History 253

SHAPING CONTEMPORARY AMERICA:
U. S. HISTORY SINCE 1960

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Fall 2010 11 to 11 50 a.m. MWF
Office: Rice 305, 775-8317
Office Hours: M 10 to 11 & 2 30 to 3 15, W 10 to 11, 12 to 1, & 2 30 to 3 15,
F 10 to 11, and by appointment

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 three major liberation 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. The readings include prominent historians, as well as some
important primary sources. We'll read writing by five women who helped shaped the
consciousness of the 1960s and beyond: Jane Jacobs, Anne Moody, Rachel Carson,
Susan Sontag, and Betty Friedan. 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 four writing assignments. The first three 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). Each counts 20 percent of the final grade. The final essay (six to
eight pages) will ask you to interpret a broader theme running throughout the course. It
counts 40 percent of the final grade. I give weight to improvements in writing over the
course of the semester.
This course is governed by the Oberlin College student honor code. Observance of the code is critical to academic integrity. All students are expected to familiarize themselves with it and abide by it fully.

REQUIRED TEXTS


Mark Atwood Lawrence, *THE VIETNAM WAR: A CONCISE INTERNATIONAL HISTORY*.

Anne Moody, *COMING OF AGE IN MISSISSIPPI*.


All readings are on reserve. Various chapters and articles cited in the syllabus are are on ERES. They are an integral part of the class.

SCHEDULE

9/8  THE UNITED STATES (AND THE WORLD) IN 1945 -- INTERPRETATIONS OF RECENT U.S. HISTORY

Boyer, chaps. 1-5 (skim)
Borstelman, preface and chap. 1

9/10 COLD WAR, CONTAINMENT, AND CONSENSUS – AND WINDS OF CHANGE

Weisbrot, chaps. 1-2
Borstelman, chaps. 2-3
Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, pp. 40-44 (recommended)
THE KENNEDY MYSTIQUE
Boyer, chaps. 6-7
Weisbrot, chap. 3

KENNEDY, COLD WAR, AND CUBA
Borstelman, chap. 4

DISCUSSION: THE ERA OF COLD WAR AND CONSENSUS

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT, I
Moody, parts 1-3
Weisbrot, chaps. 4-5
Borstelman, chap. 5

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

VISUAL CULTURE AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Special session viewing photographs and drawings related to the Civil Rights Movement from the Allen Memorial Art Museum collection. Meet in Mudd.

DISCUSSION: AFRICAN AMERICAN LIBERATION

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

THE GREAT SOCIETY
Rosen, part 1

SCREENING OF BERKELEY IN THE SIXTIES, PART I
10/4  FIRST ESSAY DUE AT CLASS TIME

10/6  ORIGINS OF THE SIXTIES: "LIKE A SPACESHIP"

Boyer, review chap. 9
Students for a Democratic Society, excerpts from "Port Huron Statement"
Young Americans for Freedom, "the Sharon Statement" (1960)
Barry Goldwater, "Extremism in the Defense of Liberty" (1964)
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*
James G. Blight, Janet M. Lang, and David A. Welch, *Vietnam If Kennedy Had Lived: Virtual JFK*, pp. 251-273

**10/20**
**DISCUSSION OF THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM**

**10/22**
**NO CLASS**

**10/25, 27, 29**
**NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

**11/1**
**NIXON, WALLACE, AND THE RESHAPING OF AMERICAN POLITICS**

Boyer, chaps. 11-12
Borstelman, chaps. 6-7

**11/3**
**SECOND ESSAY DUE AT CLASS TIME**

**11/3**
**WOMEN’S LIBERATION**

Rosen, parts 3, 4 and epilogue
Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963),

**11/5**
**DISCUSSION OF THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT**

Hannah Rosin, “The End of Men,” *The Atlantic (July/August 2010)*, 56-72, and Nicholas Kristoff column

**11/8**
**QUEER LIBERATION, I**

George Chauncey, *Why Marriage?* chaps. 1 and 2
Read either of the following:
David A. J. Richards, *The Sodomy Cases: Bowers v. Hardwick and Lawrence v. Texas* (2009), chap. 5 or 8
Joyce Murdoch and Deb Price, *Courting Justice: Gay Men and Lesbians v. the Supreme Court* (2001), chap. 17
(Additional recommended readings may be found on ERES for
11/10 QUEER LIBERATION, II

Judge Vaughn Walker decision in Perry v. Schwarzenegger (2010 gay marriage case in the U.S. District Court in San Francisco)
Harry R. Jackson, "Gay Marriage will hurt families, society"
Edwin Meese III, "Prop. 8 ruling ignores precedent, evidence and Common sense"

11/12 DISCUSSION OF QUEER LIBERATION MOVEMENT

11/15 ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT: CHOICE AND NONCHOICE

Rachel Carson, Silent Spring (1962), 1-13, 103-127

11/17 REAGAN AND THE RIGHT RESURGENT

Boyer, chaps. 13-14
Review "The Sharon Statement"

11/19 REAGAN OUT OF THE BOX: MAD NO MORE

Sean Wilentz, The Age of Reagan, 273-287

11/21 (SUNDAY EVENING) SCREENING OF THE GRADUATE

11/22 ‘PICTURES AT A REVOLUTION’: THE NEW AMERICAN CINEMA AND THE LIBERATION OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Boyer, chap. 13
Mark Harris, Pictures at a Revolution,

11/22 THIRD ESSAY DUE AT CLASS TIME
11/24 FOOD REVOLUTIONS: JULIA CHILD AND ALICE WATERS MEET MCDONALDS

Read two of the following:
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]

11/26 NO CLASS –THANKSGIVING FREE DAY

11/29 THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Borstelman, epilogue, review chap. 7

12/1 BILL CLINTON: LIBERALISM LITE?

Boyer, chap. 15
Borstelman, review epilogue

12/3 IMMIGRATION SINCE 1965: THE NEW MULTICULTURAL AMERICA

12/6 GEORGE W. BUSH AND IRAQ, ABROAD AND AT HOME

Boyer, chap.
Additional readings to be announced


Carmen M. Reinhart and Kenneth S. Rogoff, This Time Is Different: Eight Centuries of Financial Folly (2009), 205-222
OBAMA: AMERICAN PROMISE, AMERICAN CHALLENGE

Barack Obama, Dreams from My Father,
David Remnick, The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama,
pp. 337-349, 517-529

Thomas J. Sugrue, Not Even Past: Barack Obama and the Burden Of Race, chap. 1 ("This Is My Story: Obama, Civil Rights, and Memory")

Jonathan Alter, The Promise

INTERPRETATIONS OF RECENT AMERICAN HISTORY

FINAL ESSAY DUE AT TIME OF FINAL EXAM