

HIS 315L The United States Since 1865

Fall 2013

BUR 112, T-TH 12:30-2:00

Instructor: Aragorn Storm Miller

Office: GAR 3.226

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:00-4:00, and by appointment

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Course Description

In just over a century the United States transformed from a nation scarred by civil war to perhaps the most powerful, prosperous, and conflicted polity in human history. How did this happen? This course examines the dominant discourses, crises, conflicts, and resolutions associated with the emergence of the United States as a political and socioeconomic world power. We begin with a discussion of the ways in which the nation attempted to recover from the Civil War in the context of renewed territorial expansion and accelerating industrialization and immigration. From there we examine the rise of the United States as a world power and the emergence of new strains of domestic ambivalence regarding questions of macroeconomic prosperity, social discord, and geopolitical influence. We conclude with a consideration of the contested meanings of freedom, prosperity, and national identity, as the nation grappled with the Cold War and the rapidly evolving socioeconomic realities the late 20th and early 21st century world.

The goal of this course is to help students to master content and facts, and to develop the ability to interrogate competing interpretive positions and make judgments about history. We will pay attention to ideas of contingency and individual agency in the “top down” and “bottom up” history the modern United States. Students will work with dates, places, and names well known in the study of U.S. history, but shall take conventional narratives—of a steady and confident rise to power, of unity at home in the face of homogeneous opponents outside the gates—to task along the way. Perhaps most importantly, students will learn a skill set enabling them to make sophisticated arguments about U.S. and world history in general, and to judge these issues in the modern day and beyond.

There are no prerequisites to this course, though those students unfamiliar with the basic contours of U.S. History are urged to read the materials closely, and to meet with the instructor or TAs to discuss any interpretive or factual questions that may arise.

Required Texts

James Henretta, et. al., *America: A Concise History, Volume Two: Since 1865*, 5th edition (2012)

Michael P. Johnson, *Reading the American Past, Volume II, from 1865: Selected Historical Documents* (2012)

Attendance and Class Decorum

Regular attendance is absolutely crucial to student success, given that exams and assignments will draw equally from lectures and readings. Since lectures are a central part of the course, the instructor expects student help in creating and maintaining a positive learning environment. *Arriving late, leaving early, (non-course related) internet surfing, texting, etc., are distracting and disrespectful to our classroom community and are strongly frowned upon by the instructor.* At the same time, however, the instructor pledges, and expects students to follow suit, to respectfully consider divergent ideas, viewpoints, and commentary arising throughout the semester.

Grading

Exams: There will be two in-class exams and a final exam, to be given during the designated finals period. The in-class exams will require you to answer one essay question and two short identification questions. The final exam will consist of two identifications, an essay question relating to the last third of the course, and a comprehensive essay question.

Make-up Exams: You are expected to take all tests at the scheduled times. *Only students who are UNABLE to take the test on the scheduled day will be allowed to take a make-up exam.* Students who miss an exam because of illness, or other circumstances beyond their control, and who wish to take a make-up exam, must make arrangements with the instructor within one week after the missed exam.

If you have *questions or complaints* about your exam grades, you must speak with the Teaching Assistant who graded your exam. You are welcome to speak with Dr. Miller after you have met with your TA. If you request a re-grade, however, you accept the fact that your new grade can be *lower* as well as higher, based on the judgment of the instructor. Also, you should present any questions or complaints about the first exam before the second exam. You should address any questions about the second exam before the final exam.

Reading/Attendance Quizzes: There will be five pop-quizzes issued at random dates throughout the semester. The quizzes will feature two multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or true/false questions, which will be extremely straightforward for anyone who has done the reading. Fifty points will be awarded for completing the quiz, and 25 points will be awarded for each correct answer. *No make-ups will be given for these quizzes without a documented excuse (i.e. a doctor's note, proof of participation in a school-sponsored activity, etc.)*

- 1st In-class Exam, 25%
- 2nd In-class Exam, 25%
- Final Exam, 35%
- Reading/Attendance Quizzes (5 x 3% each), 15%

This course will use the +/- grading system, breaking down as follows:

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| 93-100: A | 80-82: B- | 67-69: D+ |
| 90-92: A- | 77-79: C+ | 63-68: D |
| 87-89: B+ | 73-76: C | 60-62: D- |
| 83-86: B | 70-72: C- | 59 and below: F |

Academic Integrity

The instructor takes cheating and plagiarism very seriously and expects all students to be conversant with, and observant of, University policy regarding academic integrity and the student honor code. All potential violations will be dealt with immediately and, if necessary, reported to the Dean's Office. Please visit <http://utsenate.org/integrityut/honorcode/> to learn more about the UT honor code and expectations of academic honesty.

Religious Holidays

The instructor will comply with University policy regarding absences due to religious holidays. Students must inform the instructor at least 14 days prior to any class days or assignments they will miss as a result of a religious holiday. Students will be given a reasonable time to make up any assignments or obligations missed as a result of such holidays. It remains the student's obligation, however, to manage their progress throughout the semester and make sure they have completed all scheduled assignments in a timely fashion.

Cultural Diversity in the United States

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from questions addressing the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

Students with Disabilities

The instructor complies fully with University policy regarding students with documented disabilities. It is the *student's responsibility*, however, to make the instructor aware of any special accommodations or needs in a *timely manner*. If you have, or feel you may have, a disability that might affect your performance in this class, please ensure that you have filed the correct paperwork with the Services for Students with Disabilities office (<http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>).

Classroom and Campus Safety

The instructor supports and observes the policies of the Office of Campus Safety & Security (<http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>), including the following:

- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to