

Issues in American Culture and History
GENA 2122 | Fall 2018 | Thursdays 1:30-3:15pm YIA LT8

Instructors

Senior Instructor: Jonathan Esty

jonathanesty@gmail.com

Junior Instructor: Lily Engbith

lengbith@gmail.com

Office location: Fung King Hey Building Room 314

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 have chosen the topics we consider most essential to grasping how American values have been conceived, and how American society has lived up to those values, or failed to uphold them. Through these topics you will gain a deeper, 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.

Sept. 6	Introduction to Course
Sept. 13	Declaration and Constitution: The Founders' Project 1776-1800
Sept. 20	Democracy and American Expansion 1800-1870
Sept. 27	Slavery Crisis and Civil War: The Project in Peril 1820-1870
Oct. 4	Gilded Age and Great Depression: Government Responses 1870-1940
Oct. 11	World War II and Cold War: America the Superpower 1940-1990
Oct. 18	Civil Rights, Counterculture and Backlash: 1950-1980
Oct. 25	War on Terror and Rising Rivals: 1990-2018
Nov. 1	Asian-American Narratives
Nov. 8	CANCELLED
Nov. 15	Age of American Partisanship: Elections and the Growing Party Divide 1980-2018
Nov. 22	American Anxiety: The Causes and Consequences of the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008
Nov. 29	IN-CLASS FINAL

Daily Class Schedule

1:30-1:35	Weekly Quiz
1:35-2:15	Lecture
2:15-2:30	Break
2:30-3:15	Group Discussion

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 emailed to *both tutors*, **before** the beginning of class.

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.
5. **Electronics** (phones, laptops, tablets) as well as **food and drink** (except water) are **not permitted in the classroom**. Using electronics or snacking during class will lower your participation grade. You are welcome to have a snack outside of the classroom during the mid-session break.

Guiding Questions

In order to 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 return to these questions to connect themes and ideas across classes.

- 1) **“Defining the American project: who are American citizens and how will they govern themselves?”**
- 2) **“Defining America in the wider world: how does America engage with other countries?”**