

Department: History

Course No: 131/W

Credits: 3

Title: United States History to 1877

Contact: Nancy Shoemaker

Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

WQ: Writing

Catalog Copy: 131/W. United States History to 1877 Either semester. Three credits.

Surveys political, economic, social, and cultural developments in United States history through the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Reason for the change in course level: This is a standard course taught in colleges throughout the United States at the introductory level. Textbooks available for this course consider freshmen and sophomores to be the audience. Making our course match the national standard would allow for equivalence. Currently, students who have taken this course through advanced placement or at another institution prior to transferring to UConn present a problem since they have taken the course at the 100-level while UConn's version is on the books as a 200-level course.

Reason for the change in title: To eliminate ambiguity in course's geographic parameters

Course Information: a. This course acquaints students with the major events and changes occurring in United States history from around the time of initial European settlement in North America through the Reconstruction period. Course themes are the diversity of people (mainly in terms of race and ethnicity,

gender, religion, and social class), diversity of viewpoints (evident in political debates, reform movements, and regional tensions), and the emergence of enduring ideas and institutions.

b. Course requirements will vary by instructor. Readings will commonly consist of five books (some variation of a textbook, reader with primary documents and/or secondary articles, autobiographies, novels, and readable scholarly studies, such as those that focus on a single town, person, or event.) Written assignments will consist of essay exams (a midterm and a final) and one to three short papers, usually in response to assigned readings and sometimes based on library research.

c. The course is organized chronologically and begins around the time of European settlement, surveying the different European nations that colonized North America, the differing political structures and economies of the colonies that they established, the effects of European settlement on Native Americans, why and how Euroamericans turned to African slaves as a labor force, and the interactions of these diverse peoples (Africans, Indians, and European colonists) in the area that would become the United States. For the Revolutionary War period, the course addresses both the political developments and the social and cultural debates engendered by independence: the role of enlightenment political philosophy behind declaring independence and constructing a constitutional, republican government and how ideas about the citizen, equality, and liberty inspired African-Americans, women, and other Americans to imagine political life in new ways. For the first half of the nineteenth century, major topics covered are westward expansion; industrialization, utopianism and reform (especially the antislavery and women's rights movements), and the regional divisiveness that ultimately broke down into civil war.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: This course meets the first six goals of general education. (1) Students will become more articulate orally by participating in weekly discussions. In exam essays and other assigned writings, students will work on how to construct a persuasive argument. (2) Course content examines historical changes from a variety of perspectives--economic, political, social, and cultural--and asks students to analyze a broad array of information sources (paintings and other visual images, newspapers, statistical tables, memoirs, correspondence, diaries, censuses, etc.) (3) By emphasizing how points of view and context informed political positions and historians' interpretations in the past, the course will alert students to exercise critical judgement as they learn how to evaluate all knowledge in light of its source and purpose. (4) Course material deals extensively with past moral debates and dilemmas, most notably in that about 1/4 or more of the course deals with slavery in some fashion; other moral debates that engaged American politics and society in this time period and that are therefore covered in course material are the power of government juxtaposed with individual rights and the treatment of indigenous peoples amid rapid expansion and land acquisition. (5) Students in this course will become aware of how people in the past thought and behaved differently from themselves and how many of the beliefs that 21st century people might assume are timeless truths--for instance, understandings of what is moral and immoral--have a history. (6) The course has as a major theme the meeting of peoples from throughout the world (several hundred different native North American peoples; Europeans of British, Spanish, French, Dutch, and other backgrounds; Ibo, Yoruba and other African peoples brought as slaves; and by the end

of the course Chinese immigration during the Gold Rush). Also part of the course is how new combinations of peoples emerged over time. Diversity of culture and experience runs through nearly every lecture, reading, and class discussion.

CA1 Criteria: The course mainly meets the first criteria for arts and humanities courses, as it investigates changes in human experience over time and uses as its mode of enquiry critical analysis of the documentary record. Because a substantial part of the course deals with the American Revolution and republican thought, political theory (or criteria #2) also applies to some extent.

W Criteria: 1. Depending on the instructor, students will either (1) write a 15-page revised research paper, or (2) write 3-4 shorter essays on materials used in the course (readings, films, historical documents, etc.); each of these short essays would be revised, making for a total of 15 pages of revised writing. The research paper approach would require that students use primary documents as well as secondary sources. It would allow students to develop one issue in depth amid the broad survey of American history while at the same time familiarizing the student with the research and writing process, revealing how the content in their other history readings was created and how every piece of history writing balances specific examples and generalities, evidence and interpretation. The 3-4 short essay approach will allow students to analyze a variety of historical materials more in depth, perhaps to compare scholars' interpretations of the past, arrive at their own interpre!

tations through analysis of primary documents, compare events in history, or explain people's motivations in the past and the consequences of actions (e.g., students might read excerpts from the wealth of scholarship explaining the Salem witchcraft incident to determine which offers the most persuasive explanation or to evaluate the kinds of evidence each draws on; a few weeks later, students might compare Frederick Douglass's and Harriet Jacobs' slave narratives with an eye to gender dynamics in slaves' experiences; and at the end of the course, students might pull course material together by comparing some aspect of the American Revolution and the U.S. Civil War. Because good history requires good writing, history teachers, even in an ordinary (non-W) history course, can not easily give separate grades for content and writing. To ensure that students who take the course have passed the writing component, instructors would not give a grade on a paper until it met a minim!

um standard. Students with severe writing problems would be advised to visit the Writing Center for extra help, meet with the instructor or graduate assistants to work more on their writing, and be given more opportunities to revise their paper(s).

2. Periodic formal instruction in writing will occur in class, early on in the form of a workshop on plagiarism: what it is and how to avoid it. As the class progresses, time will be spent in class through formal instruction and in exercises in or outside of class in which students can work on developing a thesis, the technical requirements of using sources (quoting, citation systems), and organizing their ideas. Written comments on drafts will address the large issues of thesis, quantity and quality of evidence, and organization while also advising students on how to edit their papers for style and error correction.

3. For the research paper approach, a rough draft will be due about 2/3 of the way through the course; comments addressing the content and the effectiveness of the writing will guide students in the revision process; students will be advised to meet with the instructor for an individual conference on their writing. For the short paper approach, students will have about one week between receiving the paper back with comments to turn in a new version.

Role of Grad Students: Advanced graduate teaching assistants (Ph.D. candidates) will run weekly discussion sections, grade exams and papers for those sections, and hold office hours or otherwise meet with students wishing to discuss course material and/or their work for the course. The instructor of record for the course will supervise the teaching assistants assigned for that course. Even more advanced graduate students (ABDs) will teach their own sections, under the supervision of the faculty member on the graduate committee appointed to serve as teaching director.

Supplemental Information: HIST 131W. United States History to 1877