

HISTORY 4340.1

Late Modern U.S. History 1975-2010: Rethinking America

Spring 2019
Baylor University

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Tuesday-Thursday 9.30-10.45
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Office Hours: TBA

I check my e-mail regularly (obsessively?) and this is an excellent way to get in touch with me if you have a quick question or if you want to make an appointment for a more substantial discussion. I can be reached at Philip_Jenkins@baylor.edu

THE COURSE

This course discusses aspects of the very recent period of US history, roughly the years between 1975 and 2010.

Whether we are looking at matters of politics and defense, technology and the economy, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, it is difficult to understand the last four decades or so without using - and often overusing - the language of "revolution." By any standard, this period has witnessed tumult and transformation on a scale scarcely preceded in the nation's history, fundamental shifts in how Americans live, how they communicate, even how they think and remember. We are rethinking fundamental assumptions about social life and identity. Debates over historical memory and commemoration imply a new quest for national identity – nothing less than rethinking America.

Writing any history of such a recent period – of "only yesterday" - has potential pitfalls. It can be difficult to rise above strictly contemporary concerns and obsessions to arrive at a balanced long-term perspective. When today we write the history of the 1850s or the 1950s (say) we know exactly the topics and individuals that demand to be covered, so that our narrative framework is pre-set. We know where the story is going, and the script is already written. That is simply not the case for the most recent era, where we rely on our individual judgments to determine the critical trends, and the most significant events. Will we make mistakes? Definitely. But it is so important to understand the turbulent history that made the nation we know today.

Or as was wisely observed some centuries ago, "The best way to suppose what may come is to remember what is past. The best qualification of a prophet is to have a good memory. Experience maketh more prophets than revelation" (Marquess of Halifax).

GRADING AND EVALUATION

There are several components to this course:

a. Two Essay Exams.

Both will be in take-home format, and will draw on both classroom materials and outside readings. In each case, you will have three days or so to respond, so you should not be under too much time pressure. There will NOT be a comprehensive final exam.

b. Research Paper.

Students will write a research paper on a topic of their choice. Papers should be between 5,000 and 6,000 words, including footnotes. Grading will of course take account of issues such as grammar and punctuation.

I am very flexible about possible themes, and am happy to assist you in developing a workable topic and a list of sources. If you want to choose something that is mainline political history, that is fine, but I am wide open to other approaches and methods – social, cultural, environmental, urban history, or whatever field appeals to you. Do see the section below about how to choose topics.

You should see writing this paper as a process, which will involve a lot of discussion and feedback, primarily with myself, but also with the rest of the class. By February 19, I need to know the title and topic of the paper you will be writing. Obviously, I need to approve your choice before you proceed with writing it. By March 19, you should please give me a two page synopsis of your proposed term paper, with thoughts on bibliography.

By April 11, you should submit a full draft, which I will then discuss with you on an individual basis during office hours. The draft is a full-length version of the paper, fully referenced, as opposed to a two or three page “concept paper”, and it should thus be in connected prose, not in point form. Basically, this should be what you think the final form will look like, but I will then suggest edits and revisions. This draft will then be revised to create a final version due in the final examination period. That gives you plenty of time to do any necessary fine-tuning.

c. Following the news.

As the semester goes on, the media will be reporting various kinds of controversy in politics or business, and I can guarantee that through those debates, experts and commentators will be drawing different kinds of historical analogy, mainly drawn from our period. I will be asking you to observe and identify these uses of history, and draw them to the attention of the class for their attention, including your opinion of how accurately that history is being employed or mobilized. Hint: usually, the degree of accuracy is not that high.

d. Participation

"Participation" means is that I expect you to do the readings for every class, and I reserve the right to call on people individually through the term to comment or respond on particular texts, or issues arising from them. If you do the readings, and take a full and regular part in class discussions, (including "following the news"), then that will have a major positive impact on your grade. On the other hand, consistently not participating, not doing the readings - or repeatedly being absent from discussions - is equivalent to missing an exam or failing to do the term paper. I don't expect perfect, 100 percent, attendance, but consistent non-participation will have serious consequences. It does not just mean that you will receive a slightly lower grade: rather, it would be equivalent to refusing to do a paper or an exam, so that you would simply have not completed the class. It's important to spell out that expectation from the outset. According to University regulations, any student who misses **eight** classes or more will fail the class, regardless of class grades.

Also - deadlines matter, and I intend to enforce them strictly.

Grading for Course

Grading for the course will therefore be based on these components:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Two essay examinations, each 25% of the total grade | = 50% |
| b. Term paper | = 40% |
| c. Class participation | = 10% |
| | 100% |

Grading scale (no rounding):

A	92.5-100
A-	90-92.5
B+	87.5-90
B	82.5-87.5
B-	80-82.5
C+	77.5-80
C	72.5-77.5
C-	70-72.5
D	60-70
F	60 or lower

A Note About Electronic Devices

Please, turn off all cellphones when class begins, and keep them off till the end. No texting during class.

I particularly emphasize this next point: there will be absolutely no recording of any kind in class, audio or video.

REQUIRED BOOKS

All these are, or should be, in affordable paperback editions.

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New Press, 2011)

Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America* (University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares* (Oxford University Press, 2006)

Joel Kotkin, *The Next Hundred Million: America In 2050* (New York: Penguin 2010))

Gil Troy, *The Age of Clinton* (Thomas Dunne, 2015)

Gil Troy and Vincent J. Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

I may also distribute other (shortish) writings from my own work, which are also to be considered as required reading. This will include a manuscript of my book, *Images of Terror* (materials to be circulated electronically), largely so you don't have to pay for a copy. You're welcome.

I could easily have used lots more collections of documents, readings, etc., but an unimaginably vast range of texts is available for free on the Internet. These cover every conceivable topic you might be researching. Early in the course, please get to know your way around the resources they offer. We can talk about this in class.

Just because I require a book does not mean that I vouch for its argument, or agree with most or all of it. Part of college education is learning how to address texts and sources of different genres and approaches, including those that might be far removed from your own. And even some that make you angry! I can't make this point too strongly.

A General Note on Reading Required Books

I also offer the following list of questions that apply to any and all of the prescribed books – or indeed, to some extent, to any academic book that you might encounter:

1. First, obviously, what is the book about, and what is its central theme or point?
2. Does the author make his/her case well and clearly? Is the book well-written and well-argued? (the two points are not necessarily the same!) If not, why not?
3. The fact that the book was published indicates that somebody thought it made an important and innovative point – there's no point in just rehashing old familiar arguments, or so we would think. What's new about this book? Is it a controversial study?
4. What did the book tell us that was not previously known? What can we learn about how the book fits into the existing literature, yet advances beyond previous knowledge? What earlier or established position is it arguing against?
5. Why are people studying this kind of topic right now? What does this tell us about the state of historical writing and scholarship?

6. Does the author push the evidence to make it fit into contemporary concerns and obsessions? How?
7. What major questions and issues surface that relate to the topics of the present course?
8. Is the book of any interest or significance beyond the immediate scope of the study addressed?
9. Are there questions that you would like to ask that the author does not deal with, or covers poorly?
10. What can we learn from the footnotes and acknowledgments about how the author went about his/her research?
11. If you were going to challenge the book or its arguments seriously, how might you go about it? What other sources or perspectives might you use or explore? Why do you think the author did not do what you are suggesting?
12. Assume you were an academic reviewer for this book, prior to publication. Would you support publication or not? Why? What if any changes might you suggest or demand?

SYLLABUS OF CLASSES

1. Tuesday January 15

Introduction

DISCUSS: Materials to be found at

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/intros4340.html>

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/intros4340.pdf>

2. Thursday January 17

Going Too Far: Mainstreaming the 1960s

DISCUSS: Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares* 1-74

See discussion questions on this book at

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/decade.htm>

3. Tuesday January 22

Threatened Children, and the Abuse Revolution

DISCUSS: Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares* 108-151, 256-272

4. Thursday January 24

1980: The Fall of America?

DISCUSS: Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares* 75-107, 152-178

5. Tuesday January 29

Reagan's America

DISCUSS: Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares* 179-208

[-http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2018/08/the-mother-of-the-modern/](http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2018/08/the-mother-of-the-modern/)

-Ronald Reagan's 100-day revolution, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

-Feminism in the 1980s, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

For the various readings from the Troy and Cannato book, see the discussion questions at

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/cannato.htm>

6. Thursday January 31

Evil Empires and Nuclear Nightmares

DISCUSS: Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares* 209-235

-Did Ronald Reagan make the Berlin Wall fall down? in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

7. Tuesday February 5

The Reagan Doctrine, and Iran-Contra

DISCUSS:

-The reorientation of liberalism in the 1980s, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

-An insider's look at the Reagan legacy, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

8. Thursday February 7

The US and the Middle East: 1980-2000

DISCUSS: Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, pages TBA

9. Tuesday February 12

Old and New Economies: cities in crisis

DISCUSS:

- Reaganomics, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*
- Bright lights, doomed cities, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*
- The privatization of everyday life, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

10. Thursday February 14

Crime, Drugs, and Prisons

DISCUSS: Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares* 236-255, 273-291

11. Tuesday February 19

The Clinton Years

DISCUSS: Troy, *The Age of Clinton*, 1-103

See discussion questions on this book at

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/giltroy.htm>

-Intellectual affirmative action, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

*I NEED TO KNOW THE TITLE AND TOPIC OF YOUR TERM PAPER TODAY, PLEASE

12. Thursday February 21

New Media: News, and Popular Culture

DISCUSS: Troy, *The Age of Clinton*, 104-181

-Where is Graceland? in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

-Ronald Reagan's South, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

13. Tuesday February 26

A New World Order, and the End of History

DISCUSS: Troy, *The Age of Clinton*, 182-240

14. Thursday February 28

Clinton's crises: resistance and impeachment

DISCUSS: Troy, *The Age of Clinton*, 241-293

*EXAMS DISTRIBUTED TODAY TO BE RETURNED ON TUESDAY MARCH 5

15. Tuesday March 5

EXAM ONE

16. Thursday March 7

Race, crisis, and assimilation

DISCUSS: Troy, *The Age of Clinton*, 294-312

SPRING BREAK

17. Tuesday March 19

The Politics of God

DISCUSS: Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 70-101

-Reaganizing religion, in Troy and Cannato eds., *Living in the Eighties*

See also my blogposts at

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2017/01/forty-years-on/>

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2017/01/and-the-non-stories/>

*PLEASE GIVE ME A TWO PAGE SYNOPSIS OF YOUR PROPOSED TERM PAPER, WITH THOUGHTS ON BIBLIOGRAPHY.

18. Thursday March 21

Gender, Sexuality, and Culture Wars

DISCUSS: Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*

See discussion questions on this book at

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/hartman.htm>

19. Tuesday March 26

The Culture Wars, continued

DISCUSS: Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*

For the same-sex marriage issue, see

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2014/05/living-through-a-revolution/>

For secularization, see

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2014/06/where-have-all-the-cultists-gone/>

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2014/06/cult-alternatives/>

20. Thursday March 28

Wars on Terror, and the End of the End of History. The Forever Wars

DISCUSS: Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, pages TBA

21. Tuesday April 2

Facing West From California's Shores: migration and a new America.

DISCUSS: Kotkin, *The Next Hundred Million*

See discussion questions on this book at

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/p/jpj1/kotkin.htm>

22. Thursday April 4

New Technology

DISCUSS: Kotkin, *The Next Hundred Million*

23. Tuesday April 9

Cities Reborn

DISCUSS: TBD

And see also my blogpost at

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2018/07/american-2040-the-church-of-the-rest/>

24. Thursday April 11

Economic Storm

DISCUSS: TBD

*PAPER DRAFTS ARE DUE TODAY

25. Tuesday April 16

Defending the Earth: Energy and the Environment

DISCUSS: TBD

26. Thursday April 18

The 2008 Election and the Obama Years
DISCUSS: TBD

27. Tuesday April 23

Still the American Dilemma
DISCUSS: Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*

28. Thursday April 25

America in the World
DISCUSS: TBD

29. Tuesday April 30

Overview, Revision, Analysis. Towards 2016

DISCUSS: blogposts of mine at

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2017/01/the-future-is-not-what-it-was/>

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2018/07/apu-and-the-world-of-2040/>

*EXAMS DISTRIBUTED TODAY TO BE RETURNED ON MAY 3

30. Thursday May 2

EXAM TWO

Choosing a Paper Topic

You might find some useful ideas about how to choose a topic here:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2014/08/finding-a-subject/>

As to a subject, my main criterion is that it should fit within the period of the course. You might choose a particular individual, a movement, an episode, a controversy, or a region. Detailed local and regional histories are appropriate, especially since major cities summarize so many of the themes I have identified. New York City and San Francisco are both massively tempting, but they have been done to death in this era. There are so many other potential candidates.

Histories based in culture and art are fine, provided that the discussion is tilted towards the major themes of the course. Visual arts offer some really tempting examples, as does music (punk, hip-hop, country, grunge...) – but do remember that you must be able to find solid source materials. A similar point can be made about sport as a potential subject.

One rich area to explore for the present topic is that of social movements, which might include pressure groups or mutual support groups. Among the very miscellaneous causes that come to mind immediately in such movements are anti-nuclear, civil rights, women's rights, Latino rights, environmental, not to mention broader political pressure groups of all sides, from Occupy to Tea Party. Particular issues would include shale oil and fracking, saving industrial plants and factories; 1980s battles over Central America and refugees; debates over abortion, censorship, pornography, gender violence and rape; gay rights and gay marriage; drunk driving; NAFTA; police behavior and official illegality. Some of the long continuities in such movements are of interest, as individuals and groups have morphed and developed since the 1970s. Through such movements, we often see the shifting battlefronts of the culture wars.

Where possible, you should use primary sources, loosely defined. Depending on the topic, these might include popular culture materials. Do be aware of the very rich resources to be found in visual evidence – paintings, prints, leaflets, films.... Music can also be a rich historical source.

One limitation there, though. A topic might seem wonderfully interesting, but if you can't find a way to study it using at least sources that are reliable and adequate, then you will have a problem.

I am always interested in issues of memory, commemoration and reputation – why some people or movements change in historical esteem (or popular regard) over time. Some of the fiercest cultural battles of this era were firmly rooted in history, for instance, in the Enola Gay controversy of the early 1990s. Today we think of memorials concerning slavery and the Confederacy, or the celebration of Columbus Day.

A Note on Sensitive Materials

Running through this course is a discussion of changing ideas of sexuality, gender and morality, and as an essential part of that, we will be covering shifting attitudes towards sexual violence and abuse, particularly in the context of children. Such topics are obviously disturbing, and students should be forewarned of this material.

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS OFFER IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND ADVICE FROM BAYLOR UNIVERSITY. DO PARTICULARLY NOTE THE VARIOUS PIECES OF CONTACT INFORMATION.

Academic Success

We as faculty members have high academic expectations of you and believe every student who has been admitted to Baylor can be successful. I am a vigilant professor and will notice if you are struggling in my course. If your academic performance in this class is substandard, I will submit an Academic Progress Report to the Success Center during the sixth week of the semester. I will work to help you get the help you need to learn more fully, and I can assist you in finding the resources you need beyond my course. Familiarize yourself with the culture of success we have at Baylor by stopping by the Paul L. Foster Success Center in Sid Richardson or by going to: <http://www.baylor.edu/successcenter/>. Even if you don't need help, you can get involved by tutoring other students in the future or by telling a hall mate how and where to get help.

Office Hours

One of the best ways to take full advantage of learning in my course is by coming to my office hours. I look forward to guiding you in your academic pursuits. Take advantage of the hours listed above or email me for an appointment.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism or any form of cheating involves a breach of student-teacher trust. This means that any work submitted under your name is expected to be your own, neither composed by anyone else as a whole or in part, nor handed over to another person for complete or partial revision. Be sure to document all ideas that are not your own. Instances of plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Council and may result in failure of the course. Not understanding plagiarism is not an excuse. You may use online resources to study for this course, but you must do so in ways that are consistent with all aspects of the Baylor University Honor Code (see, specifically, Section III.C.12 and Section III.C.16). I expect you to be intimately familiar with all aspects of the Honor Code, which can be found at this link: <http://www.baylor.edu/honorcode/>

Students Needing Accommodations

Any student who needs academic accommodations related to a documented disability should inform me immediately at the beginning of the semester. You are required to obtain appropriate documentation and information regarding accommodations from the Office of Access and Learning Accommodation (OALA). Contact Information: (254) 710-3605 - Paul L. Foster Success Center, 1st floor on the East Wing of Sid Richardson.

Title IX Office – Title IX Coordinator

Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Interpersonal Violence Policy

Baylor University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities, and it does not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of sex or gender. This policy prohibits sexual and gender-based harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, intimate partner violence, and retaliation (collectively referred to as prohibited conduct). For more information on how to report, or to learn more about our policy and process, please visit www.baylor.edu/titleix. You may also contact the Title IX office directly by phone, (254) 710-8454, or email, TitleIX_Coordinator@baylor.edu.

*The Title IX office understands the sensitive nature of these situations and can provide information about available on- and off-campus resources, such as counseling and psychological services, medical treatment, academic support, university housing, and other forms of assistance that may be available. Staff members at the office can also explain your rights and procedural options if you contact the Title IX Office. You will not be required to share your experience. **If you or someone you know feels unsafe or may be in imminent danger, please call the Baylor Police Department (254-710-2222) or Waco Police Department (9-1-1) immediately.***

Military Student Advisory

Veterans and active duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, any special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the VETS Program Office with any questions at (254) 710-7264.