

AMH 2020 (3 credit hrs.)
Fall 2023
9:35-10:25 TRF
G186 McCarty Hall

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American History From Reconstruction to the Present

I. Course Description

AMH 2020 surveys the American experience from Reconstruction, the historical era immediately following the Civil War, down to the recent past. Lecture topics and assigned readings emphasize the evolution of American democratic society since 1865 and focus on shifting definitions over time of what it means to be an “American.” This course also traces the tension between “traditional” American assumptions of self and society when confronted by the new realities of Modern America. Following the Civil War, a host of political, technological, economic, and social developments transformed what had once been, primarily, a loosely-confederated society of rural agricultural producers into a far more regimented urban-industrial world dominated by immensely powerful corporations, unprecedented concentrations of wealth and poverty, massive demographic shifts, the growing presence of machines, the emergence of what we’ll call Consumer Culture, and the transformation of American foreign policy—to name but a few. The changes were swift and, to many, unsettling, provoking discussion, debate, and, often as not, violent collisions over the meaning of freedom, equality, and democracy--how these terms were (and are) defined, defended, and challenged, who they include and exclude--which continue to this day.

According to current Florida state statutes, all students in the state university system “must demonstrate competency in civic literacy” in order to graduate. AMH 2020 has been designated by the Legislature as one of two classes (POS 2041 is the other one) that satisfies this requirement. In addition to the subjects we will cover mentioned above, this course will also focus on the civic literacy requirements outlined by the state statute, including “an understanding of the basic principles of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government, and understanding of the United States Constitution, knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-governance, and an understanding of the landmark Supreme Court cases and their impact on law and society.” These have been embedded in the course content and are reflected by course competencies and student learning outcomes listed below.

After completing this course,

* Students will have a familiarity with the broad scope salient issues, and critical moments of American history since the Reconstruction Era.

*Students will also have engaged in an analysis of primary and secondary source material in order to gain a firsthand perspective on the historian’s method and craft.

* Finally, this course allows students to sharpen their communication skills--in both writing and speaking--and to develop modes of critical thought that will carry beyond the classroom and into a career, regardless of one's major or chosen professional path.

Beyond that graduates of AMH 2020 will:

*Understand the influence of diverse historical forces – technological, social, political, cultural, intellectual, economic – on American beliefs, behaviors, and ideals.

*Analyze evidence, synthesize conflicting points of view, and evaluate assumptions and biases to attain a balanced perspective on the modern American experience.

*Learn key themes, principles, terminology, and methods used by historians to explore and explain the past.

II. Policies, procedures, guidelines, responsibilities, and other stuff known collectively as the rules and regulations.

A. Assigned Readings

All students in AMH 2020 are responsible for reading material in:

Joseph L. Locke and Ben Wright, eds. *The American Yawp: A Massively Collaborative U.S. History Textbook, Volume 2: Since 1877*. **Note: in the tentative Course Outline below, this text is abbreviated as *TAY*** and is available on-line here:

https://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/yawp_v2_open_pdf.pdf

The American Yawp Reader: A Documentary Companion to the American Yawp, Volume II.

Note: in the tentative Course Outline below, this text is abbreviated as *AYR*. It, too, is available on-line here:

<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/wp-content/uploads/The-American-Yawp-Reader-Vol-2-Fall-2020.pdf>

James West Davidson and Mark Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection, Volume II*, 6th Edition (2010) **Note: in the tentative Course Outline below, this text is abbreviated as *ATF***.

James T. Patterson, *Brown V. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy* (2001)

B. Course Format

This class meets three days each week (T/R/F) unless otherwise indicated on the Tentative Course Outline and combines lectures and readings-based in-class discussions. Students should come thoroughly prepared for each of these discussions having read the assigned material prior to class, and being certain to make written notes on it and criticisms, comments, or questions on/of/about it. Please note: Since the instructors will call randomly upon students to share with the class their views, understandings, and interpretations of a given assignment, it is vital that you attend discussions prepared to participate.

C. Attendance

More than thirty years classroom experience affirms a fundamental correlation between attendance, attentiveness, engagement with course content and scholastic achievement. Honest, I'm not just being a cranky old man. Straight up: students who attend class regularly, engage the material, and remain current in assigned readings are more likely to achieve higher grades than those who don't. That said, a crucial test of your higher education and professional development is the ability to juggle a busy schedule, skills only you can develop. So, there is no mandatory attendance policy, per se, only, once again, my strong advice about the disadvantage you incur, relative to your classmates, through poor attendance and indifference to course content.

D. Methods of Evaluation

1. In-Class Examinations

This class will have one (1) in-class midterm examination and one (1) in-class final examination. Both exams will contain objective and essay components. Essays will be examined and evaluated for their ability to address broad questions drawn from both lecture and assigned readings, by formulating a cogent critical argument, and by an effective use of specific evidence. You will need to provide your own blue book for these exams, so please secure them in advance of the exam day. The midterm will be held during the class period on Monday **10 October 2023** and the final examination will be held at a date TBA.

2. Out of Class Writings

There will be two (2) dates (**15 September and 09 November**) when students will upload to Canvas a brief (no fewer than 300 nor more than 350 words) essay based on primary source readings. Like the essays written during in-class exams, this work will be evaluated for clarity of argument and effective use of specific pieces of evidence. More details as to the specific questions and requirements of these assignments will be provided in a separate document.

E. Make-up Policy

Make-up exams will only be offered in extraordinary circumstances if accompanied by official documentation. Please be aware that since notice of all exams and paper deadlines are given well in advance, there will be no make-ups given for non-emergency situations.

F. Course Grade

A student's course grade will be determined by the following formula:

First short essay: 15%
In-class Midterm: 20%
Second short essay: 25%
In-class Final: 30%
Citizenship/Discussion participation: 10%

Grading scale: 93-100 (A); 90-92 (A-); 87-89 (B+); 82-86 (B); 80-82 (B-); 76-79 (C+); 72-75 (C); 69-71 (C-); 66-68 (D+); 62-65 (D); 60-61 (D-); 0-59 (F)

G. Disability Policy

Students requesting classroom accommodations for disability issues must register first with the Office of the Dean of Students. This office will provide documentation to the student who must then pass that documentation to the instructor. Please note: I am more than happy to do whatever is necessary to ensure an optimum learning environment for all students. To contact the UF Disability Resource Center, follow this link: <https://disability.ufl.edu/>

H. Academic Misconduct

Please be aware of the University policy on plagiarism, an especially egregious offense on many levels. Plagiarists are thieves, plain and simple. They steal the labor others have accomplished as they formulate coherent responses to complicated subjects by organizing thoughts and expressing them in written form. This is difficult work. Yes, the internet offers a tempting shortcut. I get it. But having read undergraduate essays for a very long time, it is more than easy to tell the difference between them and the work of scholarly colleagues. Besides, like Santa, Turnitin knows if you've been naughty or nice. Worse, stealing the words others have worked so hard to arrange into a satisfactory order is not only dishonest and lazy; it's demeaning to you, an expression however tacit that your words don't matter when they do. So find them, order them, and express them. You'll be a better person for the effort. If you have any questions whatsoever about what does or does not constitute an act of plagiarism do NOT hesitate to ask me. In the meantime, be advised: All plagiarism offenses will be reported on a Faculty Adjudication Form and forwarded to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. For more information on this process, please see:

<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/scctr/process/>

I. Course Assistance: UF Writing Studio

If you are concerned with your writing skills both in this class and beyond, please feel free to contact me either via e-mail or through an in-person appointment. I will help you all I can, but another resource you may wish to consider is the UF Writing Studio, where you can find assistance, advice, and encouragement in becoming a more skillful writer. Acquiring, then honing, this vital skill is not only crucial to achieving academic excellence. It will also help you to attain your professional goals as well as facilitate your personal growth and development. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in person in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

J. Citizenship

As a learning community AMH 2020 comes with a particular set of benefits and obligations. We're all here to share our varied perspectives, insights, and experiences. But we're also obliged to foster to our fullest ability a healthy learning space of trust, respect, and cooperation. I expect students to demonstrate the polite decorum appropriate to a university classroom. Please refrain from using cell phones or other pda's. When you're sending texts for whatever reason, or surfing the web, you're not here. And when you're not here, you're absent. Moreover, surfing/texting distracts (or disturbs) others around you, myself included. You may use a laptop for taking notes, but let's limit its use to that only. Additionally, as a matter of common courtesy, please do not talk when others are speaking, arrive late,

pack up early, or engage in any other form of disruptive behavior. Think “Golden Rule,” and thank you.

K. Course Objectives For the Civic Literacy Requirements

AMH 2020 will:

- *Introduce students to the evolution of basic principle of American democracy and how they have been applied to our republican form of government since the mid-19th century.

- *Examine representations of the meaning of American citizenship by a wide range of authors representing various academic, policy, and community perspectives.

- *Explore the way that the relationships with government at all levels has shaped the racial, class, and gender identities of various groups over time.

- *Introduce the idea that various meanings of citizenship are produced in democratic society in dialogue with the imaginative expressions of people and communities.

- *Invite students to build their reading, writing, and spoken communication skills through reflection on landmark Supreme Court cases and their impact on law and society.

L. Student Learning Outcomes For Civic Literacy

Students who complete AMH 2020 with a satisfactory grade will be able to:

- *Identify, describe, and explain the historical evolution of the American form of government throughout modern American history since 1877, with attention to the ways in which government officials and the Supreme Court have shaped this growth.

- *Identify, describe, and explain the ways in which diverse cultures and beliefs have shaped the meaning of the U.S. Constitution and its interpretation.

- *Analyze and evaluate how the interaction and intervention of government officials at all levels have shaped and re-shaped the meanings of American democracy and the evolution of the republican form of government.

- *Analyze and evaluate the basic principles of American democracy and how they are applied in in our republican form of government have effected the opportunities for and constraints on diverse populations.

- *Analyze, evaluate, and critically reflect on their own community’s relationships to American democracy, and to the implications of this for their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.

- *Develop and present clear and effective responses, both written and oral, to essential questions regarding the origins of the American Republic and the evolving nature of American democracy in the period from the end of the Civil War to the present.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week Date Subject/Exercise

01 Introduction

24 Aug: “Tomorrow Never Knows”

25 Aug: Meet with T.A.s

(All Read: TBA)

02 New Beginnings and a False Start

29 Aug: A Second Founding

31 Aug: Nothing But Freedom

01 Sep: Section Discussion

(All Read: the 13th, 14th, & 15th amendments; *ATF*, Chapter 8)

03 Incorporating America

05 Sep: An Industrial Revolution

07 Sep: The Art of the Last Stand

08 Sep: Section Discussion

(All Read: “Capital and Labor” and “Conquering the West,” *TAY*)

04 Alternative Visions and Violent Collisions

12 Sep: The Promise of Cooperative Commonwealth

14 Sep: Upheaval: The Crises of the 1890s

15 Sep: Section Discussion

(All Read: William Graham Sumner, On Social Darwinism; Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, Selections (1879); Andrew Carnegie, *Gospel of Wealth*, 1889 all in *AYR*)

05 A New Empire Abroad and a New Way of Life at Home

19 Sep: The New Empire

21 Sep: City Life and the American Game

22 Sep: Section Discussion

(All Read: “American Empire” and “Life in Industrial America,” in both *TAY* and *AYR*; *ATF*, Chapter 9)

06 The Progressive Impulse

26 Sep: A Crisis of Masculinity

28 Sep: Over Here, 1917-1919

29 Sep: Section Discussion

(All Read: “The Progressive Era” and “World War I and its Aftermath” in *TAY* and *AYR*; *ATF*, Chapter 10)

07 The New Era

03 Oct: “All That Is Solid Melts Into Air”

05 Oct: The Cultural Collisions of 20s America

06 Oct: **HOME COMING (No Class)**

(All Read: “The New Era” in *TAY* and *AYR*; *ATF*, Chapter 11)

08 Mean Things Happening in This Land

10 Oct: **MIDTERM EXAM**

12 Oct: Down and Out in the Great Depression

13 Oct: Section Discussion

(All Read “The Great Depression,” *TAY*)

09 The New Deal

17 Oct: Building Modern America

19 Oct: With Pen, Brush, and Camera: Looking For America in the 1930s

20 Oct: Section Discussion

(All Read “The Great Depression,” *AYR*; *ATF*, Chapter 12)

10 The Big One

24 Oct: The “Good War” at Home in Unbombed America

26 Oct: Myth and the “Good War”

27 Oct: Section Discussion

(All Read: “World War II” in both *TAY* and *AYR*; *ATF*, Chapter 13)

11 Containment and Consensus in Cold War America

31 Oct: Soviets and Suburbs

02 Nov: The Early Postwar Western

03 Nov: Section Discussion

(All Read: “The Cold War,” and “The Affluent Society” in *TAY*; Patterson, *Brown v Board*, chapters, 1-3)

12 The Movement Activism and the Struggle For Equality

07 Nov: Parting of the Waters: The Civil Rights Movement

09 Nov: The Rights Revolution

10 Nov: **NO CLASS**

(All Read: Martin Luther King, “Letter From a Birmingham Jail”)
<https://billofrightsinitiative.org/primary-sources/letter-from-birmingham-jail>;
ATF, Chapter 14; Patterson, *Brown v Board*, Chapters 4-6)

13 The Unravelling of America

14 Nov: Coming Apart in the 1960s

16 Nov: “Knockin’ On Heaven’s Door”

17 Nov: Section Discussion

(All Read: “The Sixties, *TAY*; *ATF*, Chapter 15)

14 21 Nov: TBA

23 Nov: THANKSGIVING

24 Nov: HOLIDAY

(All Read: “The Unravelling” in *TAY*; Finish Patterson *Brown v Board*.)

15 Reckoning, Reagan, and Right Turn

28 Nov: Malaise, Uncertainty, and the 1970s

30 Nov: The Reagan Revolution

01 Dec: Section Discussion

(All Read: “Triumph of the Right” and “The Recent Past” in *TAY*; *ATF*, Chapter 17)

16 05 Dec: In-class Review for Final Exam