

Honors 1300 Fall 2004

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Textbooks:

McInerney, *A Traveller's History of the USA*

Colin Powell, *My American Journey*

Terrorism and 9/11: A Reader

Introductory Thoughts:

This course examines the rise of the US from a rebellious group of English colonies in 1775 to superpower status after World War II. Being an American historian, I naturally find the United States to be a fascinating country which has been blessed with vast resources, including an amazing array of people from all over the world. It was a country born when the world was being transformed in the early modern period, thanks to the rise of nationalism, the scientific revolution, the Christian religious reformation, and Enlightenment thought. The United States has enjoyed many advantages which most other nations have not experienced: for a long time, geographical isolation; weak neighbors; supportive governments and businesses which promoted technological, communications, transportation revolutions which transformed the continental-size nation into a strong economic and military power. Yet the American story, as with all European peoples, is not without flaws. Racism, imperialistic exploitation, environmental devastations have been blots on the US historical record. And while the US has enjoyed extraordinary leadership at times, it has also been plagued by poor leaders. Last, but not least, the US has experienced, on the whole, positive effects from wars—an experience which very few other nations can boast.

For this course, I will provide many class handouts which contain information which is the equivalent of lecture material. I tend to focus on wars, US presidents, and important features of American society such as consumerism and technology (which affects ordinary lives and warfare). Hopefully, I will not inundate you with too much detail but will, rather, provide you with the “big picture” of US history. For those of you who enjoy the details of US history, Professor McInerney’s textbook on US history is useful. I have also asked you to read an autobiography by an American—a famous American, Colin Powell, who is currently US Secretary of State. He is also a minority. He was the first African American to become the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest US military rank possible. He, like so many Americans, came from an immigrant family (West Indies); he, like so many Americans, experienced the “rags to riches” story (i.e., an individual of modest family background, who through determination, talent, and luck, rose to one of the highest positions in US government and the military). Moreover, this is a man who has served many American presidents, from Richard Nixon to Bill Clinton. He served in both the Vietnam War and the Gulf War. His story, therefore, is worth reading. From my class handouts, Professor McInerney’s textbook, and Colin Powell’s autobiography, my goal is for you to gain a better understanding of the

“good, bad and ugly” of the US history, its people and its leaders. I further hope that you will gain an appreciation of the complexity of the American story and its society.

I have also included a brief reader on terrorism, published after 9/11. We will use segments of this book throughout the course.

Scope

This course begins with the American Revolutionary Era, roughly 1750 to 1800. The focus is on the War for Independence, some of the prominent Revolutionary leaders, and the remarkable political and constitutional changes they brought in this time period.

For those of you interested in colonial America, you can read chapter 1 by Professor McInerney on your own; also, Professor Nicholls offers excellent upper-division courses on colonial America. For the purposes of this course, however, because I want to reach the end of the 20th century, I must be selective in my approach.

The next segment of the course, roughly 1790 to 1850, will cover the economic, technological, territorial changes, as well as several more military conflicts (War of 1812, Second Seminole War, Mexican-American War). In each period of study, I try to highlight individuals: the famous and not so famous, for it is the individual who makes history.

The third segment will deal with the Civil War era—why the war came and with what consequences. These various segments thus constitute **the first part of the course: the US, from creation to near destruction: the Revolution to the Civil War**

The next major division or the second part of the course, deals with the rise to world power status by the US: the “West” is settled and the “Indian Problem” is finally solved; the US joins the other “big boys” in the imperial race for colonies. Then the US finds itself become wealthy off the miseries of others—WWI—and asserts its dominance as economic and military power which enabled the Allied side to win. But then the Americans tire of the international scene, turn inward, and enjoy an incredible decade of technological development and prosperity. Then, the bottom drops out of the US and world economy; the scene goes from bad to ugly in the 30s as aggressor nations, Germany and Italy and Japan, challenge the international status quo. Thus, **the second major part of the course deals with America’s attempt to come to grips with fame, fortune, and despair and poverty, roughly 1877 to 1939.**

America’s involvement in WWII consists the beginning of the last section or the third part of our studies: the emergence of the US as a Superpower, premier consumer society, technological genius, etc. This period lasts from 1941 to 2001. Hence, much of the course is intended to focus on the twentieth century and how American became the leading economic power, premier consumer society, and global military power.

Requirements :

Attendance Option: Choose A or B

Option A: you can sign a contract agreeing to **compulsory attendance** (two, justified absences in 16 weeks are allowed), class-provided assignments; one writing assignment (see below). If you miss more than two, justified classes, you will start to lose attendance points (10 pts. Per class). It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet each class; anyone who regularly arrives more than 20 minutes late or who leaves more than 20 minutes early (without expressed permission and NOT on a regular basis) or who excessively leaves and returns (to go to bathroom, get water, make a phone call, whatever) or who is a distraction in class (socializes, works on another class's homework, sleeps, reads newspaper, etc.) will be marked absent. During class, there will be an **unspecified number of class-provided assignments** (such as a short writing response to assigned text reading; brief quiz on small amount of assigned reading; response to video clip seen in class; etc.). Option A students will also write a final essay paper (see below)

Option B: non-compulsory attendance, mid-term and final exams (based on material taken from the textbooks, mainly McInerney) and a 5-page written essay paper (described below).

Once the contract (for Option A or B) is signed, by the first Friday class, you cannot change.

Reiteration: **Option A students**

Unspecified number of class-announced assignments (at least 100 points); these class-announced assignments maybe brief written responses to readings from McInerney or the Terrorism reader; maybe a brief written response to class handout read in class; maybe a brief written response to a video clip seen in class or a classroom discussion, etc.

Written essay (approximately 5 pages, worth 100 pts) in response to ONE of the textbooks: Powell or the Terrorism reader in which you either summarize the main points or write a thematic essay.

Option B students

Mid-term exam (based on McInerney's book through Reconstruction); worth 100 pts.; format-objective questions (ie., matching terms, multiple choice, true/false), identifications, an essay question (from a selection of three essay questions); **final exam** (same format; also 100 pts.); **written essay** (approximately 4-5 typed pages), based on one of several themes (which I will provide the first class)

For Option A and Option B Students:

Optional Book Review (3-4 typed pages): your book selection is optional, too (either one of your textbooks or a history book approved by instructor) (100 pts.)

Tentative Schedule: Over the years, I have discovered that keeping strictly by the schedule is difficult. I try to "go with the flow" of the class (i.e., move according to the interests

of the students). Therefore, I always offer a “tentative” schedule. I can use the last week to catch up if we fall too far behind the designated schedule. **You should keep up with the designated reading, even if we fall behind topically in class.**

First Week: Who is this American? What is America?

(for material on Colonial America, see chp. 1 McInerney). Who is this American? What is America? In the first two classes, we’ll examine several different “Americans” who lived during the Revolutionary times. For the traditional coverage of the early Revolutionary era, read McInerney’s chapter 2 & various class handouts; then write a 2-page synopsis (handwritten or typed) of the most important factors, in your view, of the coming of the American Revolution and War for Independence. **Be prepared to discuss and turn in this paper by the Monday of the second week. Worth 30 points**

From Monday’s class: we will view a clip of the Martha Ballard (she is a midwife and healer from Massachusetts, born in the 1730s, who moved to Maine during the Revolutionary war; she kept a diary from 1785 to 1812; she and her diary formed the subject of a Pulitzer Prize book, *A Midwife’s Tale*, by Historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich--this book is available in the USU library & bookstore). From your viewing, please reflect, in writing, upon the following: the precarious nature of life in the 18th century, the state of medicine, the role of women, the challenges of a historian, and any other aspect of the story that fascinated you. This represents a second, class-announced assignment, worth 25 points; it is due at the end of class or the beginning of Wednesday’s class. It can be handwritten or typed. I will also include, FYI (for your interest), two handouts of disease in early America and a handout on childbirth.

Note: the above are examples of how Option A students gain points in this class; I do not give formal exams for Option A students. On the day of the mid-term, Option A students will not attend class (Friday of 9th week). We look, listen, think, talk, read, write.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, the more “famous” Revolutionary characters (e.g., John Adams, Ben Franklin, George Washington, etc.) will be discussed, as well as less familiar ones, like Joseph Plumb Martin, a Continental soldier who served most of the war. Class discussions, based on textbooks and handouts, as well as visual material and brief lectures, will guide the class period. Read chapter 3 in McInerney for the Revolution war

Second Week: Implications of a Revolution: Winners and Losers; Creation of New

Government (continue reading McInerney, chp.3; class handouts; read chp. 4 in McInerney) Not everyone was happy with the outcome of the war for independence; Martha Ballard and her husband, neutral at best, moved to Maine; Benedict Arnold and other “loyalists” left for England or Canada or the West Indies; many African Americans did not find the liberation they hoped for; leaders of the revolutionary movement clashed over the direction of the government and economy; foreign nations showed little respect for the new US. 1783 to 1815 was a very trying time for the US. The world was very dangerous, as Europeans fought wars intermittently from the early 1790s until 1815. Meanwhile, the US struggled to give birth to a market economy and deal with the contentious issue of slavery and its expansion

Third Week: Clashes of Views: Political Revolutions of Early Republic (chp.4). What

makes for a good government? Who should lead? How can a republic survive? There are many questions and debates to consider during this early period

Fourth Week: A Giant Is Being Born: Changes of the Early Republic (chps.5-6)

Wars, clashes with Natives, influx of immigrants, religious fervor, birth of mass media and market economy, westward expansion, tensions between north and south over slavery; the issues seemed endless and insoluble. But it was also a time when heroes reigned: Lewis & Clark, the Mormon pioneers, Lowell girls, etc. Especially focus on chp. 5's discussion of the emergence of the market economy

Fifth Week : Gathering Storm & Civil War (chp. 7-8, p. 203): Ill-fruits of the Mexican War and westward expansion; the horrors of the Civil War

Sixth Week : The Meaning of the Civil War; Reconstruction (chp. 8, p. 204-end) The Civil War was the first modern war; perhaps the first total war; it remains ever fascinating to Americans; its implications have lasted more than a century.

Seventh Week: Industrialization, urbanization change. Gilded Age (chp. 9 to 236); (chp. 9 , 236 to end): Also during this period, 1877-1917, the international scene was changing. American played a role. Indeed, clashes occurred when WASP Americans tried to take their way of life (religion, economic needs, cultural biases, diseases, etc.) to other parts of the world (Hawaii, China, the Philippines, etc.); environmental concerns emerged for the first time. Read in McInerney, chp 10, pp. 247-267.

Eighth Week : World Gone Crazy: WWI & Twenties & Depression (chp. 10, p. 263 to end; chp. 11); from 1900 to 1939, the world experienced horrible change, thanks to military technology, consumerism, communications revolution, intellectual challenges, governmental failures, etc. Americans were challenged as never before.

Ninth Week : World Gone Mad and Mean: WWII (chp. 12 to p. 314)
How the US prospered and became powerful, while the rest of the world crumbled

Tenth Week: Pax Americana: Early Cold War, Proud, Powerful and Prosperous, 1945-65 (chp. 12, p. 314 to end; chp. 13 to p. 339): the heyday of American power, consumerism, entertainment

Eleventh Week: Troubled Giant (Sixties-Seventies) (chp. 13, p. 339 to end); start reading Colin Powell's autobiography. America suffers blows from Vietnam, counterculture rebels, Watergate, oil embargo, downfall of the Shah, Soviet threats worldwide

Twelfth Week: Morning in America Again: Reagan Revival (chp. 14; Powell); Reagan revolution in government and military; ending of the Cold War; greed of the 1980s; rock music after 30 years

Thirteenth Week: A New World Order?? 1991-93, the Bush (41) Years ;
read in McInerney, chp. 14; continue Colin Powell; start reading *Terrorism and 9/11 reader*):

Fourteenth Week: The Clinton Decade : Successes and Scandals (use McInerney and Powell, handouts, etc.)

Fifteenth Week: The Bush Presidency and 9/11: the beginning of the end or the start of a new round of renewal and reform? (Use Terrorism reader)

Final Exam Week : no exam for Option A; final exam for Option B; for both A & B, final essay based on text reading (due at time of final exam)(Option A students deposit this assignment in a box labeled “Conover” in the front office of the History Department, 3rd floor of Old Main, Room 323)