
American History and Politics

Instructor: Lucas A. Sprouse, MAHR

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Term: Fall 2020

Credits: 6

Instruction: English, including lecture and seminar

Lessons: Mondays and Wednesdays 14:40-16:10 (90+90)

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 16:10-16:40 or by appointment

Course Description

American History and Politics is a survey of the major historical developments in society, politics, economics, religion, and culture that helped to shape the United States of America. This course will examine major movements in American history beginning with European exploration and colonization and ending with the modern day. Central themes such as immigration, the evolving definition of freedom, expansionism, isolationism, and interventionism will be examined.

The aim of this course is to give students a deeper understanding of US history while providing some context for contemporary political affairs. As such, we will be discussing the three branches of government, checks and balances, the current campaign, the two party system, the electoral college, and other topics related to the quagmire that is American politics.

In addition to lectures, discussion-based seminars will focus on primary and secondary source readings, and students' written and oral communication skills will be developed through essays and presentations. Along with increased historical understanding, students will cultivate better critical thinking and analytical skills that can be applied in a range of academic and practical settings.

Themes:

European Colonization and Contact with Native Americans

From the Seven Years' War to the American Revolution

The Early Republic

Westward Expansion and Manifest Destiny

Civil War and Reconstruction

Immigration, Industrialization, and the Gilded Age

Protectionism and the World Wars

The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression

The Cold War and a Consumerist Society

9/11 and the War on Terror

Conservatism, Progressivism, and Populism

The Electoral College, Checks and Balances, and the Two Party System

The Presidential Election

Required and Recommended Readings:

- James A. Henretta, Eric Hinderraker, Rebecca Edwards, and Robert O. Self, *America's History, For the AP Course*, (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014, 8th edition)
- Primary and supplementary secondary sources will be supplied throughout the semester via Moodle

Evaluation Criteria

Active Participation: 30%

Writing Assignments: 25%

Presentation: 25%

Examinations: 20%

Active Participation: It is absolutely necessary to come to class and participate on a regular basis. Participation includes attendance, reading preparation, and active discussion during seminars. Each student will be in charge of finding an article, providing the link or printed copies of the article one class before their assigned date, giving a brief introduction to the article, and leading a 20 minute discussion on said article. You are allowed four unexcused absences, after which your grade will significantly decrease.

Writing Assignments: These include 500 word reflections covering historical movements that we have discussed as well as critiques of political articles we discuss throughout the course of the semester. In these assignments, you should briefly describe the movements, analytically compare and contrast them, and explain their impact to both US and world history. Critiques of political articles should tackle the inherent bias, truthfulness, and journalistic rigor on top of providing a personal reaction to the content. Critical analysis is key.

Presentation: Students will research a modern American presidential election in order to prepare a 20 minute presentation and lead a 10 minute discussion. You should be sure to provide a narrative of the election and its results, place the major candidates within the context of their party's political spectrum, list the major pros and cons of the major candidates' campaigns, and describe the impact of the election both domestically and internationally. You are required to create some sort of visual aid to accompany your presentation and engage with your audience.

Examinations: There will be two examinations in this course, a midterm and a final examination. Both examinations are weighted equally. Each examination will cover the material since the previous one; the final examination will, therefore, not be comprehensive. Examinations will be based upon information from lectures, class discussions, primary source readings, the required readings, and any presentations given.

Course Evaluation

A – excellent: 100-93%

B – very good: 92-84%

C – good: 83-74%

D – satisfactory: 73-63%

E – sufficient: 62-51%

Fx – fail: 50-0%.