2014

144-07 America Since 1865

Frank Rzeczkowski
rzeczkowskif@xavier.edu

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History 144-7  
America Since 1865  
MWF 10-10:50  
Xavier University  
Spring 2014

Instructor: Frank Rzeczkowski  
Office: Schott Hall 507  
E-mail: rzeczkowskif@xavier.edu  
Office Hours: M 8-9:30, W 11:15-12:30, and by appt.

Note: This course fulfills the following State of Ohio NCSS requirements: 1.1/1.2/1.3/1.4/1.5/1.6/1.7/1.10/2.1/3.2

Course Description: At the end of the Civil War in 1865, the United States stood on the brink of becoming a modern nation - operating with a unified economy and under a single legal/political system - in other words, on the brink of becoming the nation we know today. However, the United States faced numerous problems in making this transition to modernity - for example, deciding whether to integrate into or exclude from American society an increasingly diverse array of peoples (including former slaves, Native Americans, and immigrants); how to deal with the increasing economic inequality that accompanied the transition from a largely rural, agricultural society to a predominantly industrial, urban society; and the role of government in shaping not only American society, but America's relations with the rest of the world. In many ways, these problems were similar or precursors to the problems America faces today. Studying America's recent past, then, becomes essential to understanding the world we live in.

Course Format and Expectations: This class meets 50 minutes a day, three times per week. You are expected to attend class regularly, to arrive on time and remain until class ends, to complete scheduled readings and assignments and to be respectful of the instructor and your fellow students. Typically, two days each week will be devoted to lecture, and one day to discussion of that week's readings. Attendance and participation at discussion sections is not optional; failure to participate will result in a lower discussion grade, and three or more absences from discussion sections will result in your receiving an 'F' in discussion. Attendance at lecture is also important, since the lectures will provide critical background and place the weekly readings in a historical context.

Grading: Your final grade in this course will be determined on the following basis:
   2 of 3 Short papers: 20 percent each
   Two midterm exams: 15 percent each
   Final exam: 20 percent
   Discussion: 10 percent
   Checkpoint assignments: SEE BELOW

Short Papers: There are three short papers listed in the course schedule; the two highest paper grades will be used in computing your semester grade. If you are happy with your first two paper grades you may skip the third paper, or you may write all three papers and I will use the two highest paper grades in figuring your course grade. Each paper will be a 3 to 4 page response to a question I will hand out in class a week before the paper is due. Paper grades will be determined not only by the quality of the intellectual ideas they contain, but how well and effectively those ideas are communicated – clean and clear writing matters.

Midterms and Final Exam: Both the midterms and final exam will require you to answer short (4-5 sentence) ID questions and one essay question. The exams will NOT be comprehensive; thus each will cover roughly the 1/3 of the course prior to the exam. All exams will require you to incorporate and synthesize information and evidence from lecture, readings, and discussion.
Discussion: This grade will be computed determined based on attendance and informed participation in weekly discussion.

Checkpoint Assignments: Checkpoint assignments are short weekly assignments based on that week’s reading. They are designed to help you engage with and understand the readings better in preparation for class discussion. Checkpoints are graded on a pass/fail basis; in order to qualify for an ‘A’ for the course you cannot miss/fail more than 2 checkpoints; to qualify for a ‘B’ you cannot miss/fail more than 4 checkpoints, and no more than 6 for a ‘C’. Completing the required number of checkpoints for a grade DOES NOT guarantee you that grade; it merely makes you eligible for that grade as determined by your other coursework.

NOTE: YOU MUST HAND IN A HARD COPY AND SUBMIT AN ELECTRONIC COPY ON CANVAS TO GET CREDIT FOR PAPERS AND CHECKPOINTS!

Academic Honesty: You are expected to produce original work on all assignments. Plagiarism or cheating will result in the student failing the course. Plagiarism means passing off another person’s words or ideas as your own without acknowledging the source. Direct quotes, paraphrases, or ideas taken from another source must be acknowledged with a parenthetical citation: for example (West, The Contested Plains, 70). For more on academic honesty, consult the Xavier University Student Handbook.

Course Readings: The following books are required for this course and are available at the Xavier University bookstore:
- Kasson, Amusing the Million
- Madison, A Lynching in the Heartland
- Roeder, The Censored War
- Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, v. 2, concise 7th edition (preferred)

I reserve the right to alter any element of the course for any reason. Any changes will be announced in class and via e-mail. It is your responsibility to stay abreast of any changes and plan accordingly.

PART I: INTO MODERNITY, 1865-1898

Description: In the years after 1865, America struggled with unprecedented diversity, as the nation attempted to absorb and define the place of African-Americans, Native Americans, and immigrants into American society. At the same time, economic growth fundamentally changed the nature of the country, as industrial expansion led to increased social and economic conflict between (and among) workers, employers, and urban and rural Americans.

Questions:
A. How did concepts of who was and what it meant to be an “American” change between 1850 and 1900? What events and processes influenced these changes?

B. After the Civil War, America became more economically powerful and wealthy than ever before, but economic inequality also reached unprecedented heights. Why weren’t the benefits of the economic growth of the late 1800s more evenly shared amongst the American population?

C. All of America – North, South, and West – underwent dramatic transformations after 1865. What were the main similarities and differences in how people in each of these regions experienced and responded to these changes?

WEEK ONE
Jan. 13 – Introduction
Jan. 15 – The Revolutionary Decade
Jan. 17 – The Demise of Reconstruction
PART II: TOWARDS THE AMERICAN CENTURY, 1898-1945

Description: By the beginning of the 20th century America had shifted away from a rural, agricultural society to become an urban, industrial nation – but the cultural and social conflicts of previous decades did not disappear. And as America became a global power, both economically and (eventually) militarily, the crises the nation confronted also increased in scale, with the conflagrations of World Wars I and II and the worldwide economic collapse of the Great Depression forcing Americans to reevaluate the role of government at home and abroad.

Questions:
A. Compare American mobilization efforts during the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II. How and why did American mobilization for each war differ, and what lasting impacts did the experience of war have on American society in each case?
B. During the first several decades of the 20th century, members of previously marginalized groups (including but not limited to women, African-Americans, and immigrants) moved closer to and gained greater acceptance from mainstream American society. How and why did this process occur? What reactions and responses did this provoke and how did these responses change over time?

C. What were the chief differences between the way the government justified “reform” during the Progressive Era and the New Deal? Were there any significant similarities that linked reform during these two eras? Is the New Deal better understood as an extension of the Progressive Era or a departure from it?

WEEK SIX
Feb. 17 – The Mirror of War
Feb. 19 – Progressivism
Feb. 21 – Discussion: What does “Reform” Mean? Part I
   Reading: Theodore Roosevelt, “What a Progressive Is” *
   George Washington Plunket, “Honest and Dishonest Graft” *
   Triangle Shirtwaist Fire documents *
   Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, chapter 20

CHECKPOINT #4 DUE

WEEK SEVEN
Feb. 24 – Over Here
Feb. 26 – Closing the Borders
Feb. 28 – Discussion: The Borders Within
   Reading: Madison, A Lynching in the Heartland
   Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, chapters 21-22

CHECKPOINT #5 DUE

WEEK EIGHT
SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

WEEK NINE
March 10 – The Moral Economy of Depression-Era America
March 12 – Making a New Deal
March 14 – Discussion: What Does “Reform” Mean? Part II
   Reading: Jimmy Carter, An Hour Before Daylight (excerpt) *
   Herbert Hoover, “Lincoln Birthday Address” *
   Franklin Delano Roosevelt, ”We are Fighting to Save…” *
   Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, chapters 23-24

SECOND PAPER DUE

WEEK TEN
March 17 – The “Good” War
March 19 – The Real War
   Viewing: The Bombing of Germany
March 21 – Discussion: Fear
   Readings: Roeder, The Censored War
   Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, chapters 25-26

CHECKPOINT #6 DUE
PART III: COLD WAR TO 9/11

Description: America’s superpower status after World War II did not bring the stability many Americans hoped for. Even as America experienced unprecedented affluence, members of marginalized and/or minority groups continued to struggle for full inclusion and access to the American Dream. Overseas, American commitment to the Cold War led to political and military involvement (covert or overt) in places like Korea, Vietnam, and Iran. Nor did postwar prosperity prove permanent, leading to a new series of social, cultural, and political struggles in the 70s, 80s, and 90s.

Questions:

A. What were the sources of America’s unprecedented affluence following World War II? Why did the economic growth of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s ultimately prove unsustainable, and how did affluence shape American society and culture – both during that time and even after the postwar era came to an end?

B. Which process/event was more critical to shaping American society after World War II: the shift from a predominantly working-class to a predominantly middle-class society, or the Cold War? Why? (Note: there is a degree of overlap between these events, but you must argue why one was more central to American attitudes and behavior than the other.)

C. Since the 1960s America has become more socially liberal and more politically conservative. Explain this seeming paradox. (Note: you are free to discuss the influence of events before the 1960s in your answer.)

March 26 – Seeing Reds
March 28 – Discussion: Containment
Readings: Harry Truman, "The Truman Doctrine" *
          George Marshall, "The Marshall Plan" *
          Kennan, "Excerpts from Telegraphic Message from Moscow" *
          Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, chapter 27

CHECKPOINT #7 DUE

WEEK TWELVE
March 31 – Inventing the Middle Class
April 2 – Freedom and Fascism
April 4 – Discussion: The Myths of Vietnam
Reading: Vietnam documents*
          Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, chapters 28-29

THIRD PAPER DUE

WEEK THIRTEEN
April 7 – Viewing: “The Freedom Riders” (Part I)
April 9 – Viewing: “The Freedom Riders” (Part II)
April 11 – Discussion: Civil Rights
Readings: “To the Montgomery Public” *
          Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" *
          Citizens’ Council articles: Evans “Forced Integration is Communism in Action” *
          Ingram, "Why Integration is Un-Christian" *
Shearer, “Can Conservatives Unite to Save Our Nation?” *
Madison, A Lynching in the Heartland, pages 129-153

CHECKPOINT #8 DUE

WEEK FOURTEEN
April 14 – The Second Reconstruction
April 16 – Flaunting It
April 19 – GOOD FRIDAY – NO CLASS

WEEK FIFTEEN
April 21 – EASTER MONDAY – NO CLASS
April 23 – Discussion: The Feminist Revolt
  Reading: Betty Friedan, "The Problem that Has No Name" *
           Helen Gurley Brown, "The Newest Glamour Girl of Our Times" *
           National Organization of Women Bill of Rights, 1968 *
           Redstockings Manifesto: "Women are an Oppressed Class" *
           Phyllis Schlafly, "The Power of the Positive Woman" *
           Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, chapter 30

CHECKPOINT #9 DUE
April 25 – Things Fall Apart

WEEK SIXTEEN
April 28 – Remembering the Cold War
April 30 – Discussion: Crisis and Conservatism
  Readings: George Wallace, "The Civil Rights Movement: Fraud, Sham, and Hoax" *
            Civil Rights Act of 1964 *
            Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address" *
            Joan Didion, "Trouble in Lakewood" *
            Brinkley, The Unfinished Nation, chapters 31-32

CHECKPOINT #10 DUE
May 2 – It’s About Sex, Stupid

FINAL EXAM – 10-11:50 Wednesday, May 7