

Department: History

Course No: 132/W

Credits: 3

Title: United States History Since 1877

Contact: Nancy Shoemaker

Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

WQ: Writing

Catalog Copy: 132W. United States History Since 1877 Either semester. Three credits.

Surveys political, economic, social, and cultural developments in American history from 1877 to the present.

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 examines how the industrial and demographic growth of the United States since 1877 affected the lives of ordinary Americans while at the same time the United States emerged internationally as a superpower. Students will study how various crises (economic depressions, world wars, etc.), technological innovations (automobiles, televisions, atomic power, the internet), and democratic revolutions (from Jim Crow laws in the south to civil rights, women's suffrage, etc.) contributed to the establishment 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 with the late-nineteenth century, covering such issues as the often violent struggles between labor and business; the "new immigration" and development of laws restricting immigration; westward expansion and Indian wars in the west; and the Spanish-American War and U.S. expansion into the Pacific. For the first few decades of the nineteenth century, issues covered are urbanization, urban reform, and the crisis facing rural communities that found expression in populism; World War I and the U.S. entry onto the world stage as an upstart claiming a seat at the table with European diplomats; the economic boom of the 1920s and the symbolic clashes in cultural values between young and old, traditional and modern, rural and urban that marked the rise of an increasingly standardized national media. The rest of the course documents how the United States became increasingly connected to the rest of the world by experiencing many of the same trends (Great Depression, World War, baby boom) while simultaneously emerging as an economic, military, and political leader in international coalitions, many of which were Cold War developments in which the U.S. allied with other capitalist nations against communism; at-home transformations occurred also as legal and educational institutions accommodated to the demands of civil rights and women's rights reformers. The last two-three decades covered in the course deal with politics and crises in presidential leadership (Nixon and Watergate; Clinton's impeachment), U.S. relations with the Middle East, and how computers and the internet have affected industry, government, and everyday life.

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 (films and other visual images, newspapers, statistical tables, laws and court decisions, 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 dilemmas such as debates over immigration and what it means to be "American," the Wounded Knee Massac!

re, the U.S. and the holocaust, the atom bomb, anticommunism versus civil rights, abortion rights and Roe v. Wade, and the Vietnam War and, generally, the nature and justness of U.S. intervention in events happening abroad. (5) Students in this course will become aware of how and why many of the institutions taken for granted in the 21st century first came into existence (the welfare state, the United Nations, etc.) (6) Diversity of culture and experience runs through nearly every lecture, reading, and class discussion but is especially at issue when the class studies the philosophies underlying immigration policies (is the U.S. a melting pot or a salad bowl?), the civil rights movement, and U.S. foreign relations.

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. Theories of political economy (criteria #2) also enter into the course, in the international and domestic debates about the virtues of communism and capitalism; in Woodrow Wilson's ideas of international cooperation; and in debates about the relationship between government and individual and human rights.

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. Because good history requires good

writing, history teachers, even in an ordinary (non-W) history course, cannot 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 minimum 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.