grading – Your course grade will be based on
Book Commentaries 20% (2 @ 10%)
Quizzes 25%
Midterm 25%
Final 30%

Grading is a measurement of how well you have learned course material; it is not an evaluation of your overall intelligence. There will not be a “curve” in course grades. Instead, I will evaluate each student’s work according to a standard set of criteria for each aspect of the course. Grading will be on a 100-point scale, distributed as follows:

A	93-100	C+	78-79	F	Below 60
A-	90-92	C	73-77		
B+	88-89	C-	70-72		
B	83-87	D+	68-69		
B-	80-82	D	60-67		

COURSE SCHEDULE

Topics may change without notice; any change in any assignment or due date will be announced.

I. ORIGINS

WEEK OF AUG 24

Reading: Jack Hitt, “Mighty White of You” (*Harper’s*, July 2005, 39-55) [on Blackboard Vista]; begin William Cronon, Changes in the Land (see “Reading Guide for Changes in the Land” on Blackboard Vista)
M, 24 Introduction

W, 26 European Expansion and African Slavery

F, 28 The First Americans (discuss Hitt article)

WEEK OF AUG 31

Reading: finish Cronon, Changes in the Land
M, 31 Contact

W, 2 Patterns of Colonial Development

F, 4 The Changing Face of New England (discuss Cronon)

WEEK OF SEPT 7

M, 7 *Labor Day – No Class Held*

W, 9 Cracks in the Empire

F, 11 Toward Independence
Cronon Commentary due in class

WEEK OF SEPT 14

Reading: Constitutional Debate Excerpts and James Madison, “Federalist Number 10” [both on e-reserve]
M, 14 Constitution Making in the New Nation

W, 16 Debating and Writing the Constitution

F, 18 Why Ratify?

II. AMERICA IN THE 19th CENTURY

WEEK OF SEPT 21

Reading: Thomas Jefferson's Letter to John Holmes [Blackboard Vista]; "Slavery and the Bible" and Stephen Foster, "The Brotherhood of Thieves" [both on e-reserve]

M, 21 Jefferson's America

W, 23 Firebell in the Night: The Peculiar Institution

F, 25 The Crucial 1820s

WEEK OF SEPT 28

Reading: Harry Watson, "The Second American Party System"; Andrew Jackson's Bank Veto Message; James Henry Hammond's March 1858 Speech (all on Blackboard Vista)

M, 28 Democrats and Whigs

W, 30 Manifest Destiny and the U.S. War with Mexico

F, 2 The Sectional Crisis

WEEK OF OCT 5

Reading: James McPherson, "The War that Never Goes Away" and "From Limited to Total War", and Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Speech (all on Blackboard Vista)

M, 5 The Secession Crisis

W, 7 Civil War

F, 9 Civil War

WEEK OF OCT 12

Reading: Frederick Douglass's Speech of December 1863 (Blackboard Vista)

M, 12 Reconstruction (discuss Douglass's speech)

W, 14 Immigration and Race at the Turn of the Century

F, 16 Imperialism

WEEK OF OCT 19

M, 19 **MIDTERM EXAM**

The Midterm will cover material from the first week of class through October 16. You will receive a study guide beforehand.

III. THE AMERICAN CENTURY (?)

W, 21 Progressive America

F, 23 Depression

WEEK OF OCT 26

Reading: Selected letters to federal government during Depression; pieces by Leslie Hohman and Hortense Johnson (Blackboard Vista)

M, 26 New Deal

W, 28 World War II Abroad

F, 30 World War II at Home

WEEK OF NOV 2

Reading: Begin Moody, Coming of Age in Mississippi.

M, 2 *Mandatory Unpaid Furlough Day – No Class Meeting*

W, 4 Cold War America

F, 6 The Early Civil Rights Movement

WEEK OF NOV 9

Reading: Finish Moody, Coming of Age in Mississippi.

M, 9 The New Frontier and the Great Society

W, 11 *Veterans' Day – No Class Meeting*

F, 24 One Young Woman's Civil Rights Story (discuss Moody)

WEEK OF NOV 16

Reading: Bruce Schulman, "'That Bitch of a War': LBJ and Vietnam" (Blackboard Vista)

M, 16 The U.S. in Vietnam

W, 18 1968

F, 20 *Mandatory Unpaid Furlough Day – No Class Held*

Moody commentary is due in History Department office (Trinity 223) before 3:00 pm.

THANKSGIVING BREAK (NOVEMBER 23-27)

Have fun and be safe!!

WEEK OF NOV 30

Reading: Shirley Willer, "One Angry Nurse"; Morty Manford, "Fearless Youth" [both on e-reserve]; and begin Jules Tygiel, Ronald Reagan

M, 30 Feminism

W, 2 To Stonewall and Beyond

F, 4 "That 70s Show"

WEEK OF DEC 7

Reading: Peter Schrag, "The Forgotten American" [on e-reserve]; finish Jules Tygiel, Ronald Reagan

M, 7 Social Conservatism in the 70s (discuss Schrag)

W, 9 The Reagan Years

F, 11 How Does Reagan Rate?
Tygiel commentary is due in class.

THE FINAL EXAM IS ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, from 10:00 to 11:50 am.

The final is NOT cumulative, but covers material since the midterm.

BOOK COMMENTARIES

You will write short commentaries on 2 of the 3 books you are reading for the course. **You must write the one by Cronon (*Changes in the Land*) and then do one of the two others (either Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi* or Tygiel's *Ronald Reagan and the Triumph of American Conservatism*).** Each commentary should be approximately 3-5 pages (750-1250 words).

Topics: For each paper, you have a choice of doing option A or option B:

A. In your commentary, you should address at least two of the following sets of questions:

- What was the author's main argument or point--or one of his or her major arguments or points?
- What evidence does the author use in support of the argument or point you've identified? Does he or she use letters, diaries, public documents, etc.? What is effective or ineffective (persuasive or unpersuasive) about the evidence the author uses?
- What did you find especially praiseworthy or problematic about the book?

B. Address one of the following questions (as appropriate)

- For Cronon: What do you see as the key “changes in the land” that occurred with the English colonization of southern New England in particular? How did the pre-contact Indians’ relationship with land, plants, and animals differ from that the English settlers created?
- For Moody: Is Moody’s autobiography essentially optimistic or pessimistic? Explain your interpretation.
- For Tygiel: Write an essay justifying a grade (A, B, C, D or F) you would assign for Reagan’s performance as U.S. president.

Some rules to follow:

- Your commentaries must be typed or printed from a word processor (not handwritten).
- Your commentaries must be spell-checked and proofread in advance to eliminate spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, and stylistic problems.
- So that I can read your papers as objectively as possible, **DO NOT** put your name on the first page or anywhere in the body. Instead, simply write your name in pencil on the back of the last page or on the back of a scratch sheet of paper appended to your work.

A few other points to remember:

- I do not accept any written work sent via e-mail. You must turn in a “hard copy.”
- Keep a hard copy of any written work you turn in, just in case I happen to have a paper-hungry dog.
- If you have multiple pages, please staple them together; paper-clipped pages tend to become separated. Better yet, if possible, use duplex (back-to-back) printing for more than one page.
- This shouldn’t be necessary to say, but here goes: Do not plagiarize. I’m interested in what *you* think and how *you* express your thoughts; I don’t care about what your friends, neighbors, relatives, or Internet chat buddies think. Here’s a good definition of plagiarism: “In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source” (“Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices,” Council of Writing Program Administrators, <http://www.wpacouncil.org>.). If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, ask me. **If you plagiarize, you will fail the course.**