HISTORY 136
U.S. HISTORY SINCE 1877

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University of South Alabama
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& by appointment

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A lack of courage allows us to remain blinded to our history and deaf to the cries of our past.
          Maya Angelou

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

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WELCOME!

COURSE OBJECTIVES

History 136 provides a general introduction and overview of American History from the Reconstruction era to the present. Though broad in scope, this course will explore in-depth various facets of U.S. History and will cover such developments as the reconstruction of the nation after the Civil War, expansionism and westward movement, immigration, industrialization and urbanization, legalized segregation, imperialism and foreign
policy, early 20th century reform movements, the rise of mass consumerism, the depression, world wars, the cold war, the various social movements of the 60’s and 70’s, the rise of the conservative right, the post-Cold War era, and America at the crossroads of the 20th and 21st centuries. We will also examine the historical foundations of today’s most pressing social issues: multiculturalism, the working poor, gay and lesbian civil rights, the homeless, health care, AIDS, the environment, the death penalty, and abortion. In light of current foreign and domestic policies and war, we will also focus on the U.S. in a global context, the New McCarthyism, and the historical roots of current conflicts. This course explores these developments through the eyes and voices of a multitude of participants who built and shaped American society. Furthermore, this course will encourage students to challenge the traditional, fixed concepts of who we are as a society and a nation as well as critically examine our collective and individual identities. Throughout the semester, we will also explore larger questions and issues: What is the meaning of history? Is there one objective history? What are the politics of History? What does history mean to you and where do you fit in? How do we as a society and as individuals create historical change? Overall, the objective of this course is not necessarily that you memorize a bunch of dates and facts that will float out of your mind at the end of the semester, but rather to help you understand how we developed as a nation, what are our collective and individual identities, to foster critical thinking skills, to make it meaningful for you, and to have some fun along the way!

CLASS FORMAT

This course is a combination of lecture and large group discussion (Monday and Wednesday) facilitated by the professor, and smaller group discussion (Friday) facilitated by the teaching assistants. This class is open to impromptu discussion and questions even during the lecture portions. Wandering off the syllabus will most likely happen! A give-and-take atmosphere where asking questions (no question is ever dumb), helping one another to learn, voicing your ideas, and fostering critical thinking is one of our goals.
DISCUSSION

Learning takes different shapes and forms. Sometimes it comes through collaborating with one another and working collectively, and sometimes it is an individual effort. The expression of ideas is not exclusively conveyed through the written word. Sometimes ideas can be more effectively expressed through art, music, or the spoken word. This course values all of these forms of learning and expression. Discussion section gives you the opportunity in a smaller setting to formulate arguments, voice your own opinions, and engage with your fellow classmates with regard to the concepts and topics covered in lecture and the readings. Discussion section will meet once per week on Fridays (unless otherwise noted or announced) and will be facilitated by the teaching assistants. Each student’s participation and effort in discussion will be evaluated weekly by the teaching assistants. In consultation with the professor, your final course grade will be determined by your section leader.

READINGS
Reading assignments will be based on our main text, The American Promise, the collection of primary source documents, and Zinn. Since we will be engaged in discussion a good portion of the course, it is essential that readings are completed at the beginning of the week on Mondays so that we may have the most fruitful and dynamic discussions possible during the week. Texts to be purchased:


Howard Zinn, A People’s History of the United States (2003)

ASSIGNMENTS: PAPERS, PROJECTS, ESSAYS

PAPERS & PROJECTS
There will be one paper and other various essays and projects due over the course of the semester. Some of the projects and essays will be in-class and some may be impromptu. More
detailed explanations with regard to paper and project requirements and topics will be distributed at the appropriate time. Papers and projects will be due at the time of class on the specified date. Late assignments will be noted and taken into consideration during the evaluation of the assignment.

EXAMS
There are no traditional blue book exams in this course. There will be impromptu in-class essays and a planned in-class essay on February 25. There will be no final exam, but a final essay will be due on the last day of class, April 30. Students who do not complete the final essay will not pass the course. Students who miss the in-class essay on February 25 and who have a legitimate written excuse, may make this essay up. There are no make-ups for other missed in-class essays.

PARTICIPATION
The key to successful classroom discussion will be engaged and thoughtful participation by members of our class. So that we may have this type of discussion, readings must be completed by the date they are assigned. Each member of class may also be asked to lead part of discussion on certain days. Participation is valued highly and is weighed as heavily as written work and projects when determining a student’s grade.

ATTENDANCE
Whether a student chooses to come to class is his or her choice and responsibility; however, students are expected to attend classes regularly. As noted above, participation is a vital part of this course, attendance plays a significant role not only in the dynamics of this class and within learning groups, but in each individual student’s grade as well. If you aren’t in class, you can’t participate! For example, students who contribute regularly but who have irregular attendance cannot expect to receive as positive an evaluation as students who do participate and come to class. Students are responsible for obtaining any notes or assignments from classes they may have missed.
GRADES

Grades are wonderful when we are doing well in class and we are getting A’s. On the other hand, when things aren’t going as well, it’s a different story. When students are focused on the end product of “THE GRADE,” students aren’t as focused on learning, developing critical thinking skills, and thinking about the historical and contemporary issues at hand. This course attempts to foster such skills. In order to achieve this goal, students will not receive any grades on papers, projects, and essays, but will receive extensive comments on all assignments. However, all work submitted will receive a grade which the instructor can give students upon request and/or conference. The professor and teaching assistants will maintain qualitative notes evaluating each piece of work a student submits. Each student’s performance, effort, and verbal contributions and participation will also be evaluated. At the end of the course, all the qualitative assessments of each student as well as all grades assigned will be evaluated from which a final grade will be determined. This method evaluates each student more holistically as all assignments, projects, and participation are valued as a whole:

Written work = 50% of grade
Participation = 50% of grade

Students must evaluate themselves and their performance at the end of the semester which will be taken into consideration when determining a student’s final grade. At any time during the semester, a student may discuss his or her evaluation and progress with the professor and/or teaching assistants.

MISCELLANEOUS BUT IMPORTANT

During class, please be courteous and keep noise levels to a minimum. Unless there is an emergency, silence or turn-off all cell phones and pagers. So as not to disturb others, please do not pack-up your belongings until the end of class— this is disruptive. Class will conclude on time, thus there is no need for a disruption. On those days when class may run over, please be courteous when leaving the room.

In addition to scheduled office hours and office hours by appointment, the professor is usually available after class and around most afternoons. Voice mail and e-mail are also available to students who wish to communicate in these ways.
** Any student who plagiarizes material will receive an automatic ‘F’ for the course. If you are in such a position where you have to resort to claiming someone else’s work as your own, see the professor before a small problem becomes a major one!

** The professor reserves the right to change the class schedule and assignments over the course of the semester.

** Free speech, communication of ideas (whether popular or unpopular), discussion, and respectful intellectual engagement is encouraged and expected. This is called academic freedom.

** Comments, concerns, or suggestions about the course are welcome. If you are encountering difficulties or problems, please make an appointment, drop by the office, phone or e-mail so that this may be addressed quickly.

** Students who need special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of the course should speak to the instructor on the first day of class.
WEEK 1: THE MEANING AND POLITICS OF HISTORY
THE CRISIS OF RECONSTRUCTION, 1865-1877

1/12  Introduction and Course Overview
Memory and Meaning: What is History?

1/14  The Aftermath of the Civil War-- Reconstructing the Nation
Zinn, Afterword

WEEK 2: A NEW SOUTH?

1/19  NO CLASS, MLK HOLIDAY

1/21  A New South?  North and South Meet: Industrialization
Zinn, Chapter 10
American Promise, Chapter 16, 17

WEEK 3: THE RISE OF INDUSTRIAL AMERICA

1/26  Robber Barons or Captains of Industry?
Zinn, Chapter 11
American Promise, Chapter 18

1/28  Labor: Rebels Against the System

WEEK 4: THE GROWTH OF AMERICA THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS:
ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

2/2  Film: Earth and the American Dream

2/4  Film: Earth and the American Dream

WEEK 5: AMERICA DURING THE GILDED AGE

2/9  The Social and Cultural Landscape of Victorian America, 1860-1900: African-Americans, Asians, Native Americans, Women, Immigrants, and “Others”
American Promise, Chapter 19
Film Excerpt: Out of the Past
2/11   The Social and Cultural Landscape of Victorian America

WEEK 6: POLITICS, EXPANSION, & IMPERIALISM IN INDUSTRIAL AMERICA

2/16   On the Homefront: Gilded Age Politics and Reform

American Promise, Chapter 20

2/18   Beyond U.S. Borders: America and Imperialism

Zinn, Chapter 12

Film: Savage Acts

WEEK 7: THE DAWNING OF A NEW CENTURY: THE "PROGRESSIVE ERA"

2/23   Progressive Reform from the Grass Roots, the Limits of Progressivism, Reform v.s. Radicalism

Zinn, Chapter 13
American Promise, Chapter 21

2/25   IN-CLASS ESSAY

WEEK 8: WORLD WAR I

3/1   To Make the World Safe for Democracy? Foreign Policy and America at Home- the Social Landscape

Zinn, Chapter 14
American Promise, Chapter 22

3/3   To Make the World Safe for Democracy? Repression at Home

WEEK 9: THE ROARING TWENTIES, CRASH, & DEPRESSION

3/8   America in the 1920′s: Culture and Intolerance

Zinn, Chapter 15
American Promise, Chapter 23
3/10  A New Deal? America’s Response to the Depression
Rising Political Crisis: The Road to War

American Promise, Chapter 24

WEEK 10: HAVE A NICE SPRING BREAK!!

3/15   BREAK
3/17   BREAK

WEEK 11: WORLD WAR II: WAGING GLOBAL WAR, 1939-1945

3/22  The “Good War?” Its Aftermath and the Homefront

American Promise, Chapter 25
Murray, What Did the Internment of the Japanese Americans Mean?

3/24  The “Good War?” Its Aftermath and the Homefront

Zinn, Chapter 16

WEEK 12: AMERICA AT MIDCENTURY

3/29   The Cold War at Home and Abroad: Foreign Policy, McCarthyism Then and Now

American Promise, Chapter 26

3/31 Dissecting June Cleaver and the 50’s: Voices of Discontent

American Promise, Chapter 27

WEEK 13: THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: ORDINARY FOLKS CREATE EXTRAORDINARY CHANGE

4/5  The Battle for Racial Equality: From Boycotts to Brown to Black Power and Beyond

Zinn, Chapter 17
American Promise, Chapter 28

4/7  The Battle for Racial Equality Film: Eyes on the Prize
WEEK 14: “THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING”: ORDINARY FOLKS CREATE EXTRAORDINARY CHANGE

4/12 The War in Vietnam and the War at Home
The Student Movement

Zinn, Chapter 18
America Promise, Chapter 29
Film Excerpt: Berkeley in the Sixties
Kent State

4/14 Creating Change: The Asian-American, Environmental, Gay Liberation, Hispanic, Native American, and Women’s Movements

Zinn, Chapter 19

WEEK 15: A TROUBLED JOURNEY AND ITS AFTERMATH: 1970’s
A NEW WORLD ORDER: 1980-1991

4/29 From Nixon to Reagan: The Politics of Watergate to Conservative Resurgence


Zinn, Chapter 20 and 21
American Promise, Chapter 30


Zinn, Chapter 22, 23, and 24
American Promise, Chapter 31

WEEK 16: AMERICA IN THE 21st CENTURY: DEMOCRACY BETRAYED

4/26 “It Can’t Happen Here:” The Suspension of the Constitution and the Appointment of a U.S. President

Zinn, Chapter 25
4/28   The Palmer Raids, Internment, and Vietnam Redux: The Suspension of the Constitution and an Undeclared War in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in America

4/30   **FINAL ESSAY DUE**