

Issues in American Culture and History
GENA 2122 | Spring 2018 | Fridays 1:30 -3:15pm TCC 208

Instructors

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Feel free to email us if you have any questions or want to talk individually - we're happy to meet with you!

Course Outline

This course takes an issue-based approach to examining the history and culture of the United States of America. Each class presents a distinct issue that Americans have dealt with (and in most cases, are still dealing with) as a defined unit and story. As it is impossible to be comprehensive in a semester, we will choose topics that we find most significant and interesting. At the same time, the issues we have chosen are some of the most important recurring themes of the American experience. Through them, you will gain a deeper and more enriched understanding of American history and culture, and be able to consider more critically the news coming out of America today. We also aim to help you see history as a dynamic, living process rather than a dry collection of facts and dates.

1	Jan 12	American Revolution and the Constitution
2	19	Continental Expansion and the Roots of American Power
3	26	Slavery, Civil War, and Reconstruction
4	Feb 2	Mass Immigration, from Diversity to Assimilation
5	9	"Jim Crow" and the Civil Rights Struggle
6	16	HOLIDAY NO CLASS
7	23	World Wars and Cold War: America Becomes a Superpower
8	Mar 2	Women in America: Suffragettes, Reproductive Rights, and #MeToo
9	9	Conservative Backlash: Reagan, the Christian Right, and Culture War
10	16	21 st Century Culture War: Gay Rights, #BLM, and "PC Culture"
11	23	NO CLASS
12	30	HOLIDAY NO CLASS
13	Apr 6	US Foreign Policy Since 9/11: War on Terror and Rising Powers
14	Apr 13	Trump's America: Crisis and Gridlock
15	Apr 20	IN CLASS FINAL

Daily Class Schedule

1:30-1:35	Weekly Quiz
1:35-2:15	Small Group Discussion
2:15-2:30	Break
2:30-3:05	Lecture
3:05-3:15	Q&A

Please note that you only have five minutes to complete the quiz, which usually contains 10 multiple choice questions. If you are absent, or if you arrive after it has been collected, you cannot take the quiz. There are no make-ups.

Grading

Weekly Quizzes	15%
Weekly Position Papers	20%
Attendance and Participation	30%
Final Exam	35%

Position papers are only 250-300 words (**single page, double spaced**). They should take less than an hour to write. They **must be printed** and handed in at the beginning of class. If you are absent, please have a friend bring your position paper to class. Position papers are **NOT** accepted via email.

Position papers are graded on a check system, with the following values: check plus (5/5), check (4/5), check minus (2/5), and incomplete (0/5). Late position positions will be deducted two points for each week late.

The Importance of Attendance

We highly value your voices. We designed this course to maximize student-teacher interactions because we believe that this is the best way for you to engage with the content.

1. The weekly quizzes make up 15% of your grade. It is always collected at 1:35, and there are no make-ups.
2. Discussion counts for 30% of your grade. You have to be present to participate. Therefore, you cannot receive points for discussion if you are absent. If you are tardy, you will receive partial credit.
3. Each lecture PPT will be emailed to you after class, but will only make sense if you attended the lecture.
4. The final exam is 35% of your grade. The exam will test content presented in lectures, and will ask you to synthesize and discuss broader themes of the course that will be discussed in small groups. It will be impossible to do well on the final exam without having been to lecture and discussion.

Guiding Questions

In order to better facilitate both discussion in class and to orient ourselves in our course this semester, keep in mind these questions to guide us in this class. We will be returning to these questions again and again in class to connect themes and ideas across classes.

In general, this course will have three main historical “threads”:

1) SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ISSUES

How did the US end up with President Donald Trump?

What does his election mean for the future of America as a racially and culturally diverse nation?

2) POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the American constitutional system in the age of Trump?

How did America end up in its current political gridlock?

3) FOREIGN POLICY

How did the US become a superpower?

What is the future of Trump’s America in a “multipolar” world of rising powers with the US in relative decline?