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History 253: American History Since 1945

Spring 2004
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:35 - 10:50 am
King Hall Room 243

In this course, we will focus on the themes of reform and reaction as we examine changes in American culture, politics, and landscapes since World War II. We will also be exploring the peculiar challenges of writing and understanding recent history as we consider the ways in which Americans changed their lives, homes and institutions in the second half of the twentieth century.

Reading:

The following books are required reading, and are available at the Oberlin College Bookstore, and are on reserve at Mudd Library:

Schrecker, Ellen. *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. New York: Basic Books, 1988.

Payne, Charles M.. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1990; Broadway Books, 1998.

Goodman, James. *Blackout*. New York: North Point Press, 2003.

Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the Aids Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Thelen, David. *Becoming Citizens in the Age of Television*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Additional readings will occasionally be made available on ERES or the course Blackboard site, or will be distributed in class. Also, although I am not assigning specific readings from a textbook, I highly recommend that you have one on hand. There will be many times when you will find it helpful to be able to look up a specific policy or date.

Class Discussion and Participation

Despite the fact that this is a large class, course attendance and participation are crucial components. Each student is expected to have mastered that day's readings before class, and to be prepared to engage in intelligent discussion of that reading. Class attendance and participation will account for 15 percent of the final course grade.

Writing

You will be writing two papers for this course. The first paper, worth 15 percent of the final grade, will be a 3-5 page critique of one of the first three books we are reading in the course (Schrecker, May, or Payne). Papers on Schrecker or May are due on March 2; papers on Payne are due on March 23. The choice of book (and corresponding deadline) is yours.

The second paper, worth 20 percent of the final grade, will be a 6-8 page analysis of a post-WWII American novel, memoir, movie, piece of music or other work of art or cultural artifact of your choosing, which you will evaluate as an historical source. This final paper will be due on the last day of class, May 13. Detailed guidelines for the two papers will be distributed during the second week of class.

Papers should be submitted in hard copy, and should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and a twelve-point font. Page limits should be taken seriously: writing concisely is an important skill.

Due dates should also be taken seriously. Papers will lose one-third of a letter grade for every 24-hour period they are late. That means, for example, that a paper that normally would have received a B+ would receive a B if it were turned in the morning after it was due.

Students must complete and turn in all written work in order to pass the course. That means, for example, that a student who has received an A on every assignment but one, but neglects to turn in that one, will fail the entire course.

Students who achieve at least a B average for the two papers and a B- average for the course as a whole will receive writing proficiency credit.

Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam, the times for which are listed below. The midterm will be worth 20 percent of the course grade, and the final will be worth 30 percent. It is your responsibility to be sure that you can be present at both exams. There will be no make-ups for the mid-term or the final except under truly extraordinary circumstances.

Grading

To summarize, the course will be graded as follows:

Class participation:	15 %
First paper:	15 %
Final paper:	20 %
Midterm:	20 %
Final:	30 %

Schedule of Classes and Assignments**Week One**

Tuesday, February 10 Introductions and Themes

Thursday, February 12 World War II as a Turning Point

Reading:
Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, ix-85.

Week Two

Tuesday, February 17 A Nation at Peace?

Reading:
Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 86-265.

Thursday, February 19 The Politics of Anti-Communism

Reading:
Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 266-415.

Week Three

Tuesday, February 24 The Cold War at Home

Reading:
Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, ix-99.

Thursday, February 26 Containment as Domestic Policy?

Reading:
Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 100-208.

Week Four

Tuesday, March 2 Film: The Atomic Café

papers on Schrecker or May are due

Thursday, March 4 Landscapes of Change

Week Five

Tuesday, March 9 The Early Civil Rights Movement

Reading:
Charles M. Payne,
I've Got the Light of Freedom, 1-131

Thursday, March 11 The Great Society

Reading:
Charles M. Payne,
I've Got the Light of Freedom, 132-337

Week Six

Tuesday, March 16 Rights Secured?

Reading:
Charles M. Payne,
I've Got the Light of Freedom, 338-441

Thursday, March 18 Film: Eyes on the Prize

Week Seven

Tuesday, March 23 Sexual Revolutions

papers on Payne are due

Thursday, March 25 Midterm Examination

Week Eight

Tuesday, March 30 No Class: Spring Recess

Thursday, April 1 No Class: Spring Recess

Week Nine

Tuesday, April 6 The Vietnam War

Reading:
Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, 1-116.

Thursday, April 8 War in Recent America

Reading:
Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, 117-246.

Week Ten

Tuesday, April 13 Watergate

Reading:
Goodman, *Blackout*, xi-128.

Thursday, April 15 The Seventies

Reading:
Goodman, *Blackout*, 129-228.

Week Eleven

Tuesday, April 20 Meanings of Equality

Thursday, April 22 Radical Politics

Week Twelve

Tuesday, April 27

The Politics of Memory

Reading:

Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 1-145.

Thursday, April 29

The AIDS Epidemic

Reading:

Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 146-259.

Week Thirteen

Tuesday, May 4

The Reagan Years

Reading:

Thelen, *Becoming Citizens*, 1-148.

Thursday, May 6

Post-Cold War America

Reading:

Thelen, *Becoming Citizens*, 149-217.

Week Fourteen

Tuesday, May 11

Conclusions

Thursday, May 13

Final Thoughts

Final paper due

Final Exam: Thursday, May 20 at 2 pm