

HIST 118: THE UNITED STATES, 1848 TO THE PRESENT

Dr. McDaniel, Spring 2010, MWF 11-11:50a, Sewell Hall 307

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Course Description

This course will introduce you to the history of the United States since 1848. Like any historical narrative of this scope, the course is necessarily selective in terms of the topics covered. Class lectures will therefore focus on revealing episodes and crucial turning points that took place in about two dozen key years. At the same time, however, your out-of-class assignments and required readings, which consist exclusively of memoirs written by Americans who lived in this time period, will introduce you to a wide variety of other topics, episodes, and perspectives.

One of my major objectives will be to communicate to you the dramatic changes and sometimes surprising continuities that have marked the last 160 years of American history. In particular, the course will focus on *three major storylines* for this period:

- (1) The transformation of the United States from a small, sectionally divided, and mostly agricultural nation into an industrial, transcontinental empire and then, in the twentieth century, an economic and military superpower, as well as the impact of these transformations on the place of the United States in the world at large.
- (2) The long and ongoing contests within the United States over who is and is not an American citizen and how wide the circle of "we, the people," should be, as well as the shifting ideas about race, class, ethnicity, and sex that have influenced answers to those questions.
- (3) The expansion of the size and power of the federal state, as well as the long and ongoing political and social contests over the role of the state in American life.

Your objectives should be to ...

- (1) Recognize key individual events, people, and ideas and relate them to these three themes, either as major parts of these storylines or as representatives of other paths not taken in the history of the United States.
- (2) Appreciate how many different stories and episodes from this period might justifiably be included in a history of the United States and learn some of the ways historians (a) select events, people, and ideas for inclusion in their narratives and (b) determine their relative significance.
- (3) Learn how to use primary sources, particularly first-person narratives by historical actors, to understand the past.

What to Expect

About two-thirds of our class meetings will consist of lectures, though these lectures will often include opportunities for you to participate in discussions, ask questions, and interact with

historical material. There is no textbook, so the lectures are especially important and attendance will be taken. The other third of our class meetings will consist of discussions of ten different autobiographies that you will read during the semester. There is a heavy reading load in this course (roughly, one autobiography a week), but it is manageable if you plan ahead. Look over the schedule in advance and be aware of the requirements. Finally, over the course of the semester you and your classmates will be constructing an online timeline of events that occurred in our time period that are of specific interest to you (more about this below). You will be required not only to post to this timeline but also to read what other students post.

How to Succeed

To take full advantage of this course and meet the learning objectives outlined above, it is crucial that you develop several regular habits this semester:

- (1) Don't skip class.
- (2) Take notes in lecture and in class discussions, and arrange to get notes from someone else if you must miss class in the rare event of a medical emergency, illness, or University-excused event.
- (3) Regularly review your notes outside of class. Make note of connections, themes, and questions that continue to arise across lectures.
- (4) Plan ahead to make sure you have enough time to complete the weekly reading assignments.
- (5) Start assignments well before they are due.
- (6) When additional non-required resources or readings are suggested in class, try as much as you can to take a look at them.
- (7) Don't violate the Rice University Honor Code by plagiarizing, allowing someone else to do your work for you, or committing some other act of intellectual dishonesty. Suspected violations of the Code will be reported to the Honor Council.

Assignments and Grades

There are **three** major assignments you will complete this semester.

1. The first are your **homework assignments** – ten short response papers based on the assigned autobiographies we will be reading. For each autobiography, I will distribute some reading questions in advance of our discussion of the book. You will then write a brief, typed response paper (about one page, single-spaced) on each autobiography. These papers should consist of two roughly equal parts. The first part of the paper should respond to one of the questions I provided, using the most relevant evidence and examples drawn from the reading to support your answer. The other part of the paper is a “free response” section. Use it to identify something that surprised, interested, or confused you about the autobiography, or to connect themes, events, and people from the autobiography to themes raised in lectures. **The homework assignments are due at the start of class on the day we discuss the autobiography in question.** Bring two copies with you – one to hand in and one to refer to during the discussion. If you will not make it to a class discussion, you should still turn in your assignment by the start of class. Late homework assignments will only be accepted in the case of medical emergencies documented to my satisfaction. I will assign each homework assignment a grade and average them at the end of the course. I reserve the right (but am not obligated) to raise

your final average if there is evidence of marked improvement over the course of the semester. The lowest of your homework assignment grades (which will include any “zeroes” from assignments you fail to turn in) will be dropped when determining your average.

2. Your second major assignment is to participate in a **collaborative wiki timeline**. For the purposes of this course, there are about 20 key years that I will focus on in my lectures (they are listed below). These years were either key turning points in American history or revealing years that open a window onto broader, slow-moving changes or continuities in American life. For the “wiki timeline” assignment, you will read newspaper articles published *on your birthday* in each of the 20 years listed below. Here’s how it works: First, go to the Historical New York Times database available through Fondren’s website (<http://bit.ly/4qnfZ8>). Browse to the issue published on your birthday in each of the assigned years. Read through some of the articles and identify one that is interesting to you. Then go to the online “wiki” on OWL-Space and post a brief summary of your article (at a minimum, 100 words, and at most, 300 words, or about the length of this paragraph), together with the title of the article, the date, and the page number, on a timeline. Technical instructions about how to do this will be provided in class.

Other students will be posting summaries of articles from their birthdays on these timelines as well. There are **two deadlines** for having your summaries posted, because we will be discussing the timelines in class on two occasions. Your exams will require you to use these timelines, so it’s important to keep up with your postings to and your reading of the wiki.

<i>Post by 8 a.m., Feb. 15, under ...</i>	<i>Post by 8 a.m., Apr. 19, under ...</i>	
1854	1901	1980
1861	1919	1983
1863	1933	1989
1873	1945	1992
1877	1954	1995
1892	1963	
	1968	
	1973	

Your summaries for the wiki timeline will not be individually graded. However, you must do **all** of your wiki posts in order to receive **any** credit on the portion of your exams that will require you to use these timelines (see below). If your summaries are consistently inaccurate, extremely brief, or riddled with grammatical and typographical errors, I also reserve the right to penalize your grade on the exams. I will contact you beforehand if I notice a pattern of unsatisfactory posting on the wikis, but I can only do this if you post early enough before the exam. So if you want feedback it is in your interest to complete some of the summaries before the final deadline. You can always ask me if you have questions about how you’re doing.

3. Your final type of assignment in this class will be **two exams**. Each exam will consist of two parts – a take-home, open-notes portion, and an in-class, closed-notes portion. The take-home portion will consist of a *long essay* question based on lecture material and the autobiographies, and a *shorter essay* question based on the wiki timelines. (If you have not posted summaries of a news article for every assigned year by the posted deadline, you won’t receive any credit for this portion of the exam.) For both essays you will be able to choose from more than one writing prompt. Both essays are due at the beginning of class on the day of the

exam. Although the take-home portion is open notes, **you will only be able to use material and information discussed in class, in assigned readings, or on material distributed by me** when constructing your answers. The in-class, closed-notes portion of the exam will test your knowledge of key terms that I will highlight and give to you in each lecture. The exam will consist of a mixture of brief, paragraph-length explanations or identifications of some of these terms, and some short-answer items like true-false statements and multiple-choice questions.

Your final grade will be a weighted average of these assignments:

Homework Assignments: 20%

First Exam: Take-Home Part (20% long essay, 10% short essay), In-Class Part (10%)

Second Exam: Take-Home Part (20% long essay, 10% short essay), In-Class Part (10%)

Policies

Classroom Civility: I expect everyone to treat other members of this course with respect, just as you have the right to expect the same from me. As part of that respect, please refrain from distracting activities during class, which include interrupting your classmates during discussion, or using cell phones or laptop computers to “text” or conduct personal business. Please note that using computers for anything other than matters related to this course is prohibited in class as a matter of common courtesy to your fellow students.

Honor Code: The Honor Code covers all work performed in this class, and all suspected cases of plagiarism and intellectual dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Council. If you are unclear at any time about what constitutes an Honor Code violation in this course, it is your responsibility to clarify the issue with me before any ambiguous case arises. Please take the time to read the Honor Council’s explanation of what constitutes plagiarism and intellectual dishonesty. http://honor.rice.edu/bluebook.cfm?doc_id=10355. *Specific Guidelines for this Course:* **You may not collaborate with other students on the take-home exams once prompts have been distributed**, though you may discuss potential questions before the prompts are distributed and you may study together to prepare for in-class portions of the exam. Please note that allowing someone else to do your assignments or take notes for you counts as intellectual dishonesty. If you miss class regularly and then turn in written work that seems to suggest a knowledge of what was said in class, I will be justified in suspecting that you are simply using someone else’s work instead of doing your own.

Required Reading

Titles are listed in order of their appearance on the class schedule. All titles are also available on reserve at Fondren library. You can check out the book for 2 hours from the circulation desk.

1. Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845).
<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Douglass/Autobiography/>
 OR <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DouNarr.html>
 OR <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/douglass.html>
 OR purchase your own copy at your preferred bookseller.

2. Douglass, Frederick. *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), chaps. XXIII-XXV.
<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DouMybo.html>
 OR <http://books.google.com/books?id=rKkJAAAAIAAJ>
 OR <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/douglass55.html>
3. Chestnutt, Mary. *A Diary from Dixie* (1905), chapters I-XI (pp. 1-209)
<http://books.google.com/books?id=5Wl3AAAAMAAJ>
 OR <http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chesnut/maryches.html>
4. Washington, Booker T. *Up from Slavery* (1901), chapters I-XV (pp. 1-266)
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/washington/washing.html>
 OR <http://books.google.com/books?id=B7MJAAAAIAAJ>
5. Berkman, Alexander. *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (1912), chaps. I-XVIII
<http://books.google.com/books?id=FC4UAAAAIAAJ>
 OR <http://bit.ly/5493Rw>
6. Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Rough Riders* (1899)
<http://books.google.com/books?id=QfwLAAAAIAAJ>
 OR <http://www.bartleby.com/51/>
7. Terkel, Studs. Excerpts from *Hard Times* (1970; 2000), provided in class.
8. Caputo, Philip. *A Rumor of War* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996).
 Available for purchase at campus bookstore. ISBN: 0-8050-4695-X
9. Dog, Mary Crow. *Lakota Woman* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991).
 Available for purchase at campus bookstore. ISBN: 0060973897
10. Brookhiser, Richard. *Right Time, Right Place: Coming Of Age With William F. Buckley, Jr. And The Conservative Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).
 Available for purchase at campus bookstore. ISBN: 0465013554
11. Obama, Barack. *Dreams From My Father: A Story Of Race And Inheritance* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004).
 Available for purchase at campus bookstore. ISBN: 1400082773

Class Schedule

WEEK 1

Reading: Begin *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

M, Jan. 11. Course introduction.

W, Jan. 13. Lecture: **1848**.

F, Jan. 15: Lecture: **1848**, and how to read autobiographies like an historian.

WEEK 2

Reading: Finish Douglass's *Narrative*; Read Chaps. XXIII-XXV of Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*

M, Jan. 18. NO CLASS in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

W, Jan. 20. Lecture: **1854**.

F, Jan. 22. Discussion: Douglass. Homework #1 Due.

WEEK 3

Reading: Mary Chestnutt, *A Diary from Dixie*, chaps. I-XV (pp. 1-209)

M, Jan. 25. Lecture: **1861**.

W, Jan. 27. Lecture: **1863**.

F, Jan. 29. Discussion: Chestnutt. Homework #2 Due.

WEEK 4

Reading: Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, Chapters I-XV (pp. 1-266)

M, Feb. 1. Lecture: 1865.

W, Feb. 3. Lecture: 1873.

F, Feb. 5. Discussion: Washington. Homework #3 Due.

WEEK 5

Reading: Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, chaps. I-XVIII (pp. 1-266)

M, Feb. 8. Lecture: 1877.

W, Feb. 10. Lecture: 1892.

F, Feb. 12. Discussion: Berkman. Homework #4 Due.

WEEK 6

Reading: None. Work on take-home essay part of Exam #1.

M, Feb. 15. Discussion: Wiki Timelines. Your entries must be posted by 8 a.m.

W, Feb. 17. Lecture: Catch up/review/answer questions..

F, Feb. 19. **FIRST EXAM.** Turn in take-home essay part; take in-class I.D. part.

WEEK 7

Reading: Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*.

M, Feb. 22. Lecture: 1898 to 1901.

W, Feb. 24. Lecture, 1919.

F, Feb. 26. Discussion: Roosevelt. Homework #5 Due. Drop Deadline.

WEEK 8

March 1-March 5. Spring Break.

WEEK 9

Reading: Studs Terkel interviews (TBA); begin reading Caputo, *A Rumor of War*.

M, Mar. 8. Lecture: 1933.

W, Mar. 10. Lecture: 1945.

F, Mar. 12. Discussion: Terkel. Homework #6 Due.

WEEK 10

Reading: Finish Caputo, *A Rumor of War*.

M, Mar. 15. Lecture: 1954.

W, Mar. 17. Lecture: 1963.

F, Mar. 19. Discussion: Caputo. Homework #7 Due.

WEEK 11

Reading: Mary Crow Dog, *Lakota Woman*.

M, Mar. 22. Lecture: 1968.

W, Mar. 24. Lecture: 1973.

F, Mar. 26. Discussion: Crow Dog. Homework #8 Due.

WEEK 12

Reading: Begin Brookhiser, *Right Time, Right Place*.

M, Mar. 29. Lecture: 1980.

W, Mar. 31. Lecture: 1983.

F, Apr. 2. No Class. Spring Recess.

WEEK 13

Reading: Finish Brookhiser, *Right Time, Right Place*.

M, Apr. 5. Lecture: 1989.

W, Apr. 7. Discussion: Brookhiser. Homework #9 Due.

F, Apr. 9. Lecture: TBA.

WEEK 14

Reading: Begin Obama, *Dreams from My Father*.

M, Apr. 12. Lecture: 1992.

W, Apr. 14. Lecture: 1995.

F, Apr. 16. Lecture: 2001 and beyond. Catch up/wrap-up/answer questions.

WEEK 15

Reading: Finish Obama, *Dreams from My Father*.

M, Apr. 19. Discussion: Wiki Timelines. Entries must be posted by 8 a.m.

W, Apr. 21. Discussion: Obama. Homework #10 Due.

F, Apr. 23. No class.

The **second exam** will be held at the date and time assigned by the registrar for final exams. As with the first exam, there will be a take-home and an in-class portion.

Note on Accommodations for Disabilities: The following notice is provided by Disability Support Services for your reference: "Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me [Dr. McDaniel] during the first two weeks of class. All such discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to also contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center."