

## HIST 121: AMERICAN HISTORY SURVEY

American History Survey  
History 121  
Spring 2013  
Prof. Kathleen Watford

T/TH 10:15am-11:40am  
Office: 807F  
Office Hours: By Appointment  
Email: [kathleen.watford@imperial.edu](mailto:kathleen.watford@imperial.edu)

### SCHEDULE

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Tuesday  
January 15

Housekeeping Details & Introductions

Thursday  
January 17

Reading: Syllabus & Website  
Discussion: Course Orientation & Expectations

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Tuesday  
January 22

Reading: Chapter 10 Howard Zinn, *People's History*  
Discussion: A War to Free the Slaves?

Thursday  
January 24

Lecture: Evidence "*Textual Documents*"  
Records, letters, newspapers, government documents,  
personal papers, pamphlets, posters

Tuesday  
January 29

Reading: Chapter 11 Howard Zinn, *People's History*  
Discussion: Birth of the Corporate State

Thursday  
January 31

Lecture: Evidence "*Visual Aids*"  
Paintings, photographs, films, pictures, architecture, maps

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Tuesday  
February 5

**Group Meeting: Discuss Blog Post #1**  
**Due Thursday 02/07/13 (50 points)**

What common grievances did workers share throughout the period described in Chapter 10? Do workers continue to have any of these grievances today? On page 226 of *A People's History*, historian David Montgomery is quoted as noting that class conflicts in nineteenth-century America "were as fierce as any known to the industrial world." What evidence can you find in the readings to support this claim?

In Chapter 11, Howard Zinn illustrates many ways in which the government benefited the wealthy. What is a welfare state? Do you agree with Howard Zinn that corporations were the first beneficiaries of the welfare state? Does the government continue to benefit the wealthy today? Explain. Why was it important during the industrializing period for working-class children to learn "obedience to authority" (*People's History*, p. 263) in school? What behaviors are taught in schools today?

Thursday  
February 7

Lecture: American Imperialism

Tuesday  
February 12

Reading: Chapter 12 Howard Zinn *People's History*  
Discussion: Expanding Empire

Thursday  
February 14

Reading: Chapter 14 Howard Zinn *People's History*  
Discussion: WWI

Tuesday  
February 19

**Group Meeting: Discuss Blog Post #2**  
**Due Thursday 02/21/13 (50 points)**

What was the Monroe Doctrine? How does it pave the way for the imperialistic foreign policies of the late nineteenth century? What do you think the writer of the Washington Post editorial meant when he wrote that at the eve of the Spanish-American war, "The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people" (*People's History*, pg. 299)? Do you agree or disagree with his statement?

Howard Zinn writes that in the pre-World War I years, "there was worry about the health of the state" (*People's History*, pg. 359). What were the worries? What do you think the federal government had to worry about? Did any of these worries lead us into war? How did they influence the course and outcomes of the war?

Thursday  
February 21

Lecture: Evidence "Oral Traditions"  
Myths, folklore, interviews, audio-recordings, etc...

Tuesday  
February 26

Reading: Chapter 15 Howard Zinn *People's History*  
Discussion: The Interwar Years  
**Self-Evaluation Due (25 points)**

Thursday  
February 28

Reading: Chapter 16 Howard Zinn *People's History*  
Discussion: WWII

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Tuesday  
March 5

**Group Meeting: Discuss Blog Post #3**  
**Due Thursday 03/07/13 (50 points)**

What are some examples from the 1920's that support the belief that the age was full of prosperity and fun? Was this belief accurate? What were the primary causes of the Great Depression? Why do you think that most politicians "did not know what had happened, [and] were baffled by it"? Why were the policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt called a New Deal for Americans? Do you think they really did offer a new deal? Explain. Can war ever be "good"? How and why? Was World War II an example of what Howard Zinn has called a war that benefited the wealthy elite? What is romantic about joining the military? About fighting a war? Should romantic imagery be used to recruit for military enlistment? Why, or why not?

Thursday  
March 7

Lecture: A Dreamed Deferred  
Boycotts, Marches, and Political Activism

Tuesday  
March 12

Reading: Chapter 17 Howard Zinn *People's History*  
Discussion: Social Unrest and Racial Segregation

Thursday  
March 14

Reading: Chapter 18 Howard Zinn *People's History*  
Discussion: An Impossible Victory

Tuesday  
March 19

**Group Meeting: Discuss Blog Post #4**  
Due Thursday 03/21/13 (50 points)

What were some of the tactics used by civil-rights activists? What tactics were used by their opponents? How are they similar and different? Which do you think was more successful? What happens “to a dream deferred”? What dreams did African Americans have to defer in the years leading up to the civil-rights movement? What was the United States strategy in Vietnam? What were the strengths and weaknesses of this strategy? Why was it ultimately unsuccessful? Who is responsible for the actions of the United States government? How were United States soldiers affected by their experiences in the Vietnam War? What actions did they take to bring it to an end? Zinn argues that the anti-war movement in the United States was instrumental in bringing the Vietnam War to an end. Do you agree? Why, or why not?

Thursday  
March 21

Lecture: Research Project  
Due Tuesday 05/07/13 – Thursday 05/09/13 (100 points)

Tuesday  
March 26

Reading: Chapter 20 Howard Zinn *People’s History*  
Discussion: Political Scandals and Corporate Scoundrels

Thursday  
March 28

Reading: Chapter 21 Howard Zinn *People’s History*  
Discussion: Widening the Wealth Gap

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Tuesday  
April 2

**NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

Thursday  
April 4

**NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

Tuesday  
April 9

**Group Meeting: Discuss Blog Post #5**  
Due Thursday 04/11/13 (50 points)

Should our government have the power to assassinate foreign leaders? Is such assassination ever justifiable? Why do you think the system “could not hold the loyalty of the public” in the 1970s? Given the political, economic, and social conditions of the 1970s, why do you think the people of the United States had become so disillusioned with the “establishment”? Cite examples from the chapter. What are the arguments against spending so much money on the United States military put forward in this/these chapter(s)? Do you agree or disagree with these arguments? How and why? In chapter 21, Howard Zinn quotes a Republican analyst as saying, “It was the truly wealthy, more than anyone else, who flourished under Reagan . . . The 1980s were the triumph of upper America . . . the political ascendancy of the rich, and a glorification of capitalism, free markets, and finance” (*People’s History*, pg. 580). What is the most compelling evidence Zinn provides in both chapters to prove this point?

Thursday  
April 11

Lecture: Writing History Papers  
Past tense, plagiarism, platitude, proof-reading, weak support, clarity, fragments, passive voice, repetition, run-on, apostrophe, hyphen, punctuation, quotations, titles, transitions, footnotes, endnotes and bibliography

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Tuesday  
April 16

Lecture: Evidence “Moving Images”  
Film: Cold Mountain

Thursday  
April 18

Lecture: How to Read a Movie  
Film: Glory

Tuesday  
April 23

Lecture: Making Sense of Films  
Film: Born on the Fourth of July

Thursday  
April 25

**Group Meeting: Discuss Research Project**  
**Make-up Day: Comprehension Exercises**  
Group Evaluation Due (25 points)

Tuesday  
April 30

Group Presentations  
\*Final Exam

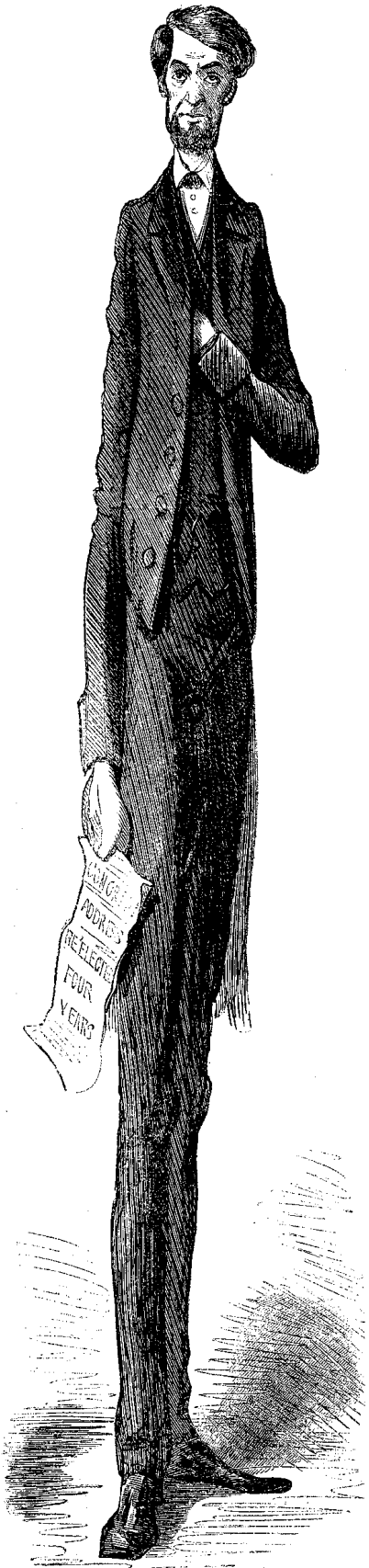
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Thursday  
May 2

Group Presentations  
\*Final Exam

Tuesday  
May 7

Group Presentations  
\*Final Exam



## **COURSE**

This course is designed as an introduction to the major themes and arguments in U.S. history from the Reconstruction Era to present as well as an exploration of the different kinds of evidence that are available to historians. This is not an easy course; it is, rather, a reading and writing course that will provide you with the general knowledge and skills commonly identified as appropriate to a one- semester introductory course. To get the most from the course, therefore, the reading assignments should be completed before the date they are due so that you will have time to digest the material thoroughly in preparation for discussion and subsequent writing assignments. You will have to use your time wisely.

## **BOOK**

The following book is required for the course.

Zinn, Howard; *A People's History of the United States*

## **REQUIREMENTS**

The requirements for the course are as follows:

- 5 Individual Blog Post (50 pts. each= 250pts.)
- 5 Comprehension Exercises (10 pts. each= 50pts.)
- 1 Group-Presentation (50 pts.)
- 1 Self-Evaluation (25 pts. 1 page, typed, single-spaced)
- 1 Group-Evaluation (25 pts.)
- 1 Final Research Project (100 pts.)

## **POLICIES**

I am explaining and stating these policies now, in the clearest possible terms, so there can be no dispute over what I expect. If you have questions about my expectations, please raise them. But whenever you ask me to modify my expectations because you failed to plan and use your time efficiently, you put me as well as the rest of the class in the ethically difficult position of applying different standards to different people. I ask that you accept responsibility for your actions rather than put us all in an uncomfortable position.

### *Attendance*

At this point in your intellectual development, you should have some sense of personal responsibility. Class attendance, therefore, will be up to you. It will be very difficult, however, to pass the course without attending class because the assignments and activities are the focus of many class discussions. In fact, failure to attend class on many occasions will have grave consequences. Attendance will be taken at random, and always at the end of class.

### *A Note on Computer Use*

Computers are a great advantage to the student writer. But, as with any technology, you must take steps to minimize the problems that computers inevitably cause. Do not expect to get through the semester without having at least one computer crisis. Prepare for this well in advance. Back up your work constantly and have alternative plans for obtaining computer use, if your primary options fail you. We will never accept computer problems as excuses for missed assignments. You must also keep backup copies of submitted assignments—either in electronic form or hard copy.

Similarly, computers and email permit around-the-clock communication. If you have questions about an assignment contact me via email. Should you need to discuss any personal issue with the instructor, contact me via email or by phone. If you email me, please put HIST 121 in the subject line; putting something like “Hi” or “Have a question” is a common “spam” technique, and my email is trained to junk these messages. Do not, however, expect an immediate response. Many of your questions can be answered by consulting the class website.

### **BLOG POST**

Students often ask about writing a good post. Essentially, a blog post should be three to four paragraphs—roughly 400-500 words or the equivalent of 1–2 double-spaced pages. You might want to draft your entry in a word processing program first and copy and paste after you have finished. Although we will discuss the elements of a good post and comment extensively in class, these paragraphs are offered as a reference and a detailed summary of how your posts will be evaluated.

### *Title*

A good post begins with a good title. A good title gets the reader's attention immediately and sets the tone for the rest of the entry. A title, such as “Entry #1,” is not particularly effective or even interesting. Since this is a class, you must number the entries so that the reader knows which assignment you are addressing. Examples might include: “#1: Re-thinking Columbus” or “No. 1 Creating the Color Line” You can be much more creative, but your post must have a number.

### *Thesis*

A thesis is a proposition or statement of an argument. It is not “a direction” (e.g., “In this paper I will tell you about the American attitude toward pre-revolutionary activism, and then I’ll show...”). An adequate thesis is a clear, precise, declarative statement: “Throughout the development of America, class struggles have always

existed. Blinded under a veil of patriotism and nationalism, the poor are generally easy to manipulate and control by the wealthy elite. It eventually became very apparent that the government and the landlords were the only ones benefiting from labor and hard work of lower working class.”

### *Argument*

The body of your post follows the terms of your thesis and outlines your argument, beginning with a transitional sentence. (The easiest way to frame a transitional sentence is to take an important word or phrase from the sentence in the preceding paragraph and build on it.) To continue the example above: “Workers shared many grievances in the 1800’s. Tenets were forced to pay taxes and rent to live on the land. One family would become rich from collecting money from the tenets. The Rensselaer family “ruled over about eighty thousand tenants and had accumulated a fortune of \$41 million” (194). Make sure you use evidence from the text with a cited page number to support your argument.

The concluding paragraph not only summarizes your argument—usually in a sentence or two—but also discusses its historical significance. The last is the most critical. A conclusion puts your argument into “the big picture,” as Richard Nixon was fond of saying. It is an effort to relate your findings to a broader theme in the course. For example: “Today we still live in a society dominated by big business. The same ideas of exploiting the poor are implemented in government and politics. Corporations do their best to maximize profits by keeping wages low and employees complacent.” Et le voilà—your paper is finished, and you have a nicely ordered 2-3 paragraph post.

### *Evidence*

Evidence is a summary description or a short quotation from the source that supports the point that you wish to make in your paragraphs. For example: The government benefited from the growing wealthy corporations. The boom in technological innovation allowed many corporations to flourish. Production increased rapidly. “Machines changed farming. Before the Civil War it took 61 hours of labor to produce an acre of wheat. By 1900, it took 3 hours, 19 minutes.”(234). “In 1860, 14 million tons of coal were mined; by 1884 it was 100 million tons.”(234). “Electrical wire needed copper, of which 30,000 tons were produced in 1880; 500,000 tons by 1910.”(234). This fortune building was done legally with the help of the government. Remember to use quotations when citing evidence from the text, and always include the page number.

### *Grammar*

Grammar and mechanics are important for a variety of reasons—all of them good. All your posts should be grammatically correct in all their particulars. Correctness includes spelling, punctuation, diction, and mechanics. A list of common grammar errors and suggestions for correcting them appears elsewhere.

### *Bonus*

Bonus points are awarded for an especially creative, original, or stylistically sophisticated post.

Points or partial will be awarded for the following:

1. Promptness (0-10 points)
2. Thesis (0-10 points)
3. Argument (0-10 points)
4. Evidence (0-10 points)
5. Grammar (0-10 points)

### **SELF-EVALUATION GUIDELINES**

Oftentimes, a letter grade does not reflect the effort that students put into a course, the amount a student has learned, or the skills that a student has acquired. A self-evaluation is one way of remedying this deficiency by illustrating and documenting your participation in the course from your perspective. This is the time to argue for yourself and put your best foot forward. In fact, it is in your interest to do the best job that you can on this assignment. The self-evaluation should be a one-page, typed single-spaced paper in which you address the following topics:

#### I. Evaluation of your participation in the class

##### A. Attendance

##### B. Time devoted to the materials

1. Blogs
2. Group meetings
3. Readings

##### C. Class participation

1. In-class contributions
2. Group contributions

#### D. The ways in which you think you improved or not

E. The problems you encountered in your effort to complete the class assignments to your satisfaction.

#### F. What you would have done differently



## **OTHER GUIDELINES**

Disabled Student Programs and Services: Any student with a documented disability who may need educational accommodations should notify the instructor or the Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSP&S) office as soon as possible. Visit or call Mel Wendrick Access Center, Room 2117, (760) 355-6312

Plagiarism: IVC expects honesty and integrity from all students. A student found to have cheated on any assignment or plagiarized will receive a zero for the assignment and sent to Disciplinary Officer Sergio Lopez.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO No. 1. Identify and recall key information from a historical text and/or a documentary film

SLO No. 2. Describe the causes and/or impact of a historical event

SLO No. 3. Explain and analyze the key information contained in a primary source document