

USU 1300: American Civilization

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USU 1300 meets the University's requirement for a **Breadth American Institutions (BAI)**, according to the *USU General Catalog, 2005-2006*. As quoted in the General Catalog, USU 1300 "Provides basic understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States." Please note that the Catalog also specifies that 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

Given the incredible scope of this course, colonial to present, one has to be selective. Therefore, one theme which I have selected for this course, **war**, has been a very persistent feature of US history. **Another theme**, trade and economic development, have formed very important facets of US history. Today, America's trade deficit and rampant consumerism made the US a different society from the one which forged national identity out of the American revolutionary war. Not surprisingly, a third **significant theme** in US history is the **role of technology, in communication and transportation especially. The ramifications are endless. For instance, the automobile and airplanes in the early 20th century, like television and computers in the latter half of the 20th century, have affected warfare tremendously.** While the overall aim is to enhance the student's understanding of all the participants in these conflicts, the focus still will be on the US and how these wars affected Americans; the time frame will be predominantly the 20th century..

Course Objectives:

- 1. To enhance the students's educational skills by exposing students, in reading and library assignments, to a wide range of primary sources such as speeches, letters, oral histories, diplomatic dispatches, and photographs; to teach students how to analyze such sources in the context; to improve student communication both written and oral.**
- 2. To promote the students awareness of the unique features of US society; the importance of wars for its development; the role of technology, religion, and other cultural aspects of life which affect American life.**
- 3. To enhance the students understanding of how America's political system, including the office of presidency, have evolved over time.**
- 4. To appreciate the cultural differences of each region of the country**
- 5. To compare and contrast the Cold War conflicts with those of the post-Cold War period (Persian Gulf War, Operation Enduring Freedom, Iraqi war of today) and, thereby, gain a better appreciation of the complex issues (and mistakes) of both the Cold War era and the**

current War on Terrorism.

Textbook: Ayers, Gould et. al. American Passages: a History of the United States, Compact Edition (2nd ed. 2005); Thomson Advantage Book. With this book is an ISBN which includes the access code for the Wadsworth's American History Resource Center for free. The ISBN is 0495009024. The US History Resource Center Link is <http://ushistory.wadsworth.com>

Course Description: This course will cover US history from the Revolutionary era (roughly 1770) to the present. In trying to ascertain the main features of American Civilization, the instructor will place a heavy emphasis on war, the presidency, and technology. Visual material, computer database from Wadsworth, and class handouts, along with the textbook, will be utilized.

Classroom Pedagogy: My primary interest is the 20th century. Hence, I will not spend as much time on earlier periods as the student might desire. Remember, this course is, in some ways, an advertisement for upper-division history courses (we have upper-division courses on women's history, black history, colonial history, Civil War, WWII, Native American history, history of the West, financial history, etc.). With the events of the late 19th and 20th centuries, we are blessed with an abundance of primary sources, in the form of visual documentaries. Hence, every class (or almost every class) will consist of a mixture of the following: a brief topical overview, video clips, class discussion or written response to material viewed or material assigned to read. Faithfully reading your textbooks and attending classes remain the best means for extracting the most knowledge from this course.

While I expect you to attend class, I also expect everyone to behave properly (which means: no sleeping, no reading newspapers, no studying for another class, and—above all else—no talking to your class neighbor!!) I especially dislike students trying to socialize in class. Every student has the right to hear the professor, film, class discussion, etc. Those who cannot follow these simple rules of courtesy will be asked to leave. We must cooperate and be considerate of each other. (Or you will be removed from class at worst or have your grade lowered at best)

Requirements:

*****One five-six page, typed essay (100 pts) on some topic in US history which we have covered (or maybe have not covered adequately). Obtain instructor's approval. Due by end of semester.**

*****Option: A second essay (worth 100 pts), utilizing the textbook and some online data from the American History Resource Center OR a final exam. For the second essay, a topic will be provided in class at a later date. 4-5 typed pages. Due by end of semester.**

*****Class-designated assignments** (probably worth, at least, 100 points or more)

1. These are assignments, given in class (hence, attendance is desirable/useful) which vary:
2. Some may be, simply, a brief, written response to what you observed in a video clip seen in class; others may be a written response to a textbook reading assignment; some may be an in-class written response asking for "feedback" (i.e., do you have questions,

complaints, suggestions, etc.); occasionally, a brief “quiz” for 10 or 20 pts. on textbook material may be given (to encourage you to read your text); sometimes, I will ask you to perform a library-oriented assignment (e.g., read an excerpt from a journal, newspaper, congressional report, etc. from a certain year).

Tentative Topic Class Schedule

First Week: Revolutionary Period

Second Week: New Republic

Third Week: Antebellum Period

Fourth Week: Civil War

Fifth Week: Post-Civil War: Development of West, Economy

Sixth Week: Imperialism, Industrialization, Reform (Progressive)

Seventh Week: Development of Modern President; World War I

Eighth Week: Twenties; Great Depression of Thirties

Ninth Week: World War II; Beginning of Cold War

Tenth Week: American Century (1945-65): Cold War, Consumerism, Counterculture

Eleventh Week: America’s Time of Trouble (1965-80)

Twelfth Week: Continuation

Thirteen Week: Reagan-Bush: American Revival; Cold War’s End

Fourteenth Week: Clinton-Bush: Conservative America

Fifteenth Week: America after 9/11

Sixteenth Week: Final Exam Week: Option of Final Essay or final exam

Reading Schedule: Will provide a reading schedule on first day of class; in text, start reading about the Revolutionary period

Teaching Style: I received this from a former student; its words, by Erwin Panofsky, an artist in the 1950s, articulate my philosophy towards teaching/learning:

"The aim of the academic process as such is to impart to the student, not a maximum of knowledge but a maximum of adaptability - not so much to teach him subject matter as to teach him method. When the [student] leaves the university, his most valuable possession is neither the fairly uneven acquaintance with [the subject in which one majored] which he is expected to acquire through lecture courses, seminars, and private reading, nor the more thorough familiarity with the special field from which the subject of his thesis has been taken, but an ability to turn himself into a specialist in whatever domain may happen to attract his fancy in later life."