This class explores the history of nineteenth century America. We will begin in the 1820s with national expansion, Andrew Jackson’s presidency, and Indian removal. We’ll then explore the sectional crisis, the Civil War, Reconstruction, white Westward expansion, treaties and Indian wars, industrialization, urbanization, Gilded Age politics, and end with the Spanish-American War in 1898.

While we will talk about prominent people and events from nineteenth century history, this course is mostly concerned with understanding how the past continues to influence the present. Indeed, the nineteenth century is still very much alive in our lives. We’re debating whether people should be allowed to fly the Confederate Battle Flag. Native Americans base many of their contemporary struggles on rights articulated in treaties negotiated in the 1850s and 1860s. One of the most popular movies of 2013, Twelve Years a Slave, was based on a book written in 1853 (a book which, coincidently, we’re reading for this class). Some critics of our economic system have said we’re living in a new “Gilded Age,” a term originally coined by Mark Twain to describe corruption and graft in the late-nineteenth century.

More than anything else, this class is about historical memory, the different ways different people have portrayed the events of the nineteenth-century, and the implications these memories have in our present-day lives. Why do some people say the Confederate Battle Flag represents Southern pride and heritage, not white supremacy, and how does this memory of the Civil War continue to shape racial relations in America? What are the implications of saying we’re living in a new “Gilded Age?” Why are Westerns set in the nineteenth century still among the most popular movies at the box office and what does this say about us? These are the types of questions this class asks.

Ultimately, this class attempts to use history to give students a better understanding of the problems we’re facing today. By thinking critically about the way American history is used (and sometimes abused) in politics, culture, and the media this class aims to make students more careful and considerate consumers of information. And most importantly, this class invites students to think about how the past informs the present so that they can think critically and creatively about how our current problems might be solved.
Learning Objectives

Students who take this course can expect:

- A better understanding of American history in the nineteenth century;
- A better understanding of how race, ethnicity, and gender have shaped American history;
- A better understanding of how political movements, the political economy, and urban growth shape racial and economic inequality;
- To think critically about race and ethnicity and the meanings of American democracy;
- To engage in critical discussions about America’s present-day problems and think about how history can help us better understand and creatively 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 assignment and two take-home exams.

Class 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 Thursdays. Thursday 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 ask questions and ask for your thoughts, the size of our lecture means not everyone will get a chance to participate regularly. I therefore strongly encourage you to take Thursday’s sections seriously and come to all section meetings prepared to participate. The majority of your time in sections will be spent discussing readings. Please have the reading listed in the schedule below completed before you come to your section on Thursday. Individual Graduate Teaching Fellows will each have their own policies regarding attendance and evaluating participation.

While active participations in Thursday’s sections are perhaps the most important part of this class, you will not succeed if you do not regularly attend lectures. This class does not have a textbook. Instead, lectures are intended to provide you with the necessary background information and context that you will need to make sense of readings and discussions. Moreover, many exam questions will be drawn directly from information presented in lectures.
Assignments

The major writing assignment for this class is a five to seven page research essay. In this class we will be exploring how episodes from the nineteenth century are remembered in contemporary America and how those memories impact the way we understand and deal with inequality in the present. For instance, some present-day southerners say the Confederate Battle Flag, also known as the “Stars and Bars” has nothing to do with slavery or white supremacy but instead represents southern pride and heritage. Others believe it is impossible to separate Confederate symbols from the history of slavery and maintain that the ubiquity of the Confederate Battle Flag speaks to the prevalence of white supremacy in contemporary America. This is an example of a historical memory and how different ways of remembering the past generate conflicts. Your job for this assignment will be to watch two movies that deal with a specific episode from American history and then write an essay that (1) examines how popular culture remembers that event and (2) considers why that event is remembered in particular ways. A list of potential topics and recommended movies will be distributed during the first week of class.

A research proposal, basically a short, one-to-two paragraph statement of what movies you’ll be watching and what themes you intended to explore, will be due on Wednesday, January 13th. The final project will be due on Friday, March 4th.

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 on Monday, February 8th and the take-home final is due on Tuesday, March 15th. 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 readings listed in the seclude below completed by Thursday before you meet for sections and come to class prepared to discuss the major themes and ideas presented therein. I would also strongly encourage you to develop your own questions about the readings and pose those questions to your classmates.

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:

- Participation: 200 points (20%)
- Take-Home Midterm: 200 points (20%)
- Take-Home Final: 200 points (20%)
- Research Paper Proposal: 50 points (5%)
- Final Research Paper: 350 points (35%)

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>1000-990</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>989-940</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>939-900</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>899-870</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>869-840</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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Grading Guidelines

I 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 disregard 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/)
Plagiarism and 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.

Required Texts

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

Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *A Pickpocket’s ale: The Underworld of Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006);

Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998);

Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (Los Angeles: Graymalkin Media, 2014).*

(*Many editions of Northrup’s *Twelve Years a Slave* are readily available. If you already have or prefer to purchase a different edition you may use it for this course—just come and see me to get page assignments.)

Additional readings listed in the course schedule will be posted in pdf form on the course website.
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.

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.
## Schedule of Topics and Readings

### Part I

**The (Complicated) Meaning of Democracy in Early-Nineteenth Century America**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>January 4</th>
<th>Popular Politics and Andrew Jackson</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 6</td>
<td>National Expansion and Indian Removal</td>
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<td>January 8</td>
<td>King Cotton: The Political Economy of the South</td>
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**Reading:**

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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>January 11</th>
<th>The World the Slaves Made</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>“Free Soil, Free Men, Free Labor”</td>
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**Research Paper Proposal Due**

| January 15 | Slavery and the Problem of National Expansion |

**Reading:**
Week 3

January 18  NO CLASS (Martin Luther King Holiday)
January 20  The Sectional Crisis
January 22  Disease, Death and Dying in the Civil War

Reading:
Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, pp. 135-238.

Week 4

January 25  Emancipation and Radical Reconstruction
January 27  Slavery by Another Name
January 29  The KKK and the Reign of Terror

Reading:
Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, pp. 3-144.

Week 5

February 1  Remembering the Civil War, Part I: The Lost Cause
February 3  Remembering the Civil War, Part II: The Birth of a Nation
February 5  Remembering the Civil War, Part III: “The Promissory Note”

Reading:
Week 6

February 8  “You Have Died of Dysentery:” Homesteads, The Oregon Trail, and White Western Settlement

Take-Home Midterm Due

February 10  “I Will Fight No More Forever:” Settlers, Treaties, and Indian Wars

February 12  All That Glitters: Race and Exclusion in the California Gold Rush

Reading:

Week 7

February 15  Railroaded: Corruption, Lies, and Graft in the Building of the Transcontinental Railroads

February 17  The (Not-so) Wild West

February 19  Water

Reading:
Week 8
February 22  The Nineteenth Century City
February 24  Industrialization and the Origins of the Working-Class
February 26  Immigration

Reading:

Week 9
February 29  The Gilded Age
March 2  Reformers and Radicals, or the origins of Parker Brother’s *Monopoly*

Research Paper Due

March 4  A Death in the Haymarket: Immigrants and Radicals in Industrial America

Reading:

Week 10
March 7  Gay New York: Sex and Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century City
March 9  Alcohol and Vice in Urban America
March 11  The Chicago World’s Fair, The Spanish American War, and the Closing of the Nineteenth Century

Reading:
Gilfoyle, *A Pickpocket’s Tale*, pp. 204-324.

Final Exam Due by 3:00 p.m., March 15th.