Course description: This course examines the political, economic, social, and military history of the United States from the 1860s through the Vietnam War.

*Required texts:


Additional readings: Additional readings may be placed on library reserve. These will be available electronically through the Robeson Library website and read by students for further discussion.

Course goals: This course will place a great emphasis on students’ performance on exams, as well as, their involved/informed participation in class discussions based on lecture themes, films, and especially assigned readings. History is not etched in stone like hieroglyphics. History is an ongoing debate about our past and the manner in which it shapes our present and future. We will discuss how historical forces have shaped the debates and decisions of those at the humblest and highest levels of American life – from the outhouse to the White House. We will examine the options that were available to American men and women in the past, the actions they engendered, and the results-which we call our history. It is the aim of this course to help students to take away more than a cursory knowledge of the last 160 years of American life. The goal is to show students how our interpretations of preceding generations of Americans and their times are based upon the clues that they left about themselves. Students will be engaged in interpreting these clues- and thus our history- for themselves.

**Academics:**

Grading:

- Mid-Term: 40%
- Final: 40%
- Class performance: 20%

There are five standard letter grades in the University’s grading system and I will assign any one of them as the work before me warrants. In this course, “A” does not stand for Average and a “C” represents an average grade (not a failing one). Below average and unacceptable work will be graded accordingly. That being said; I hope that you all do very well.
Reading: Each week (most weeks), I will give lectures on various themes relating to late-19th and 20th century American History that correspond with assigned readings. I will try to make them as interesting as possible. That is my end of the bargain.

Reading is your end of the bargain. Students will read, on average, about 40-50 pages per week (a pittance, really) in this course. Students will receive weekly reading assignments from the assigned books. It is important that you do the reading and come to class prepared to discuss it. You cannot just come to class, take notes, never open a book, and earn above average grades in this course. Exam essays must offer evidence that a student can meaningfully synthesize material from the readings and class notes in his/her answer to an essay question. An essay response that is a perfect recapitulation of lecture material will score no better than a “C+” unless it is meaningfully integrated with information from the readings.

Recitation: Most weeks of this semester part of our class meeting will be comprised of a Recitation session. During these sessions we will primarily discuss assigned readings from the Documents reader, although it may be used as an opportunity for debate, film discussion, etc. These play a big part in your class performance grade.

Exams: There will be 2 essay exams in this course:
Mid-Term: March 6
Final Exam: May 14

Exams are intensive and should demonstrate solid consideration of course reading materials. Students are therefore advised to prepare well and to begin preparing in advance.

Quizzes: I will give surprise, or “pop” quizzes if I feel it has become necessary. Students are expected to do the assigned reading and come to class prepared to participate in discussions. If I sense that the same handful of people is carrying all the discussion and that no one else is reading, I will give a quiz. It’s simple, if you don’t want quizzes: read. Quiz scores will be factored into students’ class participation grades as they reflect preparedness.

Students must pick up exams and quizzes promptly: There is a one class meeting grace period. Exams which are not picked up within one class meeting of the day they are returned will begin to be penalized 5 points per class meeting. In other words, if I hand back exams on a Wednesday and I am still holding your paper after class the next Wednesday, your 89 just became an 84. If I still have it after class on the following Wednesday, it is now a 79, etc. I do not enjoy “caddying” students’ work around in my briefcase for weeks at a time. If you are that disinterested in your work, the declining grade shouldn’t bother you anyway. This will not apply to students with excused absences. I determine what constitutes an excused absence.
**Class performance:** There will be no written homework as such for this course. However, students should come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Class performance will be graded on a weekly basis, and *student conduct including attendance, punctuality, and classroom conduct, participation, as well as any quiz grades, all factor into this portion of the course which comprises 20% of the final grade.

Class participation is graded and recorded systematically as follows. If you are absent you receive a 0. (not an F as in 50 or so, a zero) If you come to class on time but don’t participate you receive a √. (a C: you are there, you have a pulse- as average as it gets) If you come on time and participate you receive a √+. (a B: good, you’re trying) If you come on time and participate at a high level you receive a √++. (an A: great work, insightful) If you attend and are unprepared, disruptive, or annoyingly late you receive a √-. (a D: poor, try it in the workplace)

**e-mail:** All students are expected to be available through the Rutgers e-mail system.

**Extra credit:** There will be no individual “extra credit” opportunities in this course.

**Student Conduct:**

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all class meetings. As class performance comprises a considerable proportion of their grade, it is strongly suggested that they do so. Students who choose not to attend class are responsible for all materials, instructions, and/or scheduling changes covered that day and should be prepared to get the appropriate notes or information from a classmate, not the instructor.

Students who come to class and sleep will also receive zeros, as they are effectively absent for any scholastic purposes. I am more interested in whether or not your mind shows up. Students with multiple unexcused absences can expect their grades to suffer.

**Make a friend:** If you do not attend class, (for whatever reason) do not e-mail me to find out what happened- I already covered it all once, and this is not an on-line course. Make a friend today who will help you to catch up or stay informed in such circumstances.

**Punctuality:** If you don’t feel that this course really fits into your dining, commuting, or class schedule, please drop it now. Students who stroll in late are marked proportionally absent for that evening, and the lateness will work against their class performance score for that week. Consistent lateness will seriously impact your grade. If it is not important for you to be here on time, please drop the course now.

**Yes! You need a note!** Students who cannot attend class for ANY reason and wish to have their absence excused need a note. Students who are ill need a note from the doctor or the University Health Center. “I didn’t feel well,” although suggestive of illness, is not a sufficient medical excuse. If there is a prolonged illness or personal problem the proper way to handle such situations is through the Dean of Students’ Office, which contacts all the student’s instructors about the student’s situation. If your story is undocumented it is not excused – period. This means that exams will not be made up. I
will not be put in the embarrassing position of asking you for documentation. Therefore, I am telling you in advance that it is required and that it is your responsibility to bring it to me without my asking if you wish your absence to be excused.

*Electronic devices: NO. Students must turn off all cell phones, pagers, blenders, etc. before entering the classroom. They are a disruption I do not wish to hear and a distraction I do not want to see. Also, do not take out any hand-held electronic device during class for any reason. I cannot stress this strongly enough. If you do, you will be asked to leave. If it happens a second time, I will move to have you removed from this course. Consider this the sole warning on this matter. Also, you may not use a tape recorder in class.

Tentative Schedule:

Week 1, (1/23): Course introduction //Get your books pronto!// Reconstruction, Pt. 1

Week 2, (1/30): Reconstruction, Pt. 2
   Read: Ch. 14

Week 3, (2/6): The Development of the American West
   Read: Ch. 15

Week 4, (2/13): Industrialization / Immigration and Urbanization
   Read: Ch. 16

Week 5, (2/20): “Gilded Age” Politics / The New American Empire
   Read: Chs. 17-18

Week 6, (2/27): Progressivism / Review Session
   Read: Text, Ch. 19

**Week 7, (3/6): Mid-Term Exam

Week 8, (3/13): America and the Great War
   Read: Ch. 20

Week 9, (3/20): *Spring Recess – no class!

Week 10, (3/27): The New Era: The 1920s
   Read: Ch. 21

Week 11, (4/3): The Great Depression & The New Deal
   Read: Ch. 22

Week 12, (4/10): America and the Global Crisis
   Read: Ch. 23
Week 13, (4/17): The Cold War
   Read: Ch. 24

   Read: Ch. 25 and Ch. 27 pgs. 819-827

Week 15, (5/1): America and Vietnam / Review Session
   Read: Ch. 26

*Week 16 (5/8): Reading “Day”-- no class

*Week 17 (5/14): Final TBA per University Exam schedule