

USU 1300: American Institutions (BAI)

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Office hrs.: Wed. 9:30-10 or by appointment

Textbooks:

McInerney, *Traveller's History of the United States*
Hess, *Presidential Decisions: Korea, Vietnam, Gulf*

USU 1300 meets the University's requirement for a Breadth American Institutions (BAI) course, according to the USU General Catalog. As quoted in the Catalog, USU 1300 "Provides basic understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States." Also, the course should emphasize "ideas and critical thinking, rather than dates, names, and places..." Such a mandate provides the opportunity to learn about US history without the necessity of memorizing endless amounts of "facts."

Course Scope/Description: Given the incredible scope of this course, colonial to present, one has to be selective. Therefore, one focus of the course is on US presidents and constitutional amendments. Another focus, technological developments, can be examined from many angles, including war, entertainment, and politics. And, because the United States became the world's greatest economic power by the beginning of the 20th century, the story of economic development, as well as rampant consumerism, deserve scrutiny. That the US is a very different society from the one which forged national identity out of the American Revolutionary War is well-known. How and why this change occurred will ultimately occupy the course's most lengthy focus. One component of the answer involves US participation in the major wars of the 20th century. Thus, wars, like technology, presidents, and consumerism, will constitute an important component of this course.

Goals:

1. To enhance the student's educational skills by exposing them, in reading and library assignments, to a wide range of primary sources on the US story
2. To teach students how to analyze such primary and secondary sources in context
3. To improve the student's ability to communicate well, both in written and oral form.
4. To promote the student's awareness of the unique features of US society and the importance of war, technology, religion, and other cultural aspects which affect American life.
5. To enhance the student's understanding of how American's political system, including the office of the presidency, and the US military have evolved over time

Requirements:

1. Class-designated assignments (textbook readings, class material, quizzes, etc.)
2. Book review of Hess's *Presidential Decisions* (on Korea, Vietnam, Gulf), which will be due the last day of classes (instructions for a book review will be given later)

3. Final exam during final exam week (find time of exam in class schedule pamphlet)
4. "Mature" attendance is expected

Tentative Topic/Reading Schedule

First Week: Revolutionary War; Constitution (McInerney, chps. 3)(chps. 1-2 optional: colonial and pre-Revolutionary developments)

Second Week: Presidents; Territorial, Economic Expansion (McInerney, chps. 4-5) (chp. 6 on culture optional)

Third Week: More territorial expansion; war with Mexico; coming of Civil War (McInerney, chp. 7)

Fourth Week: Civil War & Reconstruction (Chp. 8); Assignment for week: 3-5 page essay on US Civil War and Reconstruction (you can summarize or focus on two or three themes; please type; due ideally by end of 5th week classes)

Fifth Week: Gilded Age: Industrialization, Immigration (chp. 9)

Third: Wars of Expansion: Mexican and Spanish-American (chp. 10 to p. 260)

Fourth: Global War: WWI (chp. 10, pp. 260-267)

Fifth: Twenties: Illusions of Peace, Prosperity (McInerney, chp. 11 to p. 283)

Sixth: Thirties: Depression and Aggression (chp. 11, p. 283-292)

Seventh: World War II; Cold War (chp. 12-13)

Eighth: US, Cold War (Korea, Vietnam) (chp. 12-13, especially pages 320-21 for Korea; pages 341-44 for Vietnam) ; Hess, first two chapters on Truman/Korea; chps. 3 & 4 on Johnson and Vietnam

Ninth: JFK-LBJ: Domestic Issues vs. Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan (chp. 12-13-14)

Tenth: Cold War Crises: from Cuban Missile Crisis to Afghanistan (chp. 12-13-14)

Eleventh: Ending of Cold War; Bush and Gulf (McInerney, chp. 14; Hess. Chps. 5-6 for Bush and Gulf)

Twelfth: Domestic Agenda of Reagan, Bush, Clinton (McInerney, chp. 14 + class material)

Thirteenth: US Cultural Life 1960-90s (Class Material)

Fourteenth: Post-Cold War: Gulf, 9/11 (Class Material)

Fifteenth: Review, Catch-up, etc.; book review of Hess book due on Friday

Sixteenth Week: Final exam (time to be announced)