Change and Continuity in the “American Century”

Course Description:
The 20th Century was a tremendous period of change for the United States, as the country became the world’s military and economic leader. This course will survey US history from 1900 to the present and will approach historical issues from a variety of perspectives. Economic and political developments will be addressed, but there will also be discussions of social and cultural changes over the course of the last century. Students will be encouraged to analyze how historical narratives are constructed and to offer their own understanding of historical events. In addition to completing the reading and written assignments for the course, students will be expected to be active participants in class discussions. At the semester’s end, students will be asked to draw conclusions about changes in the United States over the 20th Century and hypothesize about possible directions for the nation’s future.

Required Texts:
Alan Brinkley and Ellen Fitzpatrick, America in Modern Times
Mike Davis, City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles
Kevin Fernlund, Documents to Accompany America’s History, vol. 2 (Sixth edition)
Jeffrey P. Moran, The Scopes Trial
Carl Rowan, South of Freedom

Course Requirements:
Exams
1st Exam, September 24 – 20% of final grade.  
2nd Exam, November 7 – 20% of final grade  
Final Exam, December 5 – 20% of final grade

Essays
1st Essay, due in class October 19 – 10% of final grade
2nd Essay, due during finals week – 30% of final grade

Course Policies:
Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed three unexcused absences without penalty. Students are required to find out what they missed in class on the day of their absence. If students miss more than three classes, they are required to meet with the professor to discuss their absences. Failure to do so will result in the lowering of a student’s final grade by one third grade point for every absence over three. Due dates and times for writing assignments are fixed. Late assignments will not be accepted. Dates and times for exams are fixed.
The professor supports the Rhodes College Honor Code.
Course Calendar:

August 22
Introduction

August 24
Populism and the Crisis of Rural America
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, Ch. 1, 3; Ferlund, 19-10-14)

August 27, 29, 31
Changing America – America and Industry; The Rise of the West
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, Ch. 2; Fernlund, Ch. 16 “The American West”; 17-4-11; Davis, Prologue, Ch. 1)

September 3 (Labor day; no class)

September 5, 7
How “Progressive”? – The Progressive Era and Reform
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, Ch. 5, 6, 120-131; Fernlund, 17-3, Ch. 18 “The Industrial City,”
and Ch. 20, “The Progressive Era”)

September 10, 12, 14
America Meets the World: Imperialism and World War I
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, Ch. 4, 137-145, 132-136, Ch. 8; Fernlund, Ch. 21 “An Emerging
World Power”, Ch. 22 “War and the American State”)

September 17, 19, 21
Years of Plenty, Seeds of Disaster - The Roaring 20s; The Color Line, 1900-1929
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, Ch. 9-12; Fernlund, Ch. 23 “Modern Times,” 19-6-9; Moran, all)

September 24, 26, 28
Fighting Fear Itself – The Great Depression and the New Deal
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, Ch. 13-14; Fernlund, Ch. 24 “Redefining Liberalism”)

September 24
1st Exam

October 1, 3, 5
The “Good War” - World War II and Its Effects
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, 15-17; Fernlund, Ch. 25, “The World at War”; Davis, Ch. 2)

October 8, 10, 12
WWII (cont.); Free Peoples of the World - Origin of the Cold War Abroad
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, Ch. 18, 387-399, 454-462, 484-489; Fernlund, 26-1-5; 11-13)
October 15 (fall Break)

October 17, 19
Better Dead than Red - Cold War at Home and the Consensus Culture
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, 399-405, Ch. 20, 446-454; Fernlund, 26-6, Ch. 27 "The Age of Affluence" [suggested])

October 19
1st Essay

October 22, 24, 26
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, Ch. 21; 463-478; Fernlund, 28-1-6; Rowan, all)

October 29, 31, November 2
Seeds of Breakdown – Black Power and Vietnam
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, 478-483, 490-508, 531-7; Fernlund, 28-7-10)

November 5, 7, 9
The End of the Liberal Consensus – The Movements of the Sixties
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, 509-530; Fernlund, 28-11-15; Davis, Ch. 3)

November 7
2nd Exam

November 12, 14, 16
US in Decline? – Watergate; the Rise of Conservatism; the End of the Cold War
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, 537-565; Fernlund, Ch. 29. "The 1970s", Fernlund, 30-1-4; Davis, Ch. 4-5)

November 19
Renewal and Fracture - the Schizophrenic 80s
(Brinkley/Fitzpatrick, 565-607)

November 21, 23
Thanksgiving

November 26, 28, 30
A Divided Nation? - America at Century’s End
(Fernlund, 30-5-9, 31-1, 2, 6; Davis Ch. 6-7)

December 3,
Final Thoughts

December 5
Final Exam