

AMH 2020 (3 credit hrs.)
Spring 2024
T 8:30-10:30; R 9:35-10:35
MAT 0005

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American History Since 1877

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 continues 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. Please note: **a minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.**

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 every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the semester. Tuesdays are lecture days and will entail two fifty-minute lectures with a ten-minute break in between. Thursdays are discussion days, when we will review pertinent material from assigned readings. 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 instructor 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. Additionally, Discussion days will include intermittent unannounced quizzes, which cannot be made up for any reason.

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. Please note: As indicated below, 25% of your final course grade depends on an evaluation of your citizenship and participation. Attendance is a form of participation. Chronic absence, texting in class, or leaving in the middle of class will all count heavily against you when determining your course grade. Govern yourselves accordingly.

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 **Thursday 22 February** and the final examination will be held at a date TBA.

2. Out of Class Writings

There will be two (2) dates (**01 February and 18 April**) when students will upload to Canvas a brief (**no fewer than 500 nor more than 650 words**) essay based on primary and secondary 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: 10%

In-class Midterm: 20%

Second short essay: 25%

In-class Final: 20%

Citizenship/Discussion participation: 25%

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/scct/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 affected 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

09 Jan: Introduction/ “Tomorrow Never Knows”

11 Jan: Discussion 1: Introduction

02 Standing at the Crossroads

16 Jan: The New (Still)birth of Freedom/ Incorporating Gilded Age America

18 Jan: Discussion 2: All Read: the 13th, 14th, & 15th amendments; *ATF*, Chapter 8; Chapter 16, “Capital and Labor” in *TAY* and *AYR*

03 At the Margins

23 Jan: Incorporating South and West/ The Promise of Cooperative Commonwealth

25 Jan: Discussion 3: All Read: Chapter 17, “Conquering the West” in *TAY* and *AYR* and Chapter 18, Life in Industrial America” in *TAY* and *AYR*.

04 The Critical Turn

30 Jan: The Crises of the 1890s/ The Imperial Surge

01 Feb: Discussion 4: All Read: Chapter 19, “American Empire” in *TAY* and *AYR*. (**First Written Essay due**)

05 City Life

06 Feb: Rise of the City/ City Life and the American Game

08 Feb: Discussion 5: All Read: Chapter 9, “Mirror With A Memory” in *ATF*.

06 The Reform Impulse at Home and Abroad

13 Feb: The Progressives and Their World/ Over Here: Mr. Wilson’s War and After

15 Feb: Discussion 6: All Read: Chapters 20 & 21, “The Progressive Era” and “World War I and its Aftermath” in *TAY* and *AYR*; Chapter 10, “USDA Inspected,” in *ATF*; Chapter 22, “The New Era” in *TAY* and *AYR*; Chapter 11, “Sacco and Vanzetti” in *ATF*.

07 The New Era

20 Feb: The Modern Temper/ Heroes and 20s America: Ford, Barton, and Ruth

22 Feb: **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

08 The Great Depression

27 Feb: Down and Out in the Great Depression/ The New Deal and the Land

29 Feb: Discussion 7: All Read Chapter 23, “The Great Depression,” in *TAY* and *AYR* ; Chapter 12, “Dust Bowl Odyssey” in *ATF*.

- 09 Looking For America With Pen, Brush, and Camera**
05 Mar: The People, Yes!/ Federal Art and Documentary Photography
07 Mar: Discussion 8: All read: TBA
- 10 12 & 14 Mar: SPRING BREAK**
- 11 The ‘Good’ War and the “Greatest Generation?”**
19 Mar: The “Good War” at Home in Unbombed America/ Myth and the Greatest Generation
21 Mar: Discussion 9: All Read: Chapter 24 “World War II” in *TAY* and *AYR*; Chapter 13, “The Decision to Drop the Bomb” in *ATF*.
- 12 From the “Good War” to the Cold War**
26 Mar: Of Soviets and Suburbs/ Containment and Consensus in Early Postwar Westerns
28 Mar: Discussion 10: All Read: Chapters 25 & 26 “The Cold War,” and “The Affluent Society” in *TAY* and *AYR*; Chapter 14, “From Rosie to Lucy in *ATF*; Patterson, *Brown v Board*, chapters, 1-3)
- 13 The Cradle Will Rock**
02 Apr: The Politics of Respectability/ Coming Apart in the 1960s
04 Apr: Discussion 11: All Read: Chapter 27, The Sixties in *TAY* and *AYR*; Chapter 15, “Sitting In,” in *ATF*; Patterson, *Brown v Board*, Chapters 4-8)
- 14 “Ashes to Ashes, All Fall Down”**
09 Apr: Knockin’ On Heaven’s Door”: The Westerns of 1969 and After
11 Apr: Discussion 12: All Read: Chapter 28, “The Unravelling” in *TAY* and *AYR*; Chapter 16, “Breaking Into Watergate” in *ATF*; Finish Patterson, *Brown v Board*.
- 15 The Reagan Revolution?**
16 Apr: “Morning in America?”/ Clinton, Culture Wars, and the Roaring 90s
18 Apr: Discussion 13: All Read: Chapter 29, “Triumph of the Right” in *TAY* and *AYR*.
(Second Written Essay due)
- 16 The Divided States of America and the Uncertain Future**
23 Apr: Irreparable Harm/ Discussion 14: All Read: Chapter 30, “The Recent Past” in *TAY* and *AYR*.