US History 1877-Present

Course Introduction
The purpose of this two-semester course is to reorient students in relation to U.S. history by centering lesser-known stories of marginalized people in the narration of this nation’s past. The analytics of race, class, and gender will drive this course as the voices and experiences of women, working class people, and minorities are placed front and center each week. The readings students will be exposed to through this course will not only allow them to challenge and critically engage popular historical knowledge, but they will also introduce students to some of the most path-breaking research in the field. Students will learn how to evaluate historical arguments and understand how scholars produce historical knowledge. The lecture portion of the course, which will take place during one of our two meetings each week, will provide more familiar historical context in order to provide a framework for interpreting the more nuanced and narrowly-focused content offered in the course readings. A selection of textbooks will also be on reserve at the library for students to consult as they see fit.

Requirements
-Informed Participation (25%): includes attendance at lectures and discussions, contributions to class discussion informed by your own course reading and critical thinking, and informal one-page weekly papers giving your reactions to the week’s reading (engaging with the arguments, making connections among the readings and between the readings and other aspects of the class and events outside the class, asking questions, letting us know if the piece didn’t make sense to you, etc.) due 5:00 p.m. in the Sakai drop box the day before your discussion section. **You must complete reactions papers for at least ten of the semester’s weeks.** (No late reaction papers will be accepted.)

-One 5 to 7 page essay (35%): The aim of this paper is to hone your skills as a critical reader of historians’ work, based on a specific set of essays from the course readings, and using the documents and other articles in the course readings as evidence, to compare, contrast, analyze and critique the interpretation or argument offered by your two chosen authors and to provide (where appropriate) an alternative possible interpretation of the experiences of women, minorities, or working class people in the era in question. You will notice that the authors make different assumptions about what factors are most crucial in determining what defines the American experience, which leads them to create contrasting pictures even though they are often describing the same historical moment. This is an opportunity to consider how the practice of social history has changed our understanding of history and what opportunities and limitations emerge from it. **There is a mandatory first draft for this essay.**

-Final Paper/Presentation 10-12 pages (40%) Students will practice writing history by conducting small research projects on events in more recent history. Students will choose an event related to minorities like women, people of color, or working class people from the recent past, between 1980 and the present, and write a short research paper based on primary
sources. The paper will include reflections on the research experience. This assignment offers students an opportunity to apply what they have learned through the course about the challenges of writing social history, and contribute to the project of recording vital but often unexamined or little understood historical narratives.

**NB: EXTENSIONS FOR ANY ASSIGNMENT MUST BE REQUESTED A MINIMUM OF 24 HOURS BEFORE THE ESSAY IN QUESTION IS DUE IN ORDER FOR THE REQUEST TO BE CONSIDERED.**

Assignments late without question will be docked a half grade if they are turned in within a week, and a full grade after that point. **As stated above, there will be no extensions for the reaction papers.**

**Course Readings**

Most required readings for this course will be posted on Sakai unless they are full books or textbooks, in which they case they will be available for purchase at the Regulator and will be on reserve at the library. They are listed here:

Woodward, *Strange Career of Jim Crow*
Lewis, *When Harlem was in Vogue*
Hahamovitch, *No Man’s Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor*
Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*
Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*
Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*
Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*
Kerber et. al, *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past, 7th edition (TEXTBOOK)*

**Recommended textbooks for context**


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**Week 1 Introduction**

Reading:
Ch. 16 “Back Toward Slavery,” and Ch. 17 “The Propaganda of History,” from Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*

In class: Watch “Slavery by Another Name” (PBS)

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**Week 2 Railroaded**

Reading:
Part 1 “Genesis,” from White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*
Ch. 1 “The Railway Journey: The Technological Transformation,” and Ch. 2 “Gendered Journeys: Physical Vulnerability” from Welke, *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law, and Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920*

Stremlau, “‘I Know What an Indian Woman Can Do’: Sarah Winnemucca Writes about Rape on the Northern Paiute Frontier” in *Women’s America*

**Week 3 Gender, Race, and Labor at the Turn of the Century**

Reading:
Ch. 2 “Work or Worse: Desexualized Space, Domestic Service, and Class,” from Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940*

Goodwyn, “Populist Dreams and Negro Rights: East Texas as a Case Study”

Ch. 2 “Race, Class, and Republican Virtue in the Knights of Labor,” and Ch. 8 “Class, Status, Power, and the Interracial Project,” from Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement*

**Week 4 Jim Crow Violence**  
*First Essay Draft due*

Reading:
Ch. 1 “Saving the Nation: The Racial Data Revolution and the Negro Problem,” from Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*

Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases* (1892):  
[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14975/14975-h/14975-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14975/14975-h/14975-h.htm)

Preface and Ch. 1 “Youth,” from Rosengarten, *All God’s Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*

Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*

Painter, “Millenarian Aspects of the Exodus to Kansas of 1879”


**Week 5 Postbellum Borderlands**

Reading:
Ch. 1 “Strategies of Power and Community Survival: The Expanding Chicano Frontier and the
Regional Community, 1880-1914,” from Deutsch, No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on the Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940

Ch. 7 “Utah’s Indians and the Crisis of Mormon Settlement,” from Blackhawk, Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West

Ch. 4 “‘Grandpa Brown Didn’t Have No Land:’ Race, Gender, and an Intruder of Color in Indian Territory” au. Field, from eds. Faulker and Parker, Interconnections: Gender and Race in American History

Ch. 3 “Race and the Spatial Boundaries of Respectability,” from Blair, I’ve Got to Make My Livin’: Black Women’s Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago

Week 6 Reforming Women

Reading:
Brown, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom”

Gilmore, “Forging Interracial Links in the Jim Crow South,” in Women’s America

Hicks, Talk with You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935

Osburn, “‘To Build up the Morals of the Tribe:’ Southern Ute Women’s Sexual Behavior and the Office of Indian Affairs, 1895-1932”

Suggested:
Greenwood, Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White ‘Better Classes’ in Charlotte, 1850-1910

Week 7 Race, Labor, and Mobility

First Essay due

Reading:
Ch. 7 “Reconstruction California, Reconstructing the Nation,” from Smith, Freedom’s Frontier: California and the Struggle Over Unfree Labor, Emancipation and Reconstruction


Ch. 1 “Passion, Violence and Asserting Honor,” from Shah, Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West
Week 8 American Empire

Reading:
Ch. 3 “From Colonial Subject to Undesirable Alien: Filipino Migration into the Invisible Empire” from Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*

Introduction, Prologue “President Roosevelt’s Steam Shovel,” and Ch. 3 “Silver Lives” from Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal*

Epilogue “The Fruit of Conquest,” from Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I*

Submit Research Paper Topic

Week 9 Migration and Black Culture

Reading:
Lewis, *When Harlem was in Vogue*

Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West”

Carby, “‘It Jus’ Be’s Dat Way Sometime’: The Sexual Politics of Women’s Blues”

Suggested:
Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

Week 10 Race, Gender, and the Great Depression

Reading:
Ch. 5 “‘Negroes Ain’ Black—But Red!’: Black Communists and the Culture of Opposition” from Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression*

“Margaret Sanger, ‘I resolved that women should have knowledge of contraception’” and Jones, “Harder Times: The Great Depression,” in *Women’s America*

Valdés, “Mexican Revolutionary Nationalism and Repatriation during the Great Depression”

Suggested:
Reagan, “When Abortion was a Crime: Reproduction and the Economy in the Great Depression,” in *Women’s America*

Week 11 Whose New Deal?

Reading:
Ch. 4 “Constructing G.I. Joe Louis,” from Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for*
**Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era**

Ch. 3 “‘Most Fags are Floaters’: The Problem of ‘Unattached Persons’ during the Early New Deal, 1933-1935,” from Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*

Kessler-Harris, “Designing Women and Old Fools: Writing Gender into Social Security Law,” in *Women’s America*

Ch. 6 “Workers Make a New Deal,” from Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*

Ch. 5 “War, Race, and Democracy: The South in Transition,” from Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era*

Document, “Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard Act),” (1934)

**Week 12 Women and World War II  // Race and Labor during the Cold War**

Reading:
Matsumoto, “Japanese American Women during World War II,” and Bailey and Farber, “Prostitutes on Strike: The Women of Hotel Street during World War II,” in *Women’s America*

Myer, “Creating G.I. Jane: The Regulation of Sexuality and Sexual Behavior in the Women’s Army Corps during World War II”

Hahamovitch, *No Man’s Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor*

Cohen, “From Peasant to Worker: Migration, Masculinity, and the Making of Mexican Workers in the US”

Suggested: Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*
Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*

**Week 13 Emergent Urban Landscapes and the Era of Civil Rights**

Reading:
Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*


Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*
Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*

Sherron de Hart, “Second-Wave Feminists and the Dynamics of Social Change,” in *Women’s America*

Suggested: Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.*

**Week 14 The Politics of Intersectionality**

Final Research Presentations Begin

Reading:
Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*

Excerpts from Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

“The Combahee River Collective,” in *Women’s America*


Suggested:
Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*

**Week 14 Finish Presentations/In Class Final Discussion**

Reading:
Ch. 10 “Race Matters in Obamerica: The Sweet (but deadly) Enchantment of Color Blindness in Black Face,” from Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*