

American History from 1877 to the Present*

AMH 2020

Fall 2015

Turlington Hall 2306

Tuesdays, Period 4 (10:40-11:30am)

Thursdays, Periods 4&5 (10:40am-12:35pm)

Instructor: Nick Foreman

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Email: nickf@ufl.edu (Email is the best way to reach me.)

Office hours: *tbd*

Course Description:

This class is intended to give you an overview of the social, political, and economic factors that altered the American experience from the end of Reconstruction to the present day (or at least the very recent past, depending on how efficiently we use our time). In learning about the legacy of the Civil War, urban and industrial development, and the place of the individual in a continually globalizing world, you will hopefully find new perspectives on who we are and how we arrived at this most crucial of junctures in history. In order to ensure that you each get something useful out of the course, much of our time together will be spent in collaborative discussion. To truly make use of the past, you must relate it to, and engage it within the context of the present.

Required Texts:

We will be using these books throughout the course, so you'll probably want to buy them. I will post scans of many of our readings online in Canvas, but you'll be expected to obtain your own copies of these materials, each of which can be easily and cheaply purchased online or in most self-respecting bookstores.

Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*

Gilbert King, *Devil in the Grove*

Sarah Vowell, *Unfamiliar Fishes*

Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*

Recommended Reading:

I'm not going to require you guys to purchase a textbook for this course, but if you'd prefer to use one for an overview of the themes we'll be covering, I suggest:

James Hanretta, *America's History Vol. 2- Since 1865 (7th edition)*

Additional Resources:

Most of these books will pop up as selections in our weekly reading assignments, which I'll post in Canvas. You don't *have* to buy them, with the possible exception of the book you choose for your review essay.

Nathaniel Philbrick, *The Last Stand*

Adam Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside*

Amity Shlaes, *The Forgotten Man*

Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

-or-

Another book on 20th Century American History of your choosing (pending approval by me)

Class Format:

The class will be organized around readings and other selected media designed to encourage collaborative discussion. Lectures on Tuesdays (and in the first half of our meetings on Thursdays) will provide the framework and concepts to be applied in Thursday's discussion section. Weekly readings will be around 60-70 pages at the most, but it is imperative that you read, otherwise our discussions will be a real bummer. Exams and written assignments will be based on weekly readings as well as a book review of your choice.

Grades and Assignments:

Although I know you all go to college for the intrinsic reward of learning and not the grades, the overall score you earn in this class will be tabulated based on a 500 point scale. Each subdivision of your grade (i.e. tests, assignments, attendance) is weighted the same, but you will have to diversify your effort in this class to earn a high score. The point breakdown is as follows:

Two Exams: 100 pts each

Exams will be based on the readings and lecture, and will be in the form of short answer and essay questions.

Weekly Quizzes: 100 pts

Quizzes, of which there will be five (5), will appear without warning, and will be designed to test your dedication to engaging with the assigned readings throughout the semester.

Book Review: 100 pts

Students will be asked to select one book, either from the preapproved list above, or of their own choosing (with permission) and compose a 3-5 pg review and analysis of the work. Using themes from the class, this assignment should provide you an opportunity to read something you actually *want* to read, while also asking you to think critically about the material you've learned over the course of the semester.

Attendance: 100 pts

Attendance will be taken in discussion section each week until the roster has solidified and I am familiar with each of you on a name basis. After that, your attendance score will depend on the depth of your engagement in class discussions. Obviously, those who fail to attend discussion will have a difficult time acquiring these points, which make up 20% of your overall grade.

Course Policies:

Attendance Policy:

Beyond an initial period of roster verification, I will not be recording attendance in the way the authoritarians of your youth might have. You are adults, and so I trust your ability to prioritize and take school seriously without a mandate. However, students who choose not to attend diligently and on time will notice a widening chasm between themselves and the grades they'd prefer.

Make-up Policy:

Any assignments or exams that you might miss for an approved, documented reason can be made up by arranging a retake or resubmission with me personally. Papers turned in after the deadline will be docked one letter grade for each day of tardiness.

UF Policies:

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities: Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

University Policy on Academic Misconduct: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>.

**Netiquette: Communication Courtesy: All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats.

Getting Help:

For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Sakai or Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

** Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Other resources are available at <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help> for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Course Calendar:

Week 1- Course Introduction and Reconstruction in the South

- August 25- Introduction and rundown of syllabus, reading assignments and procedures
- August 27- Emancipation betrayed: the struggle for Reconstruction
 - Read: Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 39-57 (selection posted online to Canvas)

Week 2- The West

- September 1- Railroads, the Destruction of the Buffalo, and the Myth of the Vanishing Indian
- September 3- Kill the Indian, Save the Man?
 - Read: Nathaniel Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, xv-35, 287-303.
 - Supplement: James Hanretta, *America's History*, 499-522 (selection posted online to Canvas)

Week 3- America Becomes an Industrial Society

- September 8- Mechanization and the Robber Barron
- September 10- Management vs. Labor
 - Read: Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 253-295, 329-357.
 - Supplement: James Hanretta, *America's History*, 530-548 (selection posted online to Canvas)

Week 4- Daily Life in Urban America

- September 15- Migration and "Opportunity" in Northern Cities
- September 17- Casualties of Progress: The Problem of Urban Blight

- Read: Richard Wright, *Black Boy*, 261-283 (selection posted online to Canvas)
- Read: Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (selection posted online to Canvas)
- Supplement: James Hanretta, *America's History*, 592-616 (selection posted online to Canvas)

Week 5- The New American Empire

- September 22- A Splendid Little War: the US Stretches its Legs
- September 24- Fighting for "Freedom"?: Race in American Policy
 - Read: Sarah Vowell, *Unfamiliar Fishes*

Week 6- Prosperity, Foreign War, and the Domestic Individual

- September 29- Staying out of, Getting into, and Coming Home from WWI \
- October 1- "Roaring" for whom?: The Chasm of Experience in the Early 20th Century
 - Read: Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 324-370
 - Read: Howard Zinn, *People's History*, 359-376.
 - Supplement: James Hanretta, *America's History*, 686-701

Week 7- Economic Crisis, Round 1

- October 6- Depression: The Collapse of Confidence
 - Read: Amity Shlaes, *The Forgotten Man* (selection posted online to Canvas)
- October 8- **Midterm Examination**

Week 8- A New Deal and the next Great War

- October 13- Herbert Hoover, FDR and the Question of Social Welfare
- October 15- An Answer in the Form of a Gun (or tank, or bomber): Wartime Manufacturing and Economic Recovery
 - Read: Howard Zinn, *A People's History*, 407-442.
 - Supplement: James Hanretta, *America's History*, 723-749 (selection posted online to Canvas)

Week 9- The Rise of the Cold War

- October 20- Conflicting Ideologies
- October 22- Distrust at Home
 - Watch: Joseph McCarthy vs. Edward R. Murrow (links posted online to Canvas)

Week 10- The Consumer's Republic: Postwar Adjustments to American Life

- October 27- Peacetime Economic Conversion
- October 29- Reflecting Prosperity through Consumerism
 - Read: Kenneth Jackson: *Crabgrass Frontier* (selection posted online to Canvas)
 - Watch: TV Commercials for ford, appliances, etc. (links posted online to Canvas)

Week 11- The Black Freedom Struggle Continues

- November 3- Fighting Segregation

- November 5- Civil Rights: Definitions and Methods
 - Read: Gilbert King, *Devil in the Grove*

Week 12- The Sixties: Vietnam, Counterculture, and Youth in a New Age

- November 10- Rallying the Dominoes
- November 12- Upon the Gears, Upon the Levers: Students, Women, and African Americans in Opposition to the Status Quo.
 - Read: Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (selection posted online to Canvas)
 - Read: Howard Zinn, *A People's History*, 503-539.

Week 13- Suburbanization and the Environment

- November 17- Suburban Warriors: Middle-Class Housewives and the Rise of Neo-Conservatism
- November 19- Recapturing Homogeneity with Septic Tanks
 - Read: Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer and the Countryside* (selection posted online to Canvas)
 - Supplement: James Hanretta, *America's History*, 950-972 (selection posted online to Canvas)

Week 14- American Ecology

- November 24- Grassroots Environmentalism and the Rise of the EPA
 - Read: Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (selection posted online to Canvas)
- **Essay Due by 5pm via Canvas**

Week 15- America in the Modern Global Context

- December 1- Oil, Diplomacy, War, and the Media
- December 3- America as a "Modern" Society: the Continuing Struggle for Social Equality and the legacies of our past.
 - Read: Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 20-58.
 - Watch: Anita Bryant video (posted online to Canvas)

Week 16- Looking Ahead: Capitalism and the Global Ecology

- December 8- What is Prosperity?
- December 10- Reading Day (no class)

Final Exam- Friday, December 18 @ 7:30am

*The above syllabus represents a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.