COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys the history of the United States from the end of the Civil War to the present. The period witnessed a radical reconstruction of ideas on race and gender, the formation of national issue-oriented political parties, the evolution of a powerful industrial-capitalist economy, and the emergence of U.S. influence on the international stage. Much of what we will study involves the relationship between the ideologies of capitalism and democracy. The age also saw a deliberate and on-going effort by millions of Americans to express, support, and expand notions of democracy and republicanism for everyone in the United States. This course takes these noble aspirations seriously; asking where and how Americans defined these concepts, whether or not they were met, and how the major social movements both reflected and forced the broader economic and political changes of the era.

Clearly, then, the history of this era is very complex. A survey of American history moves quickly and covers only a portion of these questions. Measuring how well students learn this material is not an exact science, yet historians agree that developing certain analytical skills are essential. The graded components of this course are designed to strengthen these analytical skills. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides a reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services Office at 361-825-5816.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Demonstrate critical thinking by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information, gathering and assessing information relevant to a question, and analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information;
- Develop communication skills by interpreting and expressing ideas through written, oral, or visual communication;
- Demonstrate personal responsibility by evaluating historical choices and actions, and relating consequences to decision making;
• Develop social responsibility by identifying intercultural competence and civic responsibility in past regional, national, and global communities.

REQUIRED BOOKS


The textbook is available for purchase at the University bookstore or through the Internet. The book is also on reserve at the library under my name and this course number.

GRADING STRUCTURE

A = 89.51-100.00
B = 79.51-89.49
C = 69.51-79.49
D = 59.51-69.49
F = 0-59.49

***YOU CAN NOT RESCHEDULE THE FINAL EXAM WITHOUT THE DEAN’S PRIOR AUTHORIZATION***

DESCRIPTION OF GRADED EVENTS

Three Exams (70% of final grade) will ask you to identify the significance of several key terms AND compose a single well-argued essay answer supported by evidence. Each exam is weighted differently when computing your final grade: Exam 1=15%, Exam 2 = 25%, Exam 3=30%. The last/final exam will not be comprehensive.

Quizzes and Class Participation (15% of final grade)

This class will be often run in a discussion-centered format. This is an adult and participatory approach that puts a premium less on accumulating “knowledge,” but on developing skills—of analysis, critical thinking, and the ability to articulate your ideas both verbally and in writing. Thus your voice and active participation are crucial. This means doing the readings and coming to class prepared to respond intelligently to the material presented, and perhaps to stimulate critical thinking in others by providing an alternative perspective. Though we will be discussing delicate questions of history, war, race, class, sexuality, gender, and politics about which Americans frequently disagree, we should all strive to remain amicable and respectful, and to avoid giving intentional offense. But our discussions will be most fruitful if everyone contributes, not with any particular position, but with what you really think. Discussions where everyone agrees, or where people feel they cannot speak frankly, are not very enlightening. Attendance will be a part of your grade. The material will be presented in an understandable way and the lectures and discussions will shed light on the readings, which will be assigned in segments. Nonetheless, as with all Liberal Arts classes, reading the material assigned in advance
of the class at which it will be discussed is essential. If some students do not prepare for class and participate in discussions, then I will give unscheduled quizzes, and I reserve the right to factor quiz grades into your participation grade with whatever weight I feel appropriate. You are expected to read the SMALL AMOUNT of material required for each class; think seriously about the material and come to your own conclusions about the views expressed therein; and then come to class prepared to discuss the material and to discuss your opinions of it. As long as it is based on a reading of the material, I do not care what your opinion is. I only care that you be able to understand the economics, politics, and social and cultural ideas and/or myths and stereotypes that have driven American history and that you be able to discuss and/or criticize them in an intelligent reasoned fashion. You are thus to be graded on the logical validity and thoughtfulness of your discussions, not upon your conclusions, opinions, or biases, no matter how bizarre they might appear to me or to your colleagues. People who discuss more will generally get better grades, BUT you will be graded on quality not quantity. It is better to say a few things well than to talk to no purpose. Thus, students, regardless of how well informed they are, will not be allowed to monopolize class discussion. In fact, I will often question the class and members of it in the Socratic fashion in order to draw out and build discussions, especially by those who do not volunteer. One excellent outcome of an open classroom environment is the diversity of ideas and perspectives that can emerge in discussions: your perspective or doubt might be quietly shared by others, and can help us all understand life in unexpected ways, so speak up!

One American History Paper (15% of final grade). The papers are due on the day indicated on the schedule that I will distribute in class and post electronically. A handout will be distributed in class and/or through Blackboard with complete instructions.

Attendance Policy. Your attendance in class is required and will be recorded over the semester. For each day over three unexcused absences, your final term grade will be lowered by 2 percentage points. Students with more than six unexcused absences will have their final term grade lowered by a full letter grade. Obviously, attendance will also affect your class participation grade.

Hurricane policy: In the event of a hurricane, I follow the published policies of TAMU-CC. If the campus remains officially open during the time that our class normally meets then class will proceed as scheduled (including all graded events). If the university closes campus then, of course, we push to the next class period. If an exam date is cancelled, the exam is held at the next class meeting.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THIS CLASS
This course does not require that you memorize speeches, dates, or statistics that (as University students) you are wise enough to look up in any textbook (okay, probably the internet). The focus in this course is on finding the significance of people, events, and ideas and to understand them in the proper order and in terms of cause and effect. Most people do this in their everyday lives. Your job for the next fifteen weeks is to apply and develop this skill for U.S. history from 1865.

Students who compete for the highest grades regularly attend class, read the assigned work, take their own notes, participate in class discussion, and learn how to best manage their time. Students
who do well also take time to read and understand the syllabus, to ask questions when confused, and to prepare for assignments in advance. Regular attendance in any college course is a strong predictor of student grades.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Early in the semester I will distribute a class schedule that will specify the readings for each class in advance, as well as due dates of midterm exam, final exam, and term paper.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY, ATTENDANCE, AND OTHER CLASS POLICIES

It is my experience that most students attend class regularly, behave as adults, submit assignments and take exams on time, perform well over the term, and do not cheat. Unfortunately, the following rules are necessary for the remaining few.

The environment of the classroom demands that we conduct ourselves like adults and with respect for each other. As a result, the following guidelines will be followed:

- always conduct yourself with respect and civility toward others. Abusive language or behavior will not be tolerated.
- please turn off or set to vibrate all cell phones and pagers. If you must take a call, do so outside of class.
- please be aware that talking, leaving early, arriving late, and other disruptive behavior affects your peers’ ability to learn the material. Excessive disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
- dozing-off sometimes happens (even in my electrifying lectures), but DO NOT come to my class to sleep.
- please refer to the TAMU-CC Student Code of Conduct for a more complete treatment of your rights and responsibilities while in class.

Be absolutely clear: I will hold you responsible should your behavior negatively affect others in class. If this happens repeatedly, you will be removed from the class (even if it is the last week of the term).

The penalty for academic dishonesty is clearly specified in the current Undergraduate Bulletin. I will follow these guidelines. In addition, students will be awarded zero points for any assignment in which cheating is detected. Plagiarism is considered by me and the University to be cheating. This is your first and only warning not to cheat in this class.

Make-up exams will be offered to students who inform me before test time of an excused absence. The questions on the make-up exam will not be harder but the exam will not offer optional or bonus questions. Make-up exams will be offered for one week after the scheduled date of the exam. A student may take only one make-up exam over the span of the term.

Student who fail the first exam are encouraged to schedule a meeting with me within one week of the return of the exam to discuss their work and ways to improve their performance.

All assigned papers must be turned as a hard copy (printed on paper). No electronic submissions are accepted. All assigned papers will be lowered one letter grade for every calendar day that
they are late. Even very late paper submissions will receive some credit. Failure to turn in any paper will result in a zero for that assignment. Individual grades can be reviewed with the instructor, grader, or seminar leader as appropriate. Please wait at least 24 hours after receiving your graded work before meeting with the grader to discuss grader materials (you can email or see me immediately, I’m fair game and the best bet to get your answer). All final grading decisions are made by me; the grading assistants are not responsible for any final grade decisions in HIST-1302.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466 or log onto http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac.

DISABILITY SERVICES

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If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

GRADE APPEALS PROCESS

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.