

HIS 3931-1979  
American Myths, American Values  
Spring 2017

MWF, 11:45-12:35, Flint 101  
Professor Jack E. Davis, Ofc. Flint 235  
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Ofc. Hrs., MWF, 12:45-1:45

In this course, we will examine the major myths that inform, and that are informed by, American values. The unifying fabric of America culture, myths shape the meaning of the American experience, American identity, and national character, and in turn determine the prevailing understanding of social groups and their relationships with the dominant American culture. It is this dynamic of myth, culture, and society that will constitute the focus of this course.

**Course Objectives:**

- X Expanding one's knowledge of fundamental myths and values and their place in the larger American historical experience
- X Introducing the student to scholarship on the subject.
- X Promoting critical thinking about American myths and values and their impact on the social relationships among different human groups.

Research Paper (Including writing-mechanics exercise and prospectus/bibliography)	30%
Take-Home exercise #1	30%
Take-Home exercise #2	30%
Class participation	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

**Course Books** (available at Goerings Bookstore):

James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your History Textbook Got Wrong*  
Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*  
Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*  
Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History: And Other Essays on American Memory*

**Week I (January 4-6) Introduction; Defining American Myths and Values**

Reading: Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, introduction, chapter 3.

**Week II (January 9-13) Inventing a Nation and Its History**

Audio: Michael Parenti, "The Struggle for History"  
Reading: Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, chapters 11, 12.

**No class Monday, January 16, MLK Day**

**Week III (January 18-20) American Values and the Prototypical American Hero**

Reading: Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, chapters 1, 2.

**Week IV (January 23-27) The American Hero cont.**

Film: *The Natural*

Reading: Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, chapters 1, 2.

**Week V (January 30-February 3) Anglo-Saxon Superiority and the “Red Man” Myth**

Reading: Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, chapter 4.

**Week VI (February 6-8) “Red Man” Myth cont.**

**No class Friday February 10**

**Writing Mechanics Exercise Due**

Film: “In the White Man’s Image”

Reading: Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, chapter 4.

**Week VII (February 13-17) Myths of Race**

Film: “Ethnic Notions”

Readings: Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, chapter 5.

**Week VIII (February 20-24) Myths of Race cont.**

**Take-Home Exercise #1 Due**

Film: “Amos ‘N’ Andy: Anatomy of a Controversy”

Reading: Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, chapter 6.

**Week IX (February 27-March 3) Myths of Race cont.**

Reading: Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 232-54.

**Spring Break March 6-10**

**Week X (March 13-17) Cold War Conformity and American Family Values**

**Prospectus/Bibliography Due**

Film” “Leave It to Beaver”

Reading: Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 1-121, 149-179.

**Week XI (March 20-24) War and Glory; Reshaping Values with Old and New Myths**

Films: *The Green Berets* and *Platoon*

Reading: Adams, *The Best War Ever*.

**Week XII (March 27-31) War and Glory cont.**

Reading: Adams, *The Best War Ever*.

**Week XIII (April 3-7) The Struggle for History**

Reading: Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, section IV.

**Week XIV (April 10-14) Mickey's World**

**Research Paper Due April 10**

Reading: Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, section II.

**Week XVI (April 17-19) Tying Up Loose Ends**

**Take-Home Essay Due (April 19)**

**Course Requirements Descriptions:**

All written work for the course must be typed or computer generated and in 12-point double-spaced print. Your work must also be presented in third-person language. It must also be turned in on the due date to be graded at full credit.

*Course Attendance* is required. A missed class will result in a deduction from your class participation grade. An absence is considered *excused* if there is an *acceptable reason* according to UF policy (<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html>). Examples of acceptable reasons are medical illness, religious holidays, military obligation, and the twelve-day rule. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of an excused absence and to provide documentation of an acceptable reason. Otherwise, the absence will be considered *unexcused* and will result in a quiz grade of zero if a quiz is administered when the student is absent. Whenever possible, the instructor should be notified prior to the absence. When this is not possible (e.g., due to unexpected emergency or illness), the instructor should be notified as soon as possible.

*Take-home essays* will represent responses to a list of essay questions provided on my web site at least one week prior to the due date of the assignment. The questions will be drawn from the assigned readings and the course lectures, and you will be expected to use the course readings and your class notes as sources to answer the questions. Each answer must be presented in essay format, using formal, academic language and style (i.e., complete sentences, tightly constructed paragraphs, no colloquialisms). Do not, in other words, provide answers in lists or bullets. Those essays that address each question in a rigorous and organized manner are more likely to earn a decent grade. **These grades will be dependent in part on your compliance with the rules in the**

### **"Writing Mechanics" exercise.**

The *Research Paper* should represent original work that deals with the dynamic of myths *and* values in American history. Many students in the past have done poorly with this assignment because they made the mistake of simply debunking a myth without examining its connection to American values. Please remember that your paper's inquiry should reflect the larger objective of this course. Please consult the "Research Paper" link on my web site for common guidelines related to writing a research paper. **Do also remember that your capacity to follow the "Writing Mechanics" rules will, as always, count toward your grade.**

### **Other Business:**

#### *Plagiarism:*

Keep in mind that your written assignments must represent original work. You cannot copy the words, phrases, arguments, ideas, and conclusions of someone else or of another source (including Internet sources) without giving proper credit to the person or source by using quotation marks and a foot note. Do not cobble together paragraphs or passages of separate texts and then try to claim that you have done original and legitimate work. You must write with your own ideas and in your own words. If you copy the words of someone else without putting those words in quotation marks, REGARDLESS OF CITING THE SOURCE, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarism is theft, and it is academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is grounds for an automatic failing grade in the course, a grade that is final and that cannot be made up. If you have any questions about how you are citing or using sources, come to me for the answers. Please also review the university's honesty policy at: {<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm>}.

#### *Classroom Assistance:*

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office { <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/>}. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide that documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

### **UF Grading Scale**

Please note UF's new grading scale with the addition of minuses.

A = 4.0

A- = 3.67

B+ = 3.33

B = 3.0

B- = 2.67

C+ = 2.33

C = 2.0

C- = 1.67

D+ = 1.33

D = 1.0

D- = 0.67

E = 0.0

E1 = 0.0 Stopped attending or participating prior to end of class

I (incomplete) = 0.0

**Note:** A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

*Alpata: A Journal of History:*

Keep in mind that the undergraduate- and graduate-student members of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society at the University of Florida publish an academic journal each spring. In the fall, the journal editors will be sending out a call for submissions (articles and book reviews) to the journal.