

Huron University College
University of Western Ontario
Department of History
2009-2010

**THE UNITED STATES:
COLONIAL PERIOD TO PRESENT**

History 2301E (550)

Dr. Jeffery Vacante

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Office Hours: Tues. 10:30-12:30 in SH2354 (Western)

Wed. 11:30-1:30 in LH211 (King's)

Fri. 2:30-3:30 in A304 (Huron)

Lectures: Fridays 11:30-2:30

in Room W-108

The American experience is often framed as an expression of historical exceptionalism in that it is the story of individual freedom and democratic governance. The idea that the United States stands apart from the rest of the world and that its history is one in which some of its people have struggled to create a "city upon a hill" has nourished the American mind for three centuries. Because this particular narrative is at the heart of American self-definition, and has shaped the projection of American power from George Washington's Farewell Address to the Monroe Doctrine to Woodrow Wilson's internationalism to George W. Bush's "war on terror," it is necessary that we study American historical development in order to understand the United States today.

Many observers in the United States talk of the American "experiment" in a manner that is meant to imply the precariousness and novelty of democracy and freedom on earth. What these observers also point out is that the idea of freedom and equality is just as precarious at home as it is abroad. Indeed, much of American history can be described as a long conversation about the meaning of freedom and equality as well as about the proper exercise of power. The story of American history, then, is the story of power, equality, and the constant struggle to live up to the lofty expectations of a country that is supposed to stand as a shining example of democracy and freedom. It is this tension that makes American history so interesting as well as so important. This course will explore the tensions at the heart of the American experience by examining the major events in American social, cultural, and political history.

Readings (available at The Bookstore at Western):

Nathaniel Philbrick, *Mayflower*

Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution*

Sean Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson*

Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order*

William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity*

Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*

Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*

Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter With Kansas?*

Assignments and Grading:

Students will prepare a paper during the first semester and a research essay during the second semester. In the **first paper** (4-5 pages), students will focus on the issues arising from a particular week's readings and lectures. In formulating your papers, you should consider the historical questions that arise from the course material. You might choose to respond to a particular point made in lecture or in the reading that you find particularly interesting or relevant and that you wish to explore further. For example, should you choose to write on Jacksonian democracy (week seven), you may wish to provide a brief overview of what is meant by the term, and perhaps evaluate Richard Hofstadter's interpretation of Jackson and his era and compare it to the one offered by Sean Wilentz. This paper is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your ability to synthesize the material from the lectures and the readings and to exhibit your analytical skills. You are not required to undertake additional research beyond the course readings and lectures to complete this assignment, although you are free to do so. Be sure that the essay is well-written, clearly-argued, and that it follows proper scholarly conventions (including proper citation style). These papers will be due on the Friday of the week following the day that the particular topic has been discussed in class (so if you choose Jacksonian democracy, your paper will be due October 30). **No papers will be accepted after Friday, December 4.**

Students will also write a **research essay** (15 pages) on a topic of their choice that will rely heavily, although not exclusively, on primary sources. This essay should follow proper scholarly conventions and citation style. It is **due on Friday, March 19**. It must be noted that essays submitted after the due date will be subject to a late penalty of five percent the first day and one percent for every day thereafter (including weekends).

While this is a lecture course students will also be assessed on their **participation**. Students will be encouraged to grapple with the material and to raise any questions they may have about the themes of the course or the readings. We may also, from time to time, discuss more directly some of the assigned readings during a particular week. Students will be assessed on their attendance throughout the year as well as their ability to discuss the themes of the course. It should be noted that the quality of one's remarks are very often more valuable than the quantity of one's interventions in a discussion. Active listening will also be rewarded, as will one's ability to consider and respect the ideas and opinions of others.

There will also be **two exams** in the course: one during the formal exam period in December and the other during the exam period in April.

Mark Breakdown

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| First Term Paper | 15% |
| Midterm Exam | 20% |
| Research Essay | 25% |
| Final Exam | 30% |
| Participation | 10% |

Lecture Schedule:

Week 1: Sept. 11: Introduction

Week 2: Sept. 18: Old World and New World

Week 3: Sept. 25: The Chesapeake

Week 4: Oct. 2: New England

- Philbrick, *Mayflower*

Week 5: Oct. 9: Colonies, Empire, and the Road to Revolution

- Wood, *The American Revolution*
- Hofstadter, “The Founding Fathers,” *The American Political Tradition*, 5-21.

Week 6: Oct. 16: Hamilton, Jefferson and the Constitution

- Hofstadter, “Thomas Jefferson” in *The American Political Tradition*, 25-56.

Week 7: Oct. 23: Jacksonian America

- Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson*
- Hofstadter, “Andrew Jackson,” and “John C. Calhoun,” in *The American Political Tradition*, 59-118.

Week 8: Oct. 30: Slavery and the Road to Disunion

- Hofstadter, “Wendell Phillips,” in *The American Political Tradition*, 177-210.

Week 9: Nov. 6: The Civil War and Reconstruction

- Hofstadter, “Abraham Lincoln,” *The American Political Tradition*, 121-173.

Week 10: Nov.13: The Gilded Age

- Hofstadter, “The Spoilsmen,” *The American Political Tradition*, 213-238

Week 11: Nov. 20: The Populist Revolt

- Hofstadter, “William Jennings Bryan,” *The American Political Tradition*, 241-264.

Week 12: Nov. 27: Progressivism

- Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 1-195.

Week 13: Dec. 4: America at 1901

MIDYEAR EXAMINATIONS

Week 15: Jan. 8: The Age of Reform: Roosevelt and Wilson

- Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 196-302.
- Hofstadter, “Theodore Roosevelt” and “Woodrow Wilson,” in *The American Political Tradition*, 267-365.

Week 16: Jan. 15: The Great War and the Jazz Age

- Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity*.

Week 17: Jan. 22: The Harlem Renaissance and the Great Crash

- Hofstadter, “Herbert Hoover,” in *The American Political Tradition*, 369-407.

Week 18: Jan. 29: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal

- Hofstadter “Franklin D. Roosevelt” in *The American Political Tradition*, 411-456.

Week 19: Feb. 5: The American Century and the Cold War

Week 20: Feb. 12: The Affluent Society

- John Kenneth Galbraith, “The Unseemly Economics of Opulence,” *Harper’s* (January 1952): 58-63.

READING WEEK: February 15-19

Week 21: Feb. 26: JFK, LBJ and Sixties Liberalism

- Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” *Harper’s* (November 1964): 77-86.

Week 22: Mar. 5: Feminism, Civil Rights, and Black Power

- Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*

Week 23: Mar. 12: The Vietnam War

- David Halberstam, “The Very Expensive Education of McGeorge Bundy,” *Harper’s* (July 1969): 21-41
- James C. Thomson, Jr., “How Could Vietnam Happen?—An Autopsy,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1968).

Week 24: Mar. 19: Nixon and the Rise of Conservatism

- Kevin Phillips, “Conservative Chic: The Evolving Style of the New Republican Majority,” *Harper’s* (June 1973): 66-70.

Week 25: Mar. 26: Reagan and the Politics of Hope

- Frank, *What’s the Matter With Kansas?*

Week 26: Apr. 2: No Class

Week 27: Apr. 9: The End of the Cold War & the Perils of Peace

Medical Absences:

For work representing 10% or more of the overall grade for the course, a student must present documentation indicating that s/he was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet her/his academic responsibilities. Huron students should take their medical documentation to the Academic Counselor, Academic Services Centre at Huron University College, together with a Request for Relief specifying the nature of accommodation requested. Documentation for non-Huron students must be submitted as soon as possible to the student's Faculty Dean's Office. The request and documentation will be assessed and appropriate accommodation will be determined by the Dean's office in consultation with the instructor(s). Academic accommodation will be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration, and variety of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her/his academic responsibilities. The UWO Student Medical Certificate (http://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_document.pdf) and Request for relief (<http://www.huronuc.ca/pdf/AcademicCounselingRequestforReliefFormMar08.pdf>) are available at the Student Centre Website (<http://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>), the Huron University College Academic Counseling website (http://huronuc.ca/faculty_arts_social_science/academic_counseling/) or from the Academic Service Centre at Huron.

For work representing less than 10% of the overall grade, if a student is unable to meet a deadline for reasons beyond her/his control, s/he should discuss the matter with the instructor in advance and give adequate justification.

Non-Medical Absences:

Request for academic accommodation for non-medical reasons will be considered by the instructor, or appropriate department chair, or dean's office in accordance with the relevant policies of the University of Western Ontario, available at <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2009/pg118.html>, <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2009/pg119.html>, and <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2009/pg122.html>.

Statement on Academic Offences:

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf .

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is an academic offence and will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant policy of the university, found at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf. Note that to convey others' phrases or sentences without quotation marks or block quotation, even if footnoted, constitutes plagiarism. Students who are in doubt as to the nature of this offence should consult their instructor, department chair, dean's office, as well as the Huron University College Statement on Plagiarism, available at <http://www.huronuc.on.ca/pdf/FASSonPlagiarism.pdf>. In addition, students may seek guidance from a variety of current style manuals available at the Reference Desk in the Huron University College Library. Information about these resources may be found at www.huronuc/library/research_guides_and_handouts.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University of Western Ontario for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the Turnitin.com system. Use of the service is subject to the license agreement, currently between the UWO and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Prerequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites. If you do not have the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from the Dean to enroll in this course, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Technology

It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited to, laptops, PDAs, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Program and Academic Counselling

History students registered at Huron who require advice about modules and courses in History should contact Jun Fang, Chair of the History Department, jfang9@huron.uwo.ca, V126, ext. 239. Students should contact Debbie Chadwick or Kent Robinson, Academic Counsellor on other academic matters. See the Academic Counselling website for information on services offered.

http://www.huronuc.on.ca/faculty_arts_social_science/academic_services_centre/academic_counselling_contact_and_services/