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Syllabus will be populated with further sources, assignment due dates, and other details soon.

21:512:392

Modern American (Honors American History)

Spring 2018

Tuesday & Thursday 10:00-11:20 am
Engelhard 213

Professor: Dr. Mark Krasovic
Office: 49 Bleeker Street
Email: krasovic@rutgers.edu
Telephone: 973-353-1051
Office Hours: Tues. 1:00-2:00pm & by appt.
Mailbox: Conklin 323

Course Description

Through encounters with key historical sources – both primary and secondary – this class will explore the key cultural, social, and political developments that mark the decades around the turn of the twentieth century as “modern” and that produced some of the key elements that continue to shape our contemporary United States. We will seek to draw connections between those years and today, whether via disturbing similarities (nativism, rising inequality), more edifying ones (mobilizations against racism and fascism), cultural resonances (the strength of visual culture and the sense of a shrinking world), or marked differences (more recent ways of organizing economic production in the U.S., the rise of the U.S. as a world power vs. what may be the early years of its decline). Our broad goals will be twofold: to practice critical reading and analytical skills on historical evidence, while gaining a firmer understanding of our own time by studying what are arguably its first decades.

Learning Objectives

In this course students will be given the opportunity to:

- Identify and analyze different types of evidence using critical thinking skills
- Think about the meaning of the word “modern,” its ambiguities and contradictions
- Construct multiple narratives that tell how the U.S. became “modern”
- Deepen their understanding of the early 21st century world by drawing connections back to the modern period

All readings will be distributed via Blackboard. There is nothing you need to buy.

Course Requirements

The quizzes and exams for this course will consist almost entirely of essay-style writing, sometimes short (maybe just one paragraph), sometimes longer (several pages). In my mind, “essay-style” means that you are attempting to prove a point (i.e., an argument, a claim, a thesis) via the close reading of evidence (i.e., via analysis). As a history professor, I’m much less interested in you memorizing things (heck, some people have strong memories, some have weak ones) than in you being able to explain convincingly why the world – or a small part of it, both in the past and today – looks a certain way. So the quizzes and exams will consist largely of you making an argument about a particular piece or body of evidence, why it looks or says what it does, and what it tells us about the world, and supporting that argument with close readings of the evidence. That said, while I will not test your memory directly (with, say, simple identifications or multiple choice questions), it will be extremely helpful to have committed some details to memory and to deploy them in your analysis of evidence. Quizzes will not be announced ahead of time.

For the preparedness and participation grade, students are expected to read the assigned texts before each class session. Simple attendance alone doesn’t much help the participation grade, but missing too many classes can seriously hurt it (see class rules below). Students are required to come to class ready with questions or observations about the readings and to take part in the discussion to earn a good participation grade. We will devote much of our class time to interpreting the primary source readings. This in-depth analysis will compose the participation grade. *Students **must** print out the readings from Blackboard for each session and bring them to class.*

Quizzes	25%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%
Preparedness and participation	20%

Class Rules

Studying history is often a politically and personally charged pursuit, and we will not shy away from tough questions about power, inequality, race, and immigration, to name a few. In fact, they may take on specially charged meaning in our current historical moment, and we need not steer our conversations away from making connections between the past and today. But I expect that all of us – myself included – will behave in a manner that assumes and shows respect for others’ needs and desires to learn. By all means, disagree with me and with each other. But do so in a civil way that will promote, rather than hinder, learning. *Any behavior that in any way intimidates others from participating in class will be addressed and may count against your participation grade.*

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Similarly, any behavior that distracts from class discussion will also be addressed and may count against your participation grade. In concrete terms, this means that in class there will be:

- No talking in private conversations, even in whispers
- No cell phone use of any sort, including texting
- No use of computers or laptops
- No working on homework or other course work

Attendance is required. There will be no make-up opportunities for missed classes. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. If you arrive late, after I have taken attendance, I will give you half credit for being in class. This means that two late arrivals will count as one unexcused absence. After two unexcused absences, your overall course grade will be lowered by a partial grade (from B+ to B, for example) for every further unexcused absence. *Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will have missed more than a quarter of the class time and will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw from the course to avoid an F.*

Excused vs. Unexcused absences: The Rutgers-Newark Undergraduate catalog (http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nwk-ug_current/pg576.html) states: “The recognized grounds for absence are illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions.” *If you plan to claim a religious holiday as an excused absence, you must inform me of this fact within the first two weeks of class.*

Late assignments will not be accepted except in cases of proven emergency. Unless you have express permission from me, discussed with me *in advance*, and based on an acknowledged reason, late assignments will have their grades lowered one partial grade every day that they are late.

Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism):

Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. Cheating is both a moral and an ethical offense. It violates both your own integrity and the ethics of group commitment: when you cut corners and cheat, you undermine those students who took the time to work on the assignment honestly. As a standard minimum penalty, students who are suspected of cheating or plagiarism are reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Pending investigation, further penalties can include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University.

All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.

You may only use the texts assigned in this syllabus to complete the work in this class. If I find that you have used other people’s ideas (ex: Wikipedia, Amazon reviews, book jacket descriptions, etc.), I will not accept the assignment because I will not be able to consider it your

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own work. You will get a failing grade (0 points) for that assignment and will not be able to make it up.

Disabilities

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973) 353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

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Class Schedule

Tues, Jan 16: Introduction to the class, to history, and to the modern

Thurs, Jan 18: Fleshing Out the Modern

Reading: Solnit, “The Annihilation of Time and Space” from *River of Shadows*, pp. 1-14.

Tues, Jan 23: The “Closing” of the West

Reading: Trachtenberg, “The Westward Route”

Thurs, Jan 25: The Incorporation of America & Populism

Reading: Jager, “The Myth of Populism”; King, “The Woman Who Took on the Tycoon”

Tues, Jan 30: Labor I – African Americans

Reading: Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors*; Tera Hunter, “Dancing and Carousing the Night Away”

Thurs, Feb 1: Labor II – Immigrants

Tues, Feb 6: The Industrial Order

Thurs, Feb 8: Urbanization

Reading: selections from Anthony Comstock, *Frauds Exposed*;

Tues, Feb 13: Amusements I – Public Spectacle

Reading: selection from John Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*

Thurs, Feb 15: Amusements II – Early Cinema

Reading: “Turn Back the Clock: Reminiscences of Edwin S. Porter”

Tues, Feb 20: Modern Art I – Realism & Naturalism

Reading: Stephen Crane, “The Self-Made Man”

Thurs, Feb 22: Modern Art II – Abstraction

Reading: selection from John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*; Kenyon Cox, “Cubists and Futurists are Making Insanity Pay”

Tues, Feb 27: Imperialism

Thurs, March 1: Inclusion & Exclusion

Reading: Schulz, “Citizen Khan”; Rothman, “When Bigotry Paraded Through the Streets”

Tues, March 6: Film Study – *Birth of a Nation*

Thurs, March 8: In-class Midterm

SPRING BREAK

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Tues, March 20: Progressivism

Reading: Bowery Boys podcast, “The Blizzard of 1888”; Alice Hamilton, “TITLE”

Thurs, March 22: Coming of WWI

Reading: Adriane Lentz Smith, “Saving Sergeant Caldwell”

Tues, March 27: The Great Migration & Black Urbanization

Reading: Alain Locke, “Enter the New Negro”

Thurs, March 29: The Jazz Age

Reading: “Sex O’clock in America”

Tues, April 3: The Great Depression

Reading: selections from Studs Terkel, *Hard Times*

Thurs, April 5: The New Deal

Tues, April 10: New Deal Art

Thurs, April 12: Film Study – *The River*

Tues, April 17: Coming of WWII

Thurs, April 19: The Four Freedoms

Reading: FDR, “The Four Freedoms” Message to Congress

Tues, April 24: The Ambiguities of Fighting for Freedom

Thurs, April 26: The American Economy, Power, and Looking toward the Postwar Period