Course Description

This class explores the history of America in the twentieth century. We will begin by examining scientific racism, segregation, immigration, and nativism in the Progressive Era, then look at radicalism, civil rights unionism, and popular politics in the Depression and New Deal Eras, study the Red Scare of the Cold War Era, explore the Civil Rights Movement and Anti-War Movement of the Vietnam Era, and end by looking at the Environmental Movement of the 1970s and 1980s.

As this description suggests, this class is mostly concerned with social history, or the ways that regular people understand and challenge (and sometimes reinforce) economic, racial, and social inequality. While we will certainly talk about politicians, political leaders, reformers, and broad social and economic changes, we will always return to the ways that common people understood and responded to those changes. To put it another way, this class is a history of twentieth century America from the bottom-up.

Ultimately, this class attempts to use history to give students new perspectives on contemporary American problems. Today, we’re debating immigration, just as Progressive Era Americans debated immigration. Many Americans are worried about “Middle Eastern extremism,” just as many Cold War Era Americans worried about Communism, another supposedly foreign form of extremism. Civil Rights activists in the Black Lives Matter Movement are attempting to address police brutality, just as the Black Panther Party sought to address police brutality in the 1960s and 1970s. How are the problems we face today connected to the problems of the past? What can we learn from the social movements that attempted to address these past problems? Where did these movements succeed? Where did they fail? Can we replicate their successes without repeating their failures? These are the main questions this course asks. And by asking these questions, this course ultimately encourages students to use history to think more critically and creatively about how our current problems might be solved.
Learning Objectives

Students who take this course can expect:

• A better understanding of twentieth century American history;

• A better understanding of how political and economic policies shape racial and economic inequality;

• A better understanding of how political and social movements challenge and sometimes reinforce (both wittingly and unwittingly) racial and economic inequality;

• To engage in critical discussions about America’s present-day problems and think about how history helps us better understand and address those problems;

• To hone their reading and interpretive skills through classroom discussions and careful readings of primary and secondary sources;

• To hone their writing skills through a research paper and two take-home exams.

Course Format

This class meets four times a week. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays will be largely devoted to lectures. You will meet with your Graduate Teaching Fellows in sections on either Tuesdays or Wednesdays. Discussion sections are perhaps the most important part of this course. The best learning takes place in interactive environments, when students can ask questions and develop ideas through discussions with classmates. While lectures are interactive and I will regularly pose questions and ask for your thoughts, the size of our lecture means that not everyone will get a chance to participate regularly. I therefore strongly encourage you to take section seriously and come to all section meetings prepared to participate. The majority of your time in sections will be spent discussing reading or film assignments. Please have the assignment listed in the schedule below completed before you come to your section. Individual Graduate Teaching Fellows will each have their own policies regarding attendance and evaluating participation.

While discussion sections are central to this course, you will not succeed if you do not regularly attend lectures. This class does not have a text book. Instead, lectures will provide you with the background information and context you need to make sense of readings, films, discussions, and assignments. Moreover, many exam questions will be drawn directly from lecture materials.
Assignments

The major writing assignment for this class is a six to eight page research essay. Students may choose one of two options for their paper:

Option 1: Family History
Interview a member of your family (or a family friend) about their past experiences and then, using information from lectures and a minimum of two books, write an essay that situates your interviewee’s experiences in a larger historical context. You will ultimately want to focus on a specific aspect of your family member’s (or family friend’s) story. Did your family member (or family friend) grow up in an immigrant neighborhood? Did your interviewee experience the Depression, World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War? Was your interviewee active in the Civil Rights movement, the Anti-War Movement, the Women’s Movement, or the Environmental Movement? (Or did your interviewee oppose any of those movements?) What type of career did your interviewee have? Did he or she work in industry, or an office, or in government? The goal of this assignment is to understand how social, political, and economic changes have shaped your family’s history, and hence your history.

Option 2: Social Movement Newspaper
Choose a social movement organization newspaper from a list (provided during the first week of the quarter), find that newspaper in the University of Oregon’s library, read a full year of that paper, and then write an essay that addresses some or all of the following questions: who belonged to this social movement/organization? What problems was this social movement/organization attempting to address? How did they go about attempting to address those problems? Were they successful? What challenges did they face? The goal of this assignment is to understand how people organize to solve problems and the challenges they face when they do so.

More specific assignment details, guidelines, and suggestions to help you get started will be distributed during the first week of the quarter. A research proposal (basically a one- to two-paragraph statement that states which project you’ve chosen, the major questions you will ask in the course of your research, and how you plan on answering those questions) is due by 10:00 a.m. on Friday, April 8th. The final draft of your research paper is due by 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 23rd.

You must also complete a take-home midterm and a (non-cumulative) take-home final. Both the midterm and final will be a combination of short-answer questions and a longer essay that will ask you to synthesize material presented in class and test your comprehension of lectures and readings. The take-home midterm is due by 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 2nd and the take-home final is due by 10:15 a.m. on Friday, June 10th. Questions for both the midterm and final will be distributed approximately one week before the due dates.

Finally, participation is a major part of your grade. Please have each week’s reading/film assignment completed before your Tuesday or Wednesday section and arrive at section prepared to discuss the major themes and ideas presented therein.

You must complete every assignment to receive a passing grade in the class.
Grading

Grades on each assignment, as well as your final grade for the course, will be given in points. Here is the point-value of each assignment as well as a breakdown of how each assignment will be used in calculating your final grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-Home Midterm</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-Home Final</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper Proposal</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table will be used to translate your point score into your final letter grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>1000-990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>989-940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>939-900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>899-870</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>869-840</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>839-800</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>799-770</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>769-740</td>
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<tr>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>639-610</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>609-0</td>
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</tbody>
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Grading Guidelines

Your GTFs and I will follow the guidelines established by the History Department in evaluating your work:

A+: Work of unusual distinction;

A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument;

B: Work that satisfies the main criteria of the assignment, and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality;

C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well;

D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material and/or is executed with little regard for college standards;

F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or is regard for the assigned question.

For more information on the History Department’s grading guidelines, please see: [http://history.oregon.edu/undergraduate/](http://history.oregon.edu/undergraduate/)

The Century 21 Exposition, Seattle, 1962. The fair promoted Seattle as a center of technology and industry and helped pave the way for Seattle’s tech boom in the 1990s.

“Veterans of a Farm Hill Struggle,” Linocut. By Richard V. Correll, 1981. Correll was a prominent Seattle-area artist, Communist Party member, and labor and civil rights activist. His woodcuts and linocuts celebrated workers and working-class activism.
Late Work

Late assignments will automatically be deducted half a letter grade (hence, a “B” will become a “B-” or a “C+” will become a “C”). An additional half-letter will then be deducted every 24 hours. (So, your midterm is due on 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 2nd. Suppose you don’t turn in your midterm until 10:30 a.m. on May 3rd. Your grade would then go from an “A” to a “B,” or a “C+” to a “D+.”)

Academic Dishonesty

Any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and students suspected of academic misconduct may face disciplinary action, as outlined in the Students’ Code of Conduct:

https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with University policies regarding plagiarism and what constitutes academic misconduct:

http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html

Please come see me or your Graduate Teaching Fellow if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic misconduct or if you are unsure how to properly cite a source.

Course Website

This course uses the Canvas system and you can access the course website via your Canvas front page. The course website contains this syllabus, assignment guidelines, the questions for the take-home midterm and final (when posted), and lecture slides. Please submit all written work online, via the course website. Your Graduate Teaching Fellows and I will comment on and grade your written work directly in the Canvas system.
Required Texts

The following books are required for this course. They are available for purchase at the U of O Bookstore:

Carlos Bulosan, *America is In the Heart* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1946, 2010);

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Dell Books, 1968);


Additional readings or film assignments listed in the course schedule are linked or available for download on the course website.

Instructor Contact

I am here to help you. I encourage you to come see me during my scheduled office hours (Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00-3:00), or if you can’t make those, let me know and I’m happy to find another time to meet. You can come see me to talk about any of the material covered in class, a reading you didn’t quite understand, or if there’s some aspect of history you’d like to know more about. I’m also more than happy to read early drafts of your paper and make suggestions for improvements. Or, you can just stop by just to chat. Email is the best way to get ahold of me. I will respond to all student emails within 24 hours.
PART I  The Progressive Era, 1900-1917

WEEK 1
March 28: Better Living Through Science: The Progressive Era
March 30: Scientific Racism and Jim Crow Segregation
April 1: Immigration, Nativism, and the Ku Klux Klan

SECTION ASSIGNMENT

WEEK 2
April 4: The Age of the Mass: Progressive Era Culture and Consumerism
April 6: The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire: Reforming the Workplace
April 8: Making Salmon: Nature and Progressive Era Science

RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE BY 10:00 a.m.

SECTION ASSIGNMENT
WATCH: Modern Times (dir. Charlie Chaplin), 1936. Runtime: 1h, 27m.
PART II  
**The Depression and New Deal, 1929-1948**

**WEEK 3**  
April 11:  
Hard Travelin': Experiencing the Depression  
April 13:  
The New Deal  
April 15:  
Red Lined: Race and New Deal Housing Policy

SECTION ASSIGNMENT  
READ: Bulosan, *America is In the Heart*, pp. 3-151.

**WEEK 4**  
April 18:  
The CIO and the Laboring of American Culture  
April 20:  
Civil Rights Unionism  
April 22:  
Operation Dixie, Taft-Hartley, and the Limits of Civil Rights Unionism

SECTION ASSIGNMENT  
READ: Bulosan, *America is In the Heart*, p. 152-327.

**WEEK 5**  
April 25:  
“Roll on Columbia, Roll On”  
April 27:  
Nature’s New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps  
April 29:  
“We Have Faith in God and U.S. Reclamation:” Water and Farms

SECTION ASSIGNMENT  
LISTEN: Woody Guthrie B.P.A. Recordings (linked on class website).
PART III  From World War to Cold War, 1945-1960

WEEK 6
May 2: Gender and the City in Postwar America  
TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE BY 10:00 a.m.
May 4: Cities of Knowledge: Universities and the Military Industrial Complex
May 6: Plutopia

SECTION ASSIGNMENT
WATCH: Double Indemnity (dir. Billy Wilder), 1944. Runtime: 1h 47m.
PART IV: On the March, 1954-1979

WEEK 7
May 9: Battling the Plantation Mentality: The Civil Rights Struggle
May 11: Aretha Franklin, Nina Simone, and the Music of Civil Rights
May 13: The Civil Rights Struggle in Popular Culture and Memory

SECTION ASSIGNMENT
READ: Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, pp. 3-123.

WEEK 8
May 16: “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised:” Black Nationalism and The Black Panthers
May 18: “Bring the War Home:” Vietnam, the Students for a Democratic Society, and the Weather Underground
May 20: “This Family Will NOT Be Bused:” White Reactions to Civil Rights

SECTION ASSIGNMENT
READ: Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, pp. 283-424.
PART V  Ecotopia, 1962-1999

WEEK 9

May 23:  Silent Spring: Pesticides and the Origins of the Modern Environmental Movement

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY 10:00 a.m.

May 25:  The Oregon Story: Tom McCall and Land-Use Planning

May 27:  Reimagining the Rural Working-Class
In-class film: *Cuts* (dir., Charles Gustafson), 1981

SECTION ASSIGNMENT

WEEK 10

May 30:  Memorial Day—NO CLASS

June 1:  “No Compromise In Defense of Mother Earth:” Radical Environmentalism

June 3:  Devil’s Bargains: Rural Tourism

SECTION ASSIGNMENT

TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE BY 10:15 a.m., FRIDAY, JUNE 10th