

History 122 80 2, Survey of United States History, 1877 to the Present
(3 credits)

Spring 2009
(Evening)

Cedar Crest College

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

(Course Objectives, Format, Evaluation, and Outcome)

This course surveys American history from 1877 to the present. It is designed to offer the student a broad overview of the subject. Classroom lectures, discussion, films, and reading assignments will provide information about different periods and people. Topics will include not just the traditional subject matter of history courses (politics, economics, religion, ideas, etc.), but also less traditional fare (the history of women, blacks, sports, and architecture).

The purpose of this course, however, goes well beyond the accumulation of data about such subjects. By asking intelligent questions about history, by thinking about evidence critically, by applying the principles of logic to historical facts and theories, the student will begin to think as a historian. Such an inquiry is not just an exercise in research and sound thinking. It is also an exercise in self-analysis and ethics. Historians must ask what preconceptions they hold that might prejudice their thinking, and they must also possess the integrity to reveal and consider evidence that fails to square with their own ideas.

Students often ask: What good is historical knowledge? There are many answers to such a question. But one need only think of men and women who know nothing of the past. For them governments rise or fall, wars are fought, nations are dispossessed – seemingly without explanation. Trapped in the small world of their own experience, such people are similar to the superstitious folk of past ages. They feel prey to forces beyond comprehension. At best they are given to apathy, at worst to paranoia.

Students who successfully complete this course will be well on their way to escaping such a condition. They will have gained an introductory knowledge of American history from 1877 to the present (assessed by tests and an exam). They also will be able to understand and analyze local, national, or international events logically and with growing sophistication. And they will tend to avoid many of the pitfalls of logical thinking – for example, overgeneralizations, over simplification, and ad hominum reasoning.

The study of history cannot answer all questions. Nor can it offer a perfect understanding of earlier times. Still, it can often provide explanations, as imperfect as they might be, for the human condition, both past and present.

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With this in mind, the student needs to know how this course will be taught and how student work will be evaluated. Concerning the first question, I shall use several teaching methods, including lectures, films, classroom discussion, and outside reading. In all of this, the approach is simple: college students are adults, and so I expect them to shoulder much of the responsibility for their own education. Students must keep up with the readings and study diligently for tests. As to the evaluation of student work, the latter portion of this syllabus shows how much weight each course requirement will receive.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

READINGS

George Brown Tindall America, Brief Seventh Edition, Vol. II
Robert James Maddox, American History, (20th edition), Vol. II

Please remember that used copies of the above books may be found at amazon.com.

TESTS AND GRADING;

Tests give you the opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of the course material. Consequently, there will be four tests. The first and third tests will each be worth 20% of your final grade; the second and fourth tests will each be worth 30% of your final grade. The second test will be cumulative in the sense that it will ask questions from the first half of the course. Similarly the fourth test will be cumulative in the sense that it will ask question from the second half of the course. Make-up or early tests, which can only be had with the instructor's permission, will be essay tests. If on a test day you are ill or have some other acceptable excuse for not taking the test, you will need to obtain a note of confirmation from the Office of the Dean of Students. I do not expect you to risk your life or damage to your car to get to a test in terrible weather. If conditions make it impossible to get to school, you should call my office and leave a message. The dates of the tests are:

First Test:	February 9	(20%)
Second Test:	March 16	(30%)
Third Test:	April 6	(20%)
Fourth Test:	TBA	(30%)

If you wish to have as much as two points added to your final grade, you may write a three page research paper on some topic related to this course. Before you begin your work on this project, be sure to get my approval of your paper. This paper will be due in class on April 6. The paper

must include the following statement signed by you: "I have carefully read and understand the handout entitled 'Citations, or How to Avoid Plagiarism.'"

MISSED CLASSES

If you are unable to make it to a class, it is your responsibility to get the missed notes. It is also your responsibility to be aware of any announcements—for example, assignments, schedule changes, etc.—that may have been given during the class.

DISABILITIES

Students with documented disabilities and who need academic accommodations should discuss these needs with me during the first two weeks of class. Students with disabilities who wish to request accommodation should contact the Advising Center.

OFFICE HOURS

Office visits are welcomed. If you have questions or problems with the course, or if you just want to chat about history, please feel free to drop by. My hours are on Wednesday and Thursday 11:00-11:30 a.m. I am also available, by appointment, on Monday evenings from 9:30-9:45 p.m. If these times are not convenient, see me after class for an appointment.

THIS COURSE WILL BE TAUGHT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CEDAR CREST COLLEGE HONOR SYSTEM AND THE CLASSROOM PROTOCOL CODE FOUND IN THE CUSTOMS BOOK. CHEATING AND/OR PLAGIARISM WILL RESULT IN FAILURE OF THE COURSE. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS, PLEASE SEE ME.

COURSE OUTLINE

THE AMERICAN CENTURY FROM MIDDLE AGE TO OLD AGE

I. World War II: Ironies of the "Good War"

The First Nuclear War

Racism and Genocide: Germany, the United States, and the USSR

The "Fall" of Imperialism

Reading: Tindall, pp. 857-861

II. The Cold War

A Brief History of Communism

China, Korea, and the Cuban Missile Crisis

Oppression, Conformity, and Non-conformity in the United States

Reading: Tindall, pp. 888-892

III. The Rise and Fall of Contemporary Liberalism

The Great Society

The Vietnam War, the Counterculture, and Watergate

The Triumph of Republicanism

Readings: Tindall, pp. 934-939, 956-957, 1004-1007

Maddox, "The Spirit of '68," pp. 146-151

Maddox, "Soft Power: Reagan the Dove," pp. 134-135

IV. The Post Cold War

Mikhail Gorbachev and the Failure of Soviet Communism

The Clinton Interlude

Neo-conservatism

The Middle East: Iraq and Afghanistan

Reading: Maddox, "Refusing to Lose," pp. 179-181

BACK TO THE PAST: THE UNITED STATES, 1877-1941

I. The Gilded Age (1876-1900)

The Triumph of Industrialism and Conservatism

Readings: Tindall, pp. 572-583

Maddox, "Gifts of the Robber Barons," pp. 16-21

II. The Age of Reform

Populism, Progressivism, Labor, and the New Deal

Readings: Maddox, "Evolution on Trial," pp. 66-69

Maddox, "The Fate of Leo Frank," pp. 61-67

III. The United States Becomes a Great Power

Building a Navy and an Empire: The Caribbean Becomes an American Lake, and the Pacific Slowly Becomes an American and Japanese Lake

The Great War: World War I and II

Reading: Tindall, pp. 707-715, 729-730, 743-744, 825-829