

HISTORY 115–MAKING AMERICAN SOCIETY: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

RATIONALE AS A GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE:

History 115 fulfills the General Education requirement in the category, "Perspectives on a Diverse World: U.S. Diversity." The goals that follow explain why and how this class is appropriate for General Education credit .

COURSE GOALS:

“This land is your land, this land is my land,” exulted American folksinger Woody Guthrie. Crowds of approving people join in singing the words. Grade schoolers memorize that America is a nation “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” We like to believe these fine sentiments are at the core of our national identity. We also know that ours has been a troubled history. This class provides historical perspective on our nation and it shares an important goal: that, as part of an Eastern Michigan University education, students will

- examine the complexity of their own cultural identities and how these relate to the cultural identities of others in the United States,
- explore the causes and consequences of social intolerance,
- examine differences between social intolerance, racism, ethnocentrism and exclusion,
- explore how diversity has affected class differences, economic mobility, political access, and the democratic process and continues to do so,
- develop an awareness of alternative values, views and communication styles in the United States, past and present.

Addressing Diversity in History 115: To understand most clearly the issues surrounding diversity in the United States, one of the key goals of the General Education program at Eastern Michigan University, historians believe that students must understand the historical development of diversity: how the categories of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality, among others, have been constructed and re-constructed over time. History 115 will explore why, throughout four centuries of the development of the United States, Americans have struggled over how (or whether) to make the words of democracy into reality in a land of diversity. Accordingly, the class will examine the conflicts in every era between equality, liberty, and the common good. The class will also explore the challenges presented when people of so many diverse backgrounds, values, and options try to accomplish their separate and collective ambitions within a framework of democracy and capitalism. We will examine why too many men and women in each era were denied equality, and we will examine the slow but steady progress toward a “more perfect union” that gives voice, extends toleration, and offers equal opportunity to all of its people regardless of color, race, creed, national origin, gender, and sexuality.

Addressing Forms of Discrimination in History 115: Each era has been characterized by certain customs, laws, and attitudes. Some are passed on to the next era while others are set aside, no longer acceptable or even legal. We will examine change over time in patterns of social intolerance, institutionalized racism, exclusion, and ethnocentrism or "informal discrimination." Students will learn how to distinguish one from another and will be able to assess their relative consequences for American society. Examples of the course content that will pertain to this central concern:

- Social intolerance—This is often a form of intolerance "by custom." Women were restricted not only from joining male clubs such as the Detroit Athletic Club, for example, but even at social events where women were the invited guests of their husbands, they had to enter by the side door.
- Institutionalized racism—Laws that treated people differently, based on race, creed, and or gender and created different classes among Americans. In the 18th and most decades of the 19th century, blacks not only were prohibited from voting, but laws prevented them from serving on juries, testifying in court, or carrying the mail; in some places including Michigan, blacks even had to post a substantial sum as a "good behavior" bond before they could move in.
- Exclusion—Quotas were established in many instances in order to exclude unwanted "types." Ivy League schools limited the number of Jewish students that were to be admitted, for example; in the 1920s, Congress passed laws to set quotas limiting the number of immigrants who could be admitted from central and southern Europe by deliberately selecting the 1890 census as the basis for calculations.
- Ethnocentrism—Ethnocentrism was an prevailing attitude among the long-time Americans and even the "old" immigrants that led them to advocate the 1920 immigrant quotas, for example. They believed people from central and southern European countries were morally, physically, and intellectually inferior to the Anglo Saxons who originated in northern and western Europe and should be restricted in number lest dangerous "race mixing" pull down the "American character."

Through historical perspective, students will understand the difficult questions that have confronted people of every generation and the accommodations made through law, institutions, and changed social habits. By understanding past tragedies, successes, mistakes and wise choices, students will be better citizens of the present and guardians of the future. Therein is the primary goal.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005)

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

Primary sources, course pack and web-based

BASIS FOR GRADE:

Three exams (combination of short answer, identification, essay) = 60% (20% each)

Paper on *Arc of Justice* (Due three weeks before end of class) = 20%

“Historicizing Our Diverse Cultural Identities” paper (guidelines attached). Paper should place the history of your family within the context of American history as we have discussed and studied it in this class. Alternatively, you can write the paper on the family of one of your friends or neighbors. Or, in consultation with the professor, you can choose a prominent person or family whose history is available for you through primary and secondary sources. (Due at the time of the final exam.) = 20%

GRADING SCALE:

100-94=A 93-90=A- 89-87=B+ 86-84=B 83-80=B-

79-77=C+ 76-74=C 73-70=C- 69-67=D+ 66-64=D 63-60=D-

59 and below = E

Weeks One through Four:

INTRODUCTION--THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

PART ONE – CONVERGENCE AND CONFLICT (1607-1774)

I. THIS LAND IS OUR LAND

- A. Value System of the Original Inhabitants-- People Under Siege
- B. Purposes, Cultures in Conflict – The English and The French
- C. Religious Freedom, Religious Intolerance
- D. Institutionalizing Intentions -- Beyond the Mayflower Compact

II. MAKING THEIR WAY—PRIVATE INTERESTS, COLLECTIVE GOOD

- A. The “Established” Class
- B. The “Middling” Class and Non-Slave Labor
- C. Indentured Servants
- D. In Their Place: Women of Every Class

III. A WORLD APART: THE EVOLUTION OF SLAVERY

Reading for Part ONE:

Foner, *Give Me Liberty*, Chapters 1-4

Primary Sources/Topics: The Mayflower Compact

John Winthrop’s sermon, “A Model of Christian Charity”

Trial of Anne Hutchinson

PART TWO – THE REVOLUTION FOR FREEDOM (1775-1801)

I. WORDS AND DEEDS

- . A. “We Hold These Truths...” The Language of Independence
- B. To “establish justice...promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty....” The Language and Provisions of the Constitution

II. PLURALISM AND EQUALITY IN THE NEW NATION

- A. White Men, White Women – Some More Equal Than Others
- B. Free African-Americans, Persons Who Count as “Three-Fifths”
- C. The “Indian Problem”

Reading for Part Two:

Foner, Give Me Liberty, Chapters 5-7

Primary Sources/Topics: Declaration of Independence
 The U.S. Constitution
 Abigail Adams letter to John, “Remember the Ladies”
 Petitions of slaves to the Massachusetts Legislature

- EXAMINATION #1 – Covering Part One and Part Two, Lectures and Reading

Weeks Five Through Seven

**PART THREE--STRUGGLING TOWARD A MORE PERFECT UNION
 1801-1865)**

I. AMERICANS OLD AND NEW

- A. Immigration Wave Shapes A Nation More Diverse In Religion and Nationality
- B. Tensions Arise Along With Differences and Distance —
 Slums and “Uptown” Neighborhoods, Rural and Urban, East, West, And South
- C. Free Blacks, North, South, and West
- D. The Extent of Slavery and the Changing Conditions for Slaves

II. THE REFORM IMPULSE

- A. To Keep the Faith: Bible Societies, Temperance, Almshouses, Asylums, Public Education
- B. The Long March: Toward Women’s Rights
- C. The Forced March: Indian Removal Policies

II. THE ABOLITIONISTS AND THEIR FOES

- A. Abolitionist and the Proslavery Arguments and Strategies “Firm Up”
- B. Realigning Classes, Reshaping Majorities
- C. Reshaping Political Parties: More Than Slavery at Stake

III. RESOLVING DIFFERENCES: THE CIVIL WAR

- A. The Words of War
- B. The Deeds of War—Roles of African Americans, Native Americans, and Women
- C. The Ends of War – 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments

Reading for Part Three:

Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* Chapters 8-13

Primary Sources/Topics: Seneca Falls, “Declaration of Rights and Sentiments”
 Cherokee Nation v. Georgia
 Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July”
 From the *Dred Scott* Decision
 Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation; Gettysburg Address

PART FOUR: GILDING RECONSTRUCTION (1865-1900)

I. THE MEANING OF FREEDOM

- A. To Emancipated Slaves
- B. To the Southern Planter Class; Southern Poor White Class
- C. To Native Americans on the Frontier
- D. To Women Confronted by the Reconstruction Amendment
- E. To the Chinese in the Western States

II. THE MEANING OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

- A. To the New Captains of Industry, Banking, and Railroads
- B. To the New Immigrants from Southeastern and Central Europe
- C. To Rural Americans
- D. To Progressive Reformers
- E. To National Politicians

Reading for Part Four:

Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* Chapters 14-17

Primary Sources/Topics: from Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics*
 From Court decision in Fong Yue Ting (1893)
 From Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)

- EXAMINATION #2 – Covering Parts Three and Four, Lectures and Reading

Week Eight Through Week Ten

PART FIVE: URBANIZATION, INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND WORLD POWER (1900-1945)

I. PROGRESS AND POVERTY

- A. Immigrants and Native-born: Together in the Factories, Apart in the Neighborhoods
 - B. The Great Migration: Segregation Revised
 - C. “Women’s Work”: Something Old, Something New
 - D. New Dimensions in a Class-based Society
- II. MAKING AMERICA AND THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY,
- A. Demands of World War I: A “Melting Pot” and 100% Americanism
 - B. Democracy In the Shadow of Race Riots, Lynchings, the Red Scare
 - C. In the Aftermath of War: Red Scare, Ku Klux Klan
 - D. Rural America vs. Urban America, a Clash of Cultures
- III. HOLDING ON TO DEMOCRACY THROUGH DEPRESSION AND WAR
- A. The “American Way” Under Siege
 - B. The Limits of Change: Programs of the New Deal
 - C. Women and Minorities in Depression and War
 - D. Civil Liberties In Depression and War

Reading: Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* Chapters 18 – 22

Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice*

Primary Sources/Topics: From W.E.B. DuBois on the “Talented Tenth”

From Abraham Cahan, Letters from Jewish Immigrants to the *Daily Forward*

From Justice Robert H. Jackson, Dissent in *Korematsu v. United States*

F.D. Roosevelt, “Four Freedoms” speech

Week Eleven Through Week Fourteen

PART SIX: CONTENDING VOICES, FAITH IN FREEDOM (1946-PRESENT)

- I. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE IN POST-WAR AMERICA
- A. Cold War Economics and the Politics of Anti-Communism
 - B. The Suburban Era
 - C. Cities in Decline
 - D. New Dimensions: Race and Class
- II. VISIONS OF FREEDOM
- A. The Civil Rights Movement
 - B. Feminists vs. Traditionalists
 - C. Again, “New Immigrants”—Latin Americans, Middle Easterners, and Asians
 - D. Black Power, La Raza, AIM and the Red Power Movement
- III. COMING APART IN AMERICA?
- A. Impact of Vietnam on the home front
 - B. Culture Wars – Class Conflict, Gay Liberation, Sexual Politics

- C. Liberalism in Retreat
- D. The New Faces of Conservatism

Reading: Foner, Give Me Liberty! Chapters 23 – 27

Primary Sources/Topics: From Betty Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*
From Tom Hayden and Others, “The Port Huron Statement”
By “Indians of All Tribes,” the Alcatraz Proclamation

- EXAMINATION #3 – Covering Parts Five and Six, Lectures and Reading

SUMMARY: THIS LAND IS STILL OUR LAND

Discussion of main themes about diversity in perspective, central conclusions, and short presentations/discussion of family history papers.

Sample paper assignment:

Historicizing Our Diverse Cultural Identities Paper Assignment

Description: You will write a 3-page paper about one person in your family. Or, if choosing the alternative, you will write about a person (friend, neighbor, prominent person) whose family background you can study through the primary sources described below. This paper will describe how different time-bound events or trends covered in class shaped the available decisions and overall life-direction of that individual.

Rationale: Historians use *contextualization* to show how individuals and events are the product of a particular time and place. You will practice this skill by showing how the choices available to one individual (your subject) were shaped by race, ethnicity, gender, and other broader social forces; trends; and the events that occurred during his or her lifetime.

Structure:

1. For family members, find at least 5 separate and independent primary sources to inform and verify the experiences of this person (examples: oral histories of that individual, a friend who knew him/her, other family member's perspectives, a written document, a videotape, an audiotape, a birth certificate, a passport, photographs). This is your *primary* evidence.
2. Choose 2 events or trends and 2 social forces (including, but not limited to race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and class) that you believe profoundly influenced that individual's available choices at key points in their lives and helped define who they were as human beings. This is not an essay about the trends or events they *experienced*. It is about the trends or events that *defined* them—expanded their opportunities or limited them in some way, and how that relates to the theme of diversity of this class.
3. Write a well-structured essay in (roughly) five paragraphs:
 - A) An introduction that briefly describes your “subject” and summarizes his or her lifespan, key life moments, and how you obtained information about this individual.
 - B) Describe 2 social forces and 2 historical events or trends that you believe impacted who this person became—the kinds of choices available to him/her and the motivations behind his/her major decisions.
 - C) Write a concluding paragraph that summarizes your paper, but also describes at least one instance where you see agency on the part of your subject. In other words, describe a situation where he or she seems to have made a decision *despite* historical trends and events. This is a case where the subject transcended their historical environment at least somewhat. That is, your subject made choices or defined themselves in a manner seemingly independent of broader social forces.
4. Finally, on a separate page, relate your own cultural identity to the identity of the subject of your paper. In what ways have you inherited a similar identity; in what way has your life in a different historical moment given you a distinct identity.

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Part Two--The Revolution for Freedom (1775-1801)

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- Deloria, Philip. *Playing Indian* (1998).
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Part Three--Struggling Toward a More Perfect Union (1801-1865)

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