

History 241: US History since 1865
Fall 2023
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Course Description:

Amidst the horrors of the twentieth century, many Americans found comfort in the belief that their nation was growing more powerful, modern, and free. As Martin Luther King, Jr., put it, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Although this hope has been a great motivating force for citizen activists, backlash to change has also played a major role in shaping US history. Events of great magnitude like the Civil Rights movement, the fall of the Soviet Union, or the 9/11 attacks had ripple effects that were difficult to predict. Our schedule will follow a non-linear path across time and space in order to examine how events can take on new meanings in hindsight. Along the way, we will interpret primary sources, wrestle with discoveries, and challenge our most basic assumptions about the past.

Required texts:

- Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (2019)
- Garrett Graff, *The Only Plane in the Sky: An Oral History of 9/11* (2021)
- Judy Yung, Him Mark Lai, and Genny Lim, eds., *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (2nd Edition, 2014).
- All other readings available in Content section of Blackboard.

Course Structure:

This course will be taught asynchronously, which means there is no specific time when everybody will be logged on simultaneously. You should think of this class as a college-level book club where we will analyze, critique, and discuss the readings.

Monday and Tuesday: These days are reserved strictly for reading. On Tuesday night, I will post a set of framing remarks to guide the discussion.

Wednesday: Each student will submit a 500-word post (which can be longer if you wish) to the Blackboard discussion board. This post is due by Wednesday at 11:59pm each week.

Thursday and Friday: Each student will post a minimum of 500 words spread across at least three replies (not including your Wednesday post) responding to the posts submitted by your fellow students. These responses are due by Friday at 11:59pm each week.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will acquire knowledge of the major themes in United States history since 1865.
2. Students will learn to identify and utilize primary sources to develop credible interpretations of the past. This course supports WKU’s Quality Enhancement Plan, *Evidence & Argument*.
3. Students will be able to articulate how American history is embedded global networks of political, economic, and cultural exchange.
4. Students will analyze selected examples of historical scholarship and contextualize these writings within historiographical debates.
5. Students will be able to assess representations of American history in popular media.

Technology Requirements:

Students are required to have access to a computer and reliable Internet connection to write and submit your assignments. Please visit the [Orientation for Online Learners](#) before the course begins.

AI Policy:

Artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGTP and Grammarly) are strictly prohibited. I recognize that AI technology holds great potential for making positive and useful contributions to the study of the past, but this class is designed to develop your own graduate-level skills as a historian, including the ability to independently assess the content generated by AI tools.

Grading Scale:

A (90-100%, or 90-100 points)

B (80-89%, or 80-89 points)

C (70-79%, or 70-79 points)

D (60-69%, or 60-69 points)

F (0-59%, or 0-59 points)

Late Assignments and Academic Dishonesty:

Timely participation on the discussion board is integral to this class. *Late submissions are the online equivalent of speaking aloud to an empty classroom after class has been dismissed.* Accordingly, late submissions will result in a penalty of 10 points per day. Acts of plagiarism or any other form of cheating will result in a failing grade. Please consult the [WKU Student Handbook](#).

RSI Statement:

The U.S. Department of Education requires that distance education courses must include regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty. For more information about RSI at WKU, please visit the [Regular and Substantive Interaction in Online and Distance Learning](#) webpage. In this course, regular and substantive interaction will take place in the following ways:

- Assignments and assessment deadlines that are spread throughout the term of the class,
- Announcements that frame weekly discussions and/or follow up on past discussions,
- Timely assessment and explanation of grade for individual weekly discussion posts,
- Detailed and constructive feedback on essay assignments, which identifies specifically what has been done correctly, needs improvement, or guides students to the next steps of learning.

History Tutoring:

The History Success Center provides free tutoring services for all students enrolled in history classes. Tutors are available to go over any aspect of the class, including essays, readings, exam preparation, and study skills. Drop-in appointments will be offered in Cherry Hall 202 from 10am-3pm on weekdays. Zoom appointments are also available. To make an appointment, visit <https://calendly.com/wkuhistory/>

ADA Notice:

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, Room 1074. The SARC can be reached by phone at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from SARC.

Problems?

If you are struggling or not getting the grades that you want, please contact me. I am here to help you! I am happy to answer questions by email, and we can make an appointment to speak by Zoom or phone. My office hours are any weekday by appointment.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

There are a total of 100 points available based on the following breakdown. *The best way to succeed in this class is to do the readings every week.* Our goal is not to memorize facts and arrive at a “right” answer each week, but rather to engage deeply and critically with the readings.

1) Discussions

Weekly discussion of reading—52 points (52% of grade).

Each week, you must write one 500-word-minimum original post (due by Wednesday at 11:59pm) and three shorter responses to your classmates’ posts (due by Friday at 11:59pm). The three shorter responses should be at least 500 words combined, not counting your Wednesday post. Each thread is worth 4 points. Your grade is divided equally between your main post (2 points) and responses (2 points). Although you can write with a casual, conversational tone, you are expected to proofread all submissions. You will not receive full credit for posts that simply mirror my remarks rather than demonstrating your own thoughts on the readings. Please note that there will be no discussion board during week 7 (Fall Break) or week 14 (Thanksgiving Break), so these 52 points are based on the other thirteen weeks of the course.

2) Sources & Methods Modules

Beyond Plagiarism certification—worth 8 points (8% of grade)

Please read the “Understanding Sources” and “Using Sources” modules of *Beyond Plagiarism: Best Practices for the Responsible Use of Sources*. Links to the modules can be found in the Content section (week 4) of Blackboard. Each module contains two quizzes. Upon completion of a quiz, you will receive a certificate that you can screenshot and save to your computer. Please upload the certificates to Blackboard. Each of the four quizzes is worth 2 points. **Due 9/15**

3) Projects

Oral history project—worth 20 points (20% of grade)

This assignment will investigate the nature of oral history as a research method, using an event in the lives of your own family or friends. Select any event at least two years ago, either light-hearted or serious, that was experienced by at least four members of your personal network who are willing to be interviewed. Then, carry out four separate interviews about their memory of this event. Take detailed notes and, if possible, record the interviews to capture the details. Be careful to avoid leading questions. After the four interviews are complete, compare your interviews and write an essay (at least 800 words) reflecting on your findings. Did the interviews differ on any key details? Why do you think their stories differed? What does this exercise teach us about the strengths and pitfalls of oral history as a form of historical research? **Due 10/13**

Seattle General Strike of 1919 research paper—20 points (20% of grade)

In Week 11, we will be discussing the Seattle General Strike of 1919. This research paper will be based on a collection of oral histories of the strike gathered by Rob Rosenthal in 1977. The oral histories can be found here: <https://depts.washington.edu/labhist/strike/interviews.shtml>. These interviews include people who held a wide range of views. For this assignment, please listen to at least four of Rosenthal’s 15 interviews. Then, write an essay (at least 800 words) that “fact checks” the oral histories using data from any sections of the “Seattle General Strike” online exhibit assigned in Week 11: <https://specialcollections.ds.lib.uw.edu/SeattleGeneralStrike/>. What were some of the similarities and differences between the oral histories that you chose? Did any of their perspectives surprise you? What factors (i.e., ideology, age, etc.) might explain their differing experiences of the strike? **Due 12/4**

Schedule

Readings are due the week they are listed on the syllabus. Aside from books required for purchase, all readings are posted in the “Content” section of Blackboard.

Weekly structure:

Monday and Tuesday: These days are reserved strictly for reading. During this time, Dr. Olson will post a set of framing remarks to guide the discussion.

Wednesday: Each student will submit a 500-word post (which can be longer if you wish) to the Blackboard discussion board addressing the weekly readings.

Thursday and Friday: Each student will post a minimum of 500 words spread across at least three comments responding to the posts submitted by your fellow students. These response posts cannot be written within 12 hours of your original post on Wednesday. You are encouraged to check back several times on Thursday and Friday to keep up with the discussion.

Readings and Deadlines:

Week 1 (Aug. 21-25): The Bombing of Philadelphia, 1985

- Watch: “The Day the Police Dropped a Bomb On Philadelphia” (2020).
- Watch: “The Forgotten Police Bombing of a Philadelphia Pro-Black Group” (2016).
- Nicholas Riccardi, “MOVE Still Wants to Shake Up Things” (2000).
- Chrystos, “No Rock Scorns Me as Whore” (1981).

Week 2 (Aug. 28-Sept. 1): The View from 2018

- Monica Lewinsky, “Emerging from ‘The House of Gaslight’ in the Age of #MeToo” (2018).
- Francine Prose, “New York Supergals Love that Naughty Prez” (1998).
- Brooke Blower, “V-J Day, 1945, Times Square” (2017).

Week 3 (Sept. 4-8): Iran Air Flight 655

- Max Fisher, “The Forgotten Story of Iran Air Flight 655” (2013).
- Watch: “Public War / Secret War,” *Nightline with Ted Koppel*, ABC News (1992).
- John Barry and Roger Charles, “Sea of Lies” (1992).

Week 4 (Sept. 11-15): Rethinking Pearl Harbor

- Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire* (2019), 3-19.
- *Beyond Plagiarism* module #2 (“Understanding Sources”) and module #3 (“Using Sources”).
 - Beyond Plagiarism quiz certificates due by Friday, September 15th, at 11:59pm.

Week 5 (Sept. 18-22): The Black Freedom Movement, Part 1: Legacies of the Civil War

- Letter from Jourdan Anderson, August 7, 1865.
- Watch: *The Reconstruction Era and the Fragility of Democracy*, Intro and Parts 1-6 (2015)

Week 6 (Sept. 25-29): The Black Freedom Movement, Part 2: Race in Modern America

- Barbara Ransby, “The Preacher and the Organizer” (2003).
- Listen: Interview with Richard Rothstein, *Fresh Air* (2017).
- Conor Friedersdorf, “Ferguson’s Conspiracy Against Black Citizens” (2015).

Week 7 (Oct. 2-6): Fall Break (Oct. 2-3) and Oral history research (Oct. 4-6)

- No discussion board this week
- By this week, please complete all four interviews for your oral history project.

Week 8 (Oct. 9-13): An Oral History of 9/11

- Garrett Graff, *The Only Plane in the Sky* (2019), 1-177, 209-217, 242-257, 331-341, and 373-375.
- Watch: Peter Arnett, "Interview with Osama bin Laden" (1997).
 - Oral history project essay due on Friday, October 13th, at 11:59pm.

Week 9 (Oct. 16-20): Angel Island and Ellis Island

- Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, *Island* (2014), 2-141, and 230-237.
- Watch: Clip from *The Godfather* (1972).

Week 10 (Oct. 23-27): Economic History, Part 1: Fraud and Capitalism in the Gilded Age (and Today)

- Richard White, *The Republic For Which It Stands* (2017), 589-601.
- William Jennings Bryan, "Cross of Gold" (1896)
- Molly White, "Predatory Community" (2022)

Week 11 (Oct. 30-Nov. 3): Economic History, Part 2: The Seattle General Strike of 1919

- Watch: "The Seattle General Strike" (2012) and "Witness to Revolution" (1984)
- Online Exhibit: *The Seattle General Strike* (2022)—please read at least ten sections of this online exhibit, which is a critical source for your final research paper.

Week 12 (Nov. 6-10): Economic History, Part 3: The Great Depression

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress" (1941).
- Packet of Documents: "Was the New Deal a Success or Failure?"

Week 13 (Nov. 13-17): Economic History, Part 4: The American Century

- Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire* (2019), 298-316 and 355-371.
- Tony Judt, "The Rehabilitation of Europe" (2005).
- Byrne Hobart, "Why the US Dollar Could Outlast the American Empire" (2020).

Week 14 (Nov. 20-24): Thanksgiving Break

- No assigned readings or discussion board this week.

Week 15 (Nov. 27-Dec. 1): Rethinking Native American History

- Philip Deloria, "Chuckle," *Indians in Unexpected Places* (2004), 3-11.
- David Treuer, *Rez Life* (2012), 1-9.
- Watch: "Richard Oakes and the Occupation of Alcatraz" (2019).
- Listen: "Native Fashion" *All My Relations Podcast* (2019).
 - Seattle General Strike research paper due by Monday, December 4th, at 11:59pm.