

History 5124
Readings in U.S. History Since 1877
Fall 2006
Tues, 6-8:50 pm 427 Major Williams Hall

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30 pm; Wednesdays, 11-12; and by appointment

History 5124 is an advanced reading and discussion course that surveys key themes in late-nineteenth and twentieth century American history. Our focus will be on politics and culture, broadly defined, and we will draw from the latest scholarship as well as long-respected classics in the field. Over the course of the semester, we will explore a variety of historiographical and methodological approaches to the study of U.S. history. The ultimate goals of this class are to deepen your knowledge of U.S. history and increase your skills at critical historiographical and historical analysis.

The course is organized chronologically and thematically, with its success resting upon the three pillars of **reading, writing, and participation**. As a rule, there is one assigned book per week plus a required article or two that will provide theoretical frameworks for evaluating the scholarly significance of the books assigned. I've also included suggestions for additional optional readings, some of which you will need to draw upon over the course of the semester. Writing assignments included weekly Critical Reading Summaries, three critical essays based on the required and optional readings, and a final synthetic overview of the semester's material. Class discussions will provide a forum for questions, debate, criticism, and analysis. We will all take turns leading discussions, but the success of this seminar depends upon everybody's active and informed participation.

REQUIRED READINGS:

All books are for sale at the University, Volume II, and Tech Bookstores, are on reserve at the Newman Library, and may be purchased through numerous online booksellers (amazon.com, powells.com, half.com, bookfinder.com, etc.). They include, in order of appearance:

- James Green, Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America
- Michael McGerr, A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920
- Grace Hale, Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940
- Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York
- Kevin Boyle, Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age
- Alan Brinkley, The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War

- Michael Sherry, In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s
- Lizabeth Cohen, A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America
- Barbara Ransby, Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision
- Douglas Rossinow, The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America
- Lisa McGirr, Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the American New Right

There are also various articles assigned each week that are available through Newman Library's internet resources and databases. The only exception is the article I've assigned for Tuesday, August 29th, which I will distribute during the first class and then leave extra copies of on my office door.

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS AND RESOURCES:

If your background in U.S. history is shaky, you may find it helpful to periodically review relevant chapters in a U.S. history textbook. I have made arrangements to put several on reserve.

Another valuable resource that provides short essay-length overviews of the various subfields of U.S. history (social, cultural, political, labor, etc.) is available on reserve and electronically through Newman Library:

- Eric Foner, ed., The New American History (Revised and expanded edition. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

The leading journals in the fields of U.S. History include:

- The Journal of American History (JAH)
- Reviews in American History (RAH)
- The American Historical Review (AHR)

You can gain online full text access to articles in these journals through the Virginia Tech library website. There are also a number of valuable online databases available through the library website (start on the main library page and click on "Articles/databases"). My favorites include:

- America: History and Life
- JSTOR
- Expanded Academic Index ASAP

I urge you to familiarize yourself with these databases and the resources they provide access to as quickly as possible.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS:

Participation and Discussion

This seminar will be run on a collaborative discussion-based model, meaning that everyone needs to bring their insights, questions, and ruminations to the table each and every week. Participation is key to the success of this class. We learn the most when we have to articulate our ideas out loud and then listen (and respond) to the insights and responses of others. The weekly Critical Reading Summaries will help you think about the readings beforehand, but I also encourage you to share whatever spontaneous insights and questions arise.

In addition to general participation, 2-3 students will act as “**Discussion Anchors**” each week (which means that each student will act as a Discussion Anchor two times over the course of the semester). Discussion Anchors are ultimately responsible for leading the class discussions. Each group of Anchors will need to meet beforehand in order to plan how they want to structure the class, and they may find it helpful to do some extra research (ie: book reviews of the assigned book and several of the additional readings, quick background reading in U.S. history, perusal of relevant chapters in Eric Foner’s The New American History, etc.). Anchors will also need to be prepared to answer questions, share resources, and summarize the major arguments of the reading. No formal presentations are necessary, but Discussion Anchors may provide a brief introduction to the material if they are so inclined.

Critical Reading Summaries

To aid in our ability to discuss and analyze the books, **every student will submit a 1-2 page “Critical Reading Summary” based on the required readings** (theory and practice) **each week in class**. The summaries will ask you to identify key arguments in the books and articles, describe the methodologies employed by each author, briefly evaluate the books’ strengths and weaknesses, and devise discussion questions for the class. Your grades on these summaries will be folded into your class participation grade for the semester.

Critical/Comparative Reviews

Each student will need to submit **3 critical reviews of selected required readings**. All papers must be submitted as hard/paper copies either to me in person or left on my office door.

Paper #1: due no later than Friday, September 22, 3 PM

4-5 page critical essay based on the required readings (theory and practice) from your choice of one of the following weeks:

- Aug 29 – Working-Class and Labor History
- Sep 5 – Progressivism
- Sep 12 – Race and Whiteness
- Sep 19 – Women’s and Cultural History

Paper #2: due no later than Friday, November 3, 3 PM

5-6 page critical essay based on the required readings (theory and practice) PLUS one identified optional reading from your choice of one of the following weeks:

- Oct 3 – Race and Resistance

Oct 17 – American Liberalism and the New Deal State
Oct 24 – Diplomatic and Military History
Oct 31 – Postwar Consumer Culture

Paper #3: due no later than Friday, Dec 1, 3 PM

5-6 page critical essay based on the required readings (theory and practice) PLUS one identified optional reading from your choice of one of the following weeks:

Nov 7 – Civil Rights Movement
Nov 14 – The New Left and the Sixties
Nov 28 – The New Conservatism

Synthetic Thematic Overview

5-6 page critical synthetic discussion of how historians have addressed a particular critical theme or topic in U.S. history since 1877 (ie: race, gender, culture, politics, class). This paper will draw upon selections from this semester’s required readings as well as any optional readings you have completed.

Due no later than Monday, Dec 11, 5 PM

GRADES:

The final grade for the course will be based on the following formula:

Participation/Critical Summaries	30%
Discussion Anchors	10%
Critical/Comparative Reviews (3@15%)	45%
Synthetic Thematic Overview	15%

HONOR SYSTEM:

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and adhere to the Virginia Tech Honor Code on all assignments for this course, particularly those aspects of the Graduate Honor System related to plagiarism. <http://www.gradhonor.grads.vt.edu/>

As the Virginia Tech Department of History explains on its website – <http://www.history.vt.edu/UDGHowToWriteEss.htm> – plagiarism is “the use of the writing and/or ideas of another without proper acknowledgment.”

- If you use the exact words of another person, no matter how long or short the quote, you *must* put those words into quotation marks and include a citation to indicate their source.
- If you use someone else’s ideas or paraphrase someone’s words, you must cite that as well.

Failure to do any of the above constitutes plagiarism and will result in the filing of a report to the Graduate Honor System. If you’re unsure about whether an idea or words are yours or somebody else’s, err on the side of caution and include a citation. The tenets of this code will be strictly enforced.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Tuesday, August 22 – *Introduction to the Class*

AN INDUSTRIALIZING NATION

Week 2: Tuesday, August 29 – *Working-Class History and Labor Protest in the Gilded Age*

Theoretical Frameworks: Leon Fink, “Class Conflict American-Style,” in Leon Fink, In Search of the Working Class: Essays in American Labor History and Political Culture (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, , 1994), 15-32. (handout)

Practice: James Green, Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006).

Optional Readings:

Herbert Gutman, Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class History (New York: Vintage, 1977)

David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Leon Fink, Workingmen’s Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

Paul Krause, The Battle for Homestead, 1880-1892: Politics, Culture, and Steel (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992).

Elliott Gorn, Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

Week 3: Tuesday, September 5 – *Progressivism*

Theoretical Frameworks: Daniel T. Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” Reviews in American History 10.4 (Dec 1982), 113-132.

Practice: Michael McGerr, A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Optional Readings:

Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955).

Gabriel Kolko, The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916 (New York: The Free Press, 1963).

Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

Alan Dawley, Struggles for Justice: Social Responsibility and the Liberal State (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1991).

Daniel T. Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998).

Week 4: Tuesday, September 12 – Race and Whiteness

Theoretical Frameworks: Peter Kolchin, “Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America,” Journal of American History 89.1 (2002), 154-173.

Practice: Grace Hale, Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940 (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

Optional Readings:

David Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class (New York: Verso, 1991).

Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge, 1995).

Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

Week 5: Tuesday, September 19 – Women’s History/Cultural History

Theoretical Frameworks:

Linda Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” Journal of American History 75.1 (June 1988), 9-39.

T.J. Jackson Lears, “The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities,” American Historical Review 90.3 (June 1985), 567-593.

Practice:

Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South,” Journal of American History 73.2 (Sep 1986), 354-382.

Optional Readings:

Warren Susman, Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (New York: Pantheon, 1984).

Michael Denning, The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century (New York: Verso, 1997).

Angela Y. Davis, Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday (New York: Pantheon, 1998).

Nan Enstad, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

Kathy Peiss, Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998).

Friday, September 22 – Paper #1 due by 3 PM

**** Week 6: Tuesday, September 26 – Class Canceled ****

MODERN AMERICA

Week 7: Tuesday, October 3 – *Race Relations and the Politics of Resistance*

Theoretical Frameworks: Robin D.G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” Journal of American History 80.1 (Jun 1993), 75-112.

Practice: Kevin Boyle, Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age (New York: Henry Holt, 2004).

Optional Readings:

James Goodman, Stories of Scottsboro (New York: Pantheon, 1994).

Robin D.G. Kelley, Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class (New York: Free Press, 1994).

Glenda Gilmore, Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Kevin Gaines, Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Patricia Sullivan, Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

**** Week 8: Tuesday, October 10 – Class cancelled in honor of Fall Break ****

Week 9: Tuesday, October 17 - *American Liberalism and the New Deal State*

Theoretical Frameworks: Mark Leff, "Revisioning U.S. Political History," American Historical Review 100.3 (Jun 1995), 829-853.

Practice: Alan Brinkley, The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

Optional Readings:

William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

Michael Bernstein, The Great Depression: Delayed Recovery and Economic Change in America, 1929-1939 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Lizabeth Cohen, Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Jordan Schwarz, The New Dealers: Power Politics in the Age of Roosevelt (New York: Knopf, 1993).

Week 10: Tuesday, October 24 – *Diplomatic/Military History*

Theoretical Frameworks: Melvyn P. Leffler, "The Cold War: What Do 'We Now Know'?" The American Historical Review 104.2 (April 1999), 501-524.

Practice: Michael Sherry, In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

Optional Readings:

John Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1996 (8th edition, New York: McGraw Hill, 1997).

Thomas G. Paterson, On Every Front: The Making of the Cold War (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979).

Thomas J. McCormick, America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

Melvyn P. Leffler, The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994).

Week 11: Tuesday, October 31 – *Postwar Consumer Culture*

Theoretical Frameworks: Lawrence Glickman, “Born to Shop? Consumer History and American History,” in Consumer Society in American History: A Reader, ed. Lawrence Glickman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1-16.

Practice: Elizabeth Cohen, A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

Optional Readings:

David Potter, People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

Kenneth T. Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Lynn Spigal, Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Alison Clarke, Tupperware: The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999).

Daniel Horowitz, The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

Friday, November 3 – Paper #2 due by 3 PM

POSTWAR FERMENT

Week 12: Tuesday, November 7 – *The Civil Rights Movement*

Theoretical Frameworks:

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” Signs 17.2 (1992), 251-274.

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” Journal of American History 91.4 (2005), 1233-1263.

Practice: Barbara Ransby, Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Optional Readings:

William Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

Clayborn Carson, In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s

(1981. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995)

Taylor Branch, Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

Charles Payne, I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Belinda Robnett, How Long? How Long?: African American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Timothy Tyson, Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

Week 13: Tuesday, November 14 – *The New Left and the Sixties*

Theoretical Frameworks: Wini Breines, "Whose New Left?", Journal of American History 75.2 (Sep 1988), 528-545.

Practice: Douglas Rossinow, The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

Optional Readings:

Wini Breines, Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal (New York: Praeger, 1982).

Todd Gitlin, The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage (New York: Bantam Books, 1987).

James Miller, "Democracy is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

David Farber, ed., The Sixties: From Memory to History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

Sara Evans, ed., Journeys That Opened Up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds., The New Left Revisited (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003).

Nov 18-26 – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14: Tuesday, November 28 – *The New Conservatism*

Theoretical Frameworks: Roundtable on American Conservatism, Journal of American History 99.2 (Apr 1994), 409-452

Practice: Lisa McGirr, Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New America Right (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Optional Readings

Jonathan Rieder, Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

Dan Carter, The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).

Kenneth Heineman, God is a Conservative: Religion, Politics, and Morality in Contemporary America (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

Rebecca Klatch, A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Donald Critchlow, Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Friday, December 1 – Paper #3 due by 3 PM

Week 15: Tuesday, December 5 – *Constructing a Grand Narrative of U.S. History Since 1877: Recap and Evaluation*

Monday, December 11 – Final Synthetic Overview due by 5 PM