Recent U.S. History, 1945 to Present
Wednesdays, 4:30-7:10pm.
Innovation 336

DRAFT 8 January 2018

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:20-3:20 pm and by appointment. Please sign up for a slot or slots at zschrags.youcanbookme.com, whether you are planning to come on Wednesday afternoons or any other time.

Online resources
- Course Blackboard (Bb) site: http://mymason.gmu.edu
- General advice: http://historyprofessor.org
- Administrative information: http://historyprofessor.org/miscellaneous/boilerplate/
- Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Course Description
What is the legacy of the anticommunist movement of the 1950s? How did the liberal coalition of 1964 give way to a resurgent conservatism by 1980? Did the reformist impulses of the 1960s endure past the end of the decade? Have concerns about class displaced debates over race? How do local and regional stories complicate national narratives? And can a historical profession dominated by liberal Democrats fairly answer these questions? This version of HIST 623 will explore the postwar era by focusing on recent scholarship that seeks to explain the apparent collapse of the once-mighty New Deal order and the challenges posed by a rising conservative movement. We will compare explanations stressing conflicts over race relations, business interests, Communism, crime, war, and other factors to build a complex, if not comprehensive, understanding of the postwar period.

Goals
In this course, students will:
- Enhance their knowledge of twentieth-century United States history.
- Practice critical reading and analysis of recent scholarship.
- Consider the challenges of studying the politics of recent decades.
Readings

**Required Books**


Links to additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.

**Key questions**

For each book, consider the following questions:

1. What is liberalism?
2. What is conservatism?
3. Who are the pivotal people?
4. What was the path not taken?

**Administrative**

Please read the administrative information about the honor code, university resources &c. online at http://historyprofessor.org/miscellaneous/boilerplate/
Feedback on your lesson plans, prospectus, and final paper will be provided on Blackboard. I do not expect to provide written feedback on most weekly reading responses.

As with any spring semester course, there is a reasonable chance that campus will close for snow at least once during the term. If this happens, we will use the Blackboard Blackboard Collaborate Ultra function, or, if that fails, the chat function. Chat requires a recent version of Java and will not run on all browsers (especially not on Chrome), so please configure your browser in advance and, if that fails, try a different one.

Assignments

Class participation and rapportage. 10 points

Students are expected to participate actively in all class meetings. In addition, on one occasion you will take notes on the major points of the discussion, post them to Blackboard, and start the next class with a reminder of those major points.

Reading responses: 2 points each x 10 responses. 20 points total

For each class meeting except the first and last (weeks 2-13), and the weeks for which you prepare lesson plans, please post responses to the assigned readings. These responses are mainly designed to set the agenda for class discussions. I do not expect to offer detailed feedback, though I may do so if you are having trouble with the format. Please post your responses to the discussion board section of Bb by 10am on the day of our meetings.

For each response, post three noteworthy facts. Each fact should be one or two sentences long. Look for facts that would surprise and interest potential readers, and spark discussion. The noteworthy facts on page A3 of the New York Times are good models. (I have posted some on Blackboard.) Look for quotations, statistics, or events with a particular date. Read in the body of the body paragraphs of the body chapters, avoiding topic sentences and all introductions and conclusions. Please provide a page number.

Chose one fact and explain in two or three sentences how it supports the author’s larger claims, or how it might be read in a way that challenges those claims. For models, see what facts make it into Reviews in American History, https://muse-jhu-edu.mutex.gmu.edu/journal/168

Paste your response as a plain text reply to the thread. Do not post attachments.

Goals

- Help you distinguish between the claims a historian makes and the evidence she uses to support those claims.
- Help you practice evaluating a work by its ability to make sense of the evidence it offers.
• Prepare you for class discussions by focusing your attention on the arguments and facts presented by the readings.

• Prepare the instructor and your classmates by giving them an advance idea of what you and other students think are the key questions raised by the readings.

Lesson plan. 2 x 15 points each. 30 points total.

Twice during the semester, each student will present a primary source for discussion. Imagine that you want to convey some of the major insights of our reading for the week to an audience (high school students, undergraduates, museum visitors, Smithsonian cruise ship passengers) who have not read and never will read the scholarly monograph that we are discussing that week. But they are willing to read a short, primary source, or absorb its sound or video equivalent. How will you translate your scholarly understanding to a non-scholarly audience?

Steps

1. Review the sample lesson plan on Bb.

2. As you read the assigned book, think about what major themes or questions you would like to communicate.

3. Choose one or two primary source that addresses those themes or questions. It should be brief enough that your classmates can read, listen to, or watch it in no more than 5 minutes) Please see my undergraduate syllabus for examples of sources, and the library’s (US History Sources 1940s-Present. http://infoguides.gmu.edu/modern-US-history/begin) for online resources. You are welcome to choose a source that is cited in the assigned text, though preferably not one that the author addresses at great length. You may choose one longer source or two sources for your classmates to compare.

   Sources with an explicit agenda (such as opinion pieces, political speeches, or advertisements) generally work better than straight news reporting.

   Primary sources for lesson plans must be fully cited and traced back to the original source if possible. If you find a source on the open web, try to find a version in a reputable academic or commercial site with full bibliographic information.

4. Prepare a lesson plan (500-1000 words) for the discussion with the following sections:

   • Claims. Summarize one or more (not all) of the major claims of the seminar text, quoting as appropriate.

   • Primary source: Please provide full bibliographic information for the source you will use. Explain your choice of primary source and its relation to the assigned readings. Imagine you were teaching undergraduates, preparing a museum or website exhibit, or scripting a documentary film, and you wanted to convey some of the insights from the assigned scholarly book without requiring people to read that text. What concepts would the primary source introduce on its own?
• **Goals**: what are the most important facts and concepts that students should take away from the readings.

• **Questions**: List questions about both the assigned readings and primary source. Aim for open-ended, interpretive questions, rather than specific factual questions.

Please post your lesson plan in the **assignments** section of Bb by **10am** on the day of our meetings. If possible, please post the source or a link to it at the **primary sources** section of Bb.

5. Prepare handouts or slides as needed. If you want me to make photocopies of a source you post to Bb, please let me know several hours in advance by email.

6. Lead discussion. You will have 30 minutes to lead a discussion on your source, based on your lesson plan. This includes the time your classmates will need to read, listen to, or view the source. If you are paired with another student, you and your partner can present separately, or plan together to use the allotted hour.

**Goals**

• Give you experience leading discussions and preparing materials for discussion.

• Give you experience translating the questions and claims of scholarly history into more accessible formats.

• Give you the chance to explore your own special interests by selecting primary and secondary materials that shed alternative perspectives on the common readings.

• Enliven class discussions by bringing in those new perspectives.

• Aid your instructor and classmates in teaching future courses in this period.

**Individual Paper (40 percent)**

The major assignment of this course is an original essay of roughly 3000 to 5000 words (12 to 20 pages), not including notes. I expect most students to write historiographical papers, using secondary sources to trace the scholarly debate over some aspect of the history of postwar political and economic developments. However, students who feel they would benefit more from writing a paper based on primary sources may do so.

You are expected to work on the paper throughout the term, and to complete it in stages.

**Topics**

The readings in the seminar focus on the political and economic history of United States between 1945 and 1980, and your paper should engage with those readings and our discussions. Please choose a topic that allows you to do so. For instance, while a paper on military operations during the Tet Offensive would not work well, a paper on how Tet was understood by various domestic constituencies might. Papers based on primary sources should address narrower topics.
Prospectus and bibliography

For March 5, please post a one- or two-page prospectus explaining your research question and your selection of sources, as well as an annotated bibliography explaining what you hope to learn from each source. For historiographical papers, I expect you to use ten to twenty sources, though in many cases you will address only the portion of each source relevant to your particular question. For papers based on primary sources, a single source many be sufficient, if it is sufficiently juicy (e.g., a post-riot report with hundreds of witnesses).

Presentations

Our last meeting will give you a chance to present your work to the class. Please plan a presentation of your findings; time limit will be determined by the size of the seminar. If you wish to use a Powerpoint file, please send it to me in advance.

Final paper

The final version of your paper will be due on Blackboard during exam week. Please submit this as a .docx or .rtf file. Please post your paper in the assignments section of Bb by 5pm on Tuesday, May 8.

Goals

- Give you the opportunity to explore your particular interests beyond the assigned readings.
- Expose your classmates to more topics than we could cover as a group.
- Give you the opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of the assigned readings and apply the knowledge you have gained.
- Develop skills, and perhaps topic expertise, that you will use when writing a full-length research seminar paper.
Schedule

Introduction
1. January 24
   - International Labor and Working-Class History 74 (Fall 2008), section on “Rethinking the Place of the New Deal In American History.” Essay by Cowie and Salvatore; responses by Boyle, Kazin, Klein, MacLean, Montgomery, and reply by Salvatore and Cowie, pp. 3-69. http://www.jstor.org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/i27673114

Legacies of New Deal and War
3. February 7. Cohen, Consumers’ Republic

Anticommunism killed the New Deal

Networks killed the New Deal
   March 5 (Monday), 5pm. Prospectus due.
   March 7. NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

Whiteness killed the New Deal
9. March 28. Backlash articles:

The Sixties killed the New Deal
10. April 4. Flamm, Law and Order
11. April 11 Scanlon, Pro-War Movement

Inflation killed the New Deal
13. April 25. Jacobs, Panic at the Pump

Who killed the New Deal?
14. May 2. Presentations
   May 8 (Tue). Final paper due on Blackboard, 5pm.