Course Description & Goals

According to the catalog, this course is "A comprehensive survey of American history from the end of Reconstruction to the present. Meets Texas state requirements for all graduates."

But it’s way more exciting than that. This span of roughly 141 years, while tiny in terms of the scope of recorded history, is critical in terms of explaining how our nation came to its present state of being. These are the years of the close of the storied, romanticized American West; of the surge of American capitalism and economic power; the losses and victories of two world wars; the push for greater civil liberties for all citizens; and sex, drugs, and rock ’n’ roll. Individuals of all genders, races, creeds, and classes shaped history in this period in ways that such a diverse citizenry never had before. Even today, at the dawning of a new millennium, we live with the consequences—good and ill—of their beliefs and decisions.

This course will sweep through nearly a century and a half of those beliefs and decisions, from the close of a civil war to the dawn of the 1980s (the impact of which we’re only beginning to see and feel in many ways). Along the way, we will consider both the key events and the influential trends that would affect American lives, past and present.

The goals of the course are to expand your knowledge of the basic content of recent American history, to introduce you to the conflicting interpretations of these historical phenomena, and to give you the tools to analyze historical artifacts for yourself. We will also develop your ability to process information and express yourself clearly, namely in the written word.

Required Materials

I do not believe that the cost of course materials should impede a student from being able to fully engage in this course. Thus, I have endeavored to ensure the required materials are as low in cost as possible.

We will utilize portions of several textbooks available as open educational resources (OERs). While you are welcome to purchase a physical copy of these texts, they are both available free and online, and we will use only limited portions of each.


You are also required to read one monograph. You may choose either of these:


Additional readings will be assigned throughout the semester and are included in the online course materials.
About Our Hybrid Course

This course follows a hybrid format in which we will replace half of the time we would normally spend together with thoughtful exchanges online. In our face-to-face sessions, we'll spend the majority of our time considering more difficult concepts and learning necessary skills. We will meet face-to-face on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 to 1:45 p.m. in McKibben 451. Should we need to transition to remote learning, we will meet on those days and times via Zoom. In-class and out-of-class requirements are as follows:

- In-class time (2.5 hours weekly): We’ll have two 75-minute classes each week in which we will practice historical contextualization and analysis skills. You will also complete brief quizzes and other assessments during the sessions.
- In-class replacement time (2.5 hours weekly): Instead of listening to me lecture for an extra 150 minutes each week, you’ll read, watch, and/or listen to content on your own time in preparation for our time together.
- Out-of-class time (~10 hours weekly): Outside of class, expect to complete additional readings, viewings, writing assignments, and assessments.

Reaching Me: You’ll find my complete communication policy in the Getting Started materials in our Brightspace course, but for the sake of brevity, I’ll sum it up this way: email, forever and always. You’re welcome to email me via Brightspace’s Mail tool or the email address above. Should you choose the latter, please take care to email me from your official jacks.sfasu.edu account, so as to avoid your message getting caught in spam filters.

Face Coverings

The health and safety of every member of this class is of paramount importance. In light of CDC guidance and per our institutional requirement, face coverings (cloth face covering, surgical mask, etc.) must be worn over the nose and mouth at all times in indoor public areas on campus. Out of respect for each of our personal health and safety, we will adhere to this requirement when we are together in class. We will also practice social distancing.

You are responsible for acquiring and wearing a face covering that adheres to the criteria outlined by our institution. If you have a medical condition (e.g. asthma) that necessitates an exemption to the face covering policy, please contact the Office of Disability Services.

If you arrive to class without a face covering, I will remind you of the university requirement and ask you to put a face covering on immediately. However, if you refuse to wear a face covering, I will ask you to leave the classroom and attend class remotely rather than in person. Refusal to wear a face covering or leave the classroom will be reported to the Office of Community Standards and dealt with using existing disciplinary processes.

Coming to class? Wear a mask!

Red Cross advertisement from Berkeley Daily Gazette, 1918
Attendance Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at in-class meetings is expected. Poor attendance will make it difficult to perform well. I will take attendance at each class meeting. Regardless of your attendance, you are responsible for all material and announcements delivered on class days. Should you need to miss class, I strongly encourage you to get notes/a run-down of class from a classmate. You will not be allowed to make up work missed in class unless your absence is excused. Should you miss more than ¼ of the total days class meets, I reserve the right to drop your final grade by as much as 20%. For more information on what constitutes an excused absence, consult SFA’s Class Attendance policy.

Technology Requirement

As you have elected to enroll in a hybrid course that is partially face-to-face and partially online, it is your responsibility to acquire a consistent, stable, dependable computer and internet connection with which to complete the assignments for the course by the deadlines indicated on the Semester Calendar. It is not the responsibility of the instructor to provide additional time for assignments or exams or an alternative means of completing the course due to technological issues on your part. Just as it is your responsibility to acquire and maintain adequate transportation to attend a face-to-face course, it is your responsibility to secure the technological means to participate in and complete this course.

Safe Space and Inclusion

Please know that my office and our classroom are safe spaces. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

Challenging Conversations

In our structured and unstructured discussions and dialogues, we also will have many opportunities to explore some challenging issues and increase our understandings of different perspectives. Our conversations may not always be easy; we sometimes will make mistakes in our speaking and our listening; sometimes we will need patience or courage or imagination or any number of qualities in combination to engage our texts, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences. Always we will need respect for others. Thus, an additional aim of our course necessarily will be for us to increase our facility with the sometimes difficult conversations that arise as we deepen our understandings of multiple perspectives—whatever our backgrounds, experiences, or positions.

Basic Needs

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs for support, including the Food for Thought Food Pantry. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.

Resources for Mental and Emotional Health

The rigors of higher education pose unique forms of stress—stress that can significantly compound life’s other challenges. If you are experiencing mental and emotional distress or if you just need to gain a new perspective on personal issues, please book an appointment at SFA’s Counseling Services. These services are FREE to any enrolled student. Please make use of this excellent resource. To book an appointment, contact them via any of these means:

Counseling Services
3rd floor, Rusk Building
936.468.2401 | website

Additional resources can be found on the Dean of Student Affairs’s mental health resources page.
Grading & Evaluation

Students have the opportunity to earn 1000 points in this course. Grades are determined from a variety of assignments:

- Accountability Quizzes: 400 points total
- Book Quiz: 150 points
- Activities: 400 points total
- Attendance and Participation: 50 points

Note that all assignments are due on the dates indicated on the Semester Calendar.

Accountability Quizzes

On dates of my choosing, I will give accountability quizzes. These will cover assigned readings, videos, or podcasts for the class. Quizzes can be online or in-class and taken individually or as a group (if authorized) and will be timed. Questions will vary in type. If a quiz is online, the penalty for taking more time than is allotted is five points per minute. Thirteen quizzes will be given during the semester; the lowest two scores will be dropped.

Book Quiz

On the days indicated on the Semester Calendar, there will be a very straightforward quiz, consisting of both multiple choice questions and a short answer question, on the selected, assigned monograph.

Activities

Activities will be graded on several criteria: thoroughness, thoughtfulness, and timeliness. Activities can come in a variety of forms, including (but not limited to) online discussions, primary source analyses, or projects.

Online Discussions

Online discussions may take place at various intervals throughout the course. In a discussion, you must post your own response to the prompt and, if required, respond to other students. "I agree" is not a response to another student that will merit points; this may be how you feel, but it doesn't require much depth of thought on your part. Responses must be substantive and reflect critical thought and engagement with the course material. Feel free to reply to other students' postings with oppositional points of view, but you must speak respectfully.

Please remember that the discussion board is an academic environment and should be treated as such; proper grammar, spelling, and syntax are expected. Though your postings should be of sufficient length to properly answer each question, your grade will be based not on the length of your postings (unless specifically noted) but on your active participation and the content of your messages. Note that while you may not fully understand each module's content, discussions can be a good way to help yourself and your fellow students to make sense of it. Thoughtful, appropriate questions about the content carry value and reflect critical thought.

Primary Source Analyses

In an analysis exercise, I will give you several thought-provoking questions and possibly a primary source (or two or more) to examine. You will then answer questions and/or craft an essay that carefully answers the questions asked and/or describes the document(s) and analyzes its/their historical significance. Analysis essays should be well-written, contain no grammatical or syntactical mistakes, and contain a high level of thought and polish.

Final grades will break down as follows:

A = 90-100% (900-1000 points)
B = 80-89.9% (800-899.99 points)
C = 70-79.9% (700-799.99 points)
D = 60-69.9% (600-699.99 points)
F = 59% and below (599.99 points or fewer points)

It is your responsibility to keep up with your grades and to calculate your current average for your own knowledge.

Extra Credit and Late Work

There is no extra credit in this course. Late work is not accepted.
Accessibility

I am completely committed to making our class a place where everyone can learn. Any student who may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, mental health concern, or other personal circumstance should feel reach out to me, and we can discuss how best to meet your needs and facilitate your best work and learning in this course. If possible, please communicate with me about your accommodation needs during the first week of the semester. Of course, if concerns arise later, let me know as well.

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, visit Disability Services.

Program Learning Outcomes

This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in this course.

Student Learning Outcomes

HIS 133 includes instruction in the interaction among individuals, communities, states, the nation, and the world, considering how these interactions have contributed to the development of the United States and its global role.

In addition to learning the above, students in HIS 133 will demonstrate the more general ability to:

- Think critically, which includes the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information about this period of history.
- Communicate effectively by developing and expressing ideas through written and visual communication.
- Gain intercultural competence, a knowledge of civic responsibility, and an awareness of how humans in the past have engaged effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
- Understand the role that personal responsibility has played throughout history and gain the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to making ethical decisions.

University Policies

The health and safety of every member of this class is of paramount importance.

Student Academic Dishonesty (Policy 4.1)

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways, including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

Academic and professional careers have ended because of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, please let me know. In doing so, we can avoid what could be a very costly and serious error. I take plagiarism very seriously and will not tolerate it.

Please read the University's complete student academic dishonesty policy.
Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time.

– Frederick Jackson Turner (historian)

History is the fiction we invent to persuade ourselves that events are knowable and that life has order and direction. That's why events are always reinterpreted when values change. We need new versions of history to allow for our current prejudices.

– Calvin (Calvin & Hobbes)