American society, politics, and culture have undergone remarkable change in the past half-century, but many issues have proved to be remarkably durable. This course analyzes some of the major trends in recent American history, as well as addressing conflicting interpretations about the meaning of that history. The course emphasizes the contours of major civil rights movements, particularly the foundational African American liberation movement, the women’s movement, and the gay and lesbian movement. The evolution of the United States’ role in the world is also an important focus, as is domestic politics. While this course may help explain contemporary America, it is also an exercise in historical understanding apart from presentist concerns. The class is a mixture of lecture and discussion. Participation in class discussions, based on thoughtful consideration of the readings and the issues, is expected. Class participation will be helpful in resolving borderline grades.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There are three writing assignments. The first two are synthetic essays of approximately six pages in which you analyze and develop an argument about a specific topic (I’ll give you suggested topics). The final essay (six to eight pages) will ask you to interpret a broader theme running throughout the course. Each essay counts one-third of the final grade. The Vietnam essay is optional. It may be written in place of the second essay (not the first) or it may be written for extra credit. I include this option because some students wish to write on Vietnam.
REQUIRED TEXTS


Paul Boyer, *PROMISES TO KEEP: THE UNITED STATES SINCE WORLD WAR II*.

Anne Moody, *COMING OF AGE IN MISSISSIPPI*.

James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *WHERE THE DOMINO FELL: THE UNITED STATES AND VIETNAM*.


All other readings are on ERES. They are an integral part of the class.

SCHEDULE

8/31 THE UNITED STATES (AND THE WORLD) IN 1945 -- INTERPRETATIONS OF RECENT U.S. HISTORY

9/2 COLD WAR, CONTAINMENT, AND CONSENSUS

Boyer, chaps. 1-5
Borstelman, preface and chap. 1
Moody, part 1
Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, pp. 40-44 (recommended)

9/4 AFFLUENCE AND THE POLITICS OF STASIS

[Robert K. Carr], “To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s [Truman] Committee on Civil Rights,” part IV.

Weisbrot, chaps. 1-2
Moody, part 2
Borstelman, chaps. 2-3
Rosen, part 1

9/7 NO CLASS – LABOR DAY
9/9  THE KENNEDY MYSTIQUE
     Boyer, chaps. 6-7
     Weisbrot, chap. 3
     Borstelmann chap. 4

9/11  KENNEDY, COLD WAR, AND CUBA

9/14  THE AFRICAN AMERICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT, I
     Moody, part 3
     Weisbrot, chaps. 4-5
     Borstelman, chap. 5

9/16  THE AFRICAN AMERICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT, II
     Weisbrot, chaps. 6-8
     Moody, part 4
     Boyer, chap. 9

9/18  DISCUSSION: AFRICAN AMERICAN LIBERATION

9/21  LYNDON JOHNSON AND LIBERALISM AT HIGH TIDE
     Boyer, review chap. 7
     Borstelman, review chap. 5

9/23  THE GREAT SOCIETY

9/25  SCREENING OF ‘BERKELEY IN THE SIXTIES,’ PART I

9/28  NO CLASS – YOM KIPPUR

9/30  THE SIXTIES: “LIKE A SPACESHIP”
     Boyer, review chap. 9
     Todd Gitlin, The Whole World Is Watching, selections

10/1  FIRST ESSAY DUE AT CLASS TIME

10/1  THE SIXTIES, CONTINUED
     Rosen, part 2
     Roth, American Pastoral [1997], pp. 148-66 (recommended)
Additional readings to be announced

10/5  THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM: ROOTS OF COMMITMENT
Olson and Roberts, prologue and chaps. 1-6
Boyer, chap. 10

10/7  THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM: STRATEGIC AND MORAL DILEMMAS
Olson and Roberts, chaps. 7-12
Selections from the following:
Gunter Lewy, America in Vietnam
Christian Appy, Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam
Larry Berman, No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and The Betrayal of Vietnam
Michael Lind, Vietnam: The Necessary War

10/9  SCREENING OF “BERKELEY IN THE SIXTIES,” PART II

10/12  DISCUSSION OF THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM

10/14  “IMPEACH EARL WARREN”: THE WARREN [BRENNAN] COURT AND THE RIGHTS REVOLUTION

10/16  ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

10/16  OPTIONAL VIETNAM ESSAY DUE AT CLASS TIME

10/19, 10/21  NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

10/26  NIXON, WALLACE, AND THE REFORMING OF AMERICAN POLITICS
Boyer, xxxxxxxxxxxx
Borstelman, chaps. 6-7

10/28  THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT
Rosen, parts 3, 4 and epilogue

10/30  DISCUSSION OF THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT
11/2 QUEER LIBERATION, I
Readings to be announced

11/4 QUEER LIBERATION, II

11/6 FOOD REVOLUTIONS: JULIA CHILD MEETS MCDONALDS
Read two of the following:
Michael Pollan, “Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch,”
Julia Child with Alex Prud’homme, My Life in France, pp. 214-219,
222-233 [on the trials of getting her cookbook published]
David Kamp, The United States of Arugula: How We Became a
Gourmet Nation, chap. 5 [on Berkeley, radicals, Alice
Waters, and Chez Panisse]
Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the
All-American Meal,
Michael Pollan, The Omnivore’s Dilemma, chaps. 2, 6, 7 [on
America as the Land o’ Corn]

11/9 REAGAN, THE RIGHT, AND RELIGION
Boyer, chaps. 13-14

11/11 REAGAN OUT OF THE BOX: MAD NO MORE

11/13 DISCUSSION WITH BOBBIE KNABLE, OC ’58, LONGTIME
DEAN OF STUDENTS AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY

11/13 SECOND ESSAY DUE AT CLASS TIME

11/16 GEORGE H.W. BUSH AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR
Borstelman, epilogue, review chap. 7

11/18 PILLS: THE RISE OF A THERAPUETIC CULTURE

11/20 BILL CLINTON: LIBERALISM LITE?
Boyer, chap. 15
Borstelman, review epilogue
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<tr>
<td>11/23, 11/25</td>
<td>MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART (Visit to the Allen Memorial Art Museum)</td>
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<td>11/27</td>
<td>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING WEEK</td>
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<td>11/30</td>
<td>IMMIGRATION SINCE 1965: THE NEW MULTICULTURAL AMERICA</td>
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<td>GEORGE W. BUSH AND IRAQ, ABROAD AND AT HOME</td>
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<td>OBAMA: AMERICAN PROMISE, AMERICAN CHALLENGE</td>
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<td>INTERPRETATIONS OF RECENT AMERICAN HISTORY</td>
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<td>TODAY’S CHALLENGES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE</td>
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**12/15 (TUESDAY) FINAL ESSAY DUE AT 11 A.M.**