

**SYLLABUS**  
**History 4870.001**  
**The Making of the Modern United States, 1877-1929**  
**Fall 2013**  
**TuTh 11:00-12:20, Wooten Hall 316**

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**Course Description:** With the formal end of Reconstruction in 1877, the American people put their divisions behind them and embarked on a boom-and-bust economic and geographic expansion that made the United States the envy of the world by 1929. Or did they? During this half-century the American people also battled one another over lines of class, race, and ethnicity, and they struggled to reconcile the ideals of a democratic republic with the realities of an expanding capitalist economy. In some ways, their divisions during this period were as deep as they had been during the Civil War, but in others they united and created a truly national culture. Indeed, this is the period during which the United States developed into what contemporary Americans might recognize as a modern society.

HIST 4870 is an upper-division survey of United States history from 1877 to 1929. We will study social, political, and cultural interactions among different groups of Americans during this period, and we will devote particular attention to the struggle to assimilate millions of freed slaves, European immigrants, and Native Americans into a national American culture during an economic expansion that resulted in massive disparities of wealth. We will also explore the United States' reluctant entrance onto the world stage through an examination of its foreign policy in the period. Emphasis will be given here to the major social and political trends that have shaped the development of the modern U.S., but we will also explore the ways that struggles over ideas and culture fashioned modern American society.

I expect students to develop reading, writing, and verbal skills throughout the semester, but a solid foundation in these areas is a prerequisite for the course. This course will require you to read and master a great deal of information—in other words, it has a heavy required reading load—and to write about it in ways that demonstrate your critical-thinking skills.

**Required Texts/Readings:** The following books are required and are available from the college bookstore and other outlets. **Some of these books may be available in multiple editions, so please pay close attention to the edition I am assigning:**

H.W. Brands, *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism, 1865-1900* (Anchor paperback, 2011)

Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (Penguin paperback, 2010)

James Green, *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America* (Random House paperback, 2006)

Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (Henry Holt paperback, 2004)

In addition, I will from time to time assign primary source readings and articles, which I will hand out in class and/or make available via the course Blackboard site. Students may also find it helpful to keep an American history survey textbook on hand to serve as a background resource. I recommend the second volume of Foner, *Give Me Liberty*.

**Grades:** Grades are computed on a ten-point scale: 90.0 – 100 = A, 80.0 – 89.9 = B, etc. I do not “curve” grades as such, but I will take improvement into account when assigning final grades.

Your grades will be based on four in-class quizzes (each worth 10% of your total grade), two reaction papers (each worth 15% of your final grade), a final exam (20%), and class participation (10%).

The quizzes, which are designed to test your comprehension of assigned readings and lecture materials, will include some combination of map questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, multiple choice questions, and chronologies. You will receive more detailed instructions for the reaction paper assignments later in the semester. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and formatted in a way that does not challenge my eyesight or sanity. The final exam, which is take-home, will share the format of the reaction papers.

**I will not accept late papers without evidence of an emergency, nor will I allow make-up quizzes without evidence of an emergency.**

**Expectations:** The attached class schedule lists weekly reading assignments, which you should ideally complete before the first lecture of that week. Whether or not you can complete reading assignments before I deliver the corresponding lectures, I do expect you to keep up with the readings. I will also create an electronic discussion group for the class at the course’s Blackboard site. I encourage you to discuss the course’s content with your classmates as much as possible, either face-to-face or on the electronic

discussion board. You should use these occasions to practice your ability to present and support historical arguments—respectfully, of course.

I do not have an official attendance policy, but you absolutely cannot expect to do well in this course if you miss class often. If you do miss a class meeting it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate; I will share my lecture outlines with you, but I will not post them at the Blackboard site or share my lecture notes. You will find that I work hard to prepare for class, make a point of arriving to the classroom on time, do my best to return graded assignments promptly, treat my students with respect, and maintain a sense of humor. I ask no more—or less—than the same from you. **Please turn your cell phone off before you enter my classroom, and only use laptops, tablets, etc., for their intended purposes in the classroom or prepare to be embarrassed.**

**Statement Regarding Academic Dishonesty:** I encourage you to become familiar with the University's policy of academic dishonesty found in the *Student Code of Conduct* (<http://policy.unt.edu/policydesc/code-student-conduct-and-discipline-18-1-11>). The content of the *Student Code* applies to this course.

If you turn in an assignment in this course, our understanding is that the words and ideas in the assignment are entirely your own. (If they are not your own, you need to cite them. I will provide you with specific guidelines for citing outside sources in your writing assignments.) If you have any doubt regarding these requirements, please consult with me before you complete any assignments for this course. **It is your responsibility to guarantee that the work you hand in is entirely your own and that you understand my expectations. If you fail to fulfill any of these requirements and do choose to plagiarize an assignment, you will receive at minimum a zero for the assignment, which means that you will most likely fail the course.** I refer cases of plagiarism to the University Provost, who may decide to take further punitive actions.

**Disability Statement:** The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. **Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student.** For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

### Class Schedule (Subject to change on short notice)

August	29	Class introduction
September	3	Searching for the meanings of Reconstruction
	5	The “New South” and “New North”: the American People at the end of Reconstruction
<b>Reading:</b>		Eric Foner, “The Meaning of Freedom” (available at Blackboard) Brands, Prologue, Ch. 5
September	10	Western expansion, 1870-1900
	12	Film: “Last Stand at Little Bighorn”
<b>Reading:</b>		Brands, Ch. 6-8 Ostler, Introduction-Ch. 4
September	17	Urbanization
	19	Immigration
<b>Reading:</b>		Brands, Ch. 9-11 Ostler, Ch. 5-Conclusion
September	24	<b>QUIZ I</b> ; Politics in “the Gilded Age”
	26	<b>REACTION PAPER I DUE</b> ; Constructing Jim Crow
<b>Reading:</b>		Brands, Ch. 12-13, 15-16
October	1	The age of the “robber barons”
	3	Organizing Labor
<b>Reading:</b>		Brands, Ch. 3-4 Green, Prologue-Ch. 6
October	8	The Labor Movement, cont.
	10	<b>No class meeting</b>
<b>Reading:</b>		Green, Ch. 7-11
October	15	The populist impulse
	17	The decline of the populists
<b>Reading:</b>		Brands, Ch. 17-18 Green, Ch. 12-Epilogue
October	22	The Road to American Imperialism
	24	<b>REACTION PAPER II DUE</b> ; The Spanish-American War
<b>Reading:</b>		Brands, Ch. 20
October	29	<b>QUIZ II</b> ; The “nadir” of race relations

October	31	DuBois and Washington
<b>Reading:</b>		Boyle, Prologue-Ch. 2
November	5	The Progressive Impulse
	7	Progressivism in National Politics
<b>Reading:</b>		Brands, Ch. 21-Epilogue Boyle, Ch. 3-5
November	12	<b>QUIZ III</b>
	14	Foreign policy from the Spanish-American War to WWI
<b>Reading:</b>		Boyle, Ch. 6-7
November	19	The U.S. in World War I
	21	Reactions
<b>Reading:</b>		Boyle, Ch. 8-9; additional readings TBA
November	26	The Red Scare
	28	<b>Thanksgiving holiday</b>
<b>Reading:</b>		Boyle, Ch. 10-Epilogue
December	3	The “Roaring Twenties”: Creating the Modern Economy
	5	Cultural clashes in the 1920s
<b>Reading:</b>		Miller, chapters from <i>New World Coming</i> (available at Blackboard)
December	10	<b>QUIZ IV; The Crash</b>
	12	Review
<b>December</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Take-Home Final Exam due at 12:30 p.m.</b>