

History 405 – United States History Since 1945

Dr. Charles W. McKinney

Fall 2006, 313 Clough Hall
TR 11.00 – 12.15
Office Hours: MT 2.30 – 4.00
and by appointment

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Course Overview:

This course will survey American history in the post-1945 period. Using both secondary and primary source documentation, students will come to an understanding of the myriad forces that worked to shape what many call the “American Century.” The course will focus on the more significant social and political movements in American society since 1945; special attention will be given to the Cold War, Civil Rights, cultural evolutions of the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Women’s movement and the resurgence of conservatism. In addition to using traditional political and economic viewpoints for historical interpretation, students will also assess the impact of social and cultural forces on our collective past. This comprehensive perspective will enable students to come to an understanding as to how and why history is constructed and to answer fundamental questions about history and the historical process: Who writes it? Who reads it? What are its purposes? To this end, students will be required to analyze, critique and interpret primary source materials as they offer their own view of historical events and construct some historical documentation of their own. Given the central nature of primary texts and our reactions to them, active participation during class will form an *essential element of the course*. Of course, students are expected to complete all reading and written assignments.

Course Requirements:

Books:

- James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (*Fire*)
- William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey* (*Journey*)
- William Chafe, Harvard Sitkoff, *A History of Our Time* (*Time*)
- Matthew Dallek, *The Right Moment* (*Right*)
- Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open* (*World*)

Primary Source Papers – 25% of final grade:

Three of these 4-5 page papers will be due on designated class periods. To complete the assignment, select **at least 2 primary source documents** that are either given out in class or that you find on your own. The documents you use should correspond with the due date of the paper. We’ll talk more about these during the semester, and I will give you a handout of primary source references to get you started. One final note: when I say the papers should be 3-4 pages long I mean it. Papers that do not have at least four full pages of text will not be graded.

Final paper – 20% of final grade

Students will submit a 15 – 20 page research paper that uses both secondary and primary source materials to explore key issues raised (or not raised) throughout the course. Frequently, the most difficult part of assignments like these is to find a viable topic. This challenge can be surmounted by doing a thorough survey of all of the readings, sources and other materials that we use for class. *It is in your best interests to start thinking about and working on the paper early in the semester.* I will be happy to assist you in your efforts to identify workable topics, primary source materials and any other things you may need for this paper. Start early!

Examinations – 15% each of final grade:

There will be two in-class examinations, a mid term and a final. Both of these will consist of short answer questions and essay questions. The final exam will be held on **Monday, December 11 at 8.30AM.**

In-class discussion/class presentation – 20% of final grade:

On most days, I will give a general overview of the period being discussed for the week, field questions and engage you all in a discussion of the main points of the reading. However, students should come prepared to actively engage in an extended discussion of the assigned readings and any primary source material they've encountered that may enhance discussion. Come prepared to give your initial critical observations about the readings, and to react to questions, comments and insights generated by your classmates. Remember though, that while class participation is crucial, it is not a contest. The people who talk the most do not necessarily "win." What really counts is your ability and willingness to bring something valuable to the discussion that your colleagues and I can build on in our efforts to bring some clarity to the issues that we are discussing. If you have an epiphany, by all means, please share it with us! On the other hand, if you are stumped and confused by the week's documents, don't be afraid to share that as well—you probably will not be alone. Failure to participate in class discussion on a consistent basis will result in a *very* poor class participation grade.

Each student in the class will preside over the discussion of one class period's readings. Students will give a brief overview of the readings for the day, make an assessment of the major themes and issues prepare a list of discussion questions (which you will turn in to me) that will facilitate a rich, productive class dialogue.

Honor Code:

All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with the Rhodes College Honor Code. To demonstrate your commitment to the Code, each student must write "pledged" and sign his/her name on every assignment. If you have questions about plagiarism you should talk to me directly.

Policies:

Note on written work:

All written work must be composed on a computer, be double-spaced and in 10 or 12 point font. Have your name, the assignment name (and number if necessary), date, course name and email address on each document you turn in. Students who feel that they need assistance with written assignments should feel free to contact me so that we can discuss whatever challenges you may be facing.

Attendance:

Students will be allowed three unexcused absences. *All other absences after the third one must be excused. Each unexcused absence after the third one will cost you 5% of your final grade. If you miss three weeks worth of classes (six classes total), you can be dropped from the class or flunked.* Valid excuses for missing class include but are not limited to religious observances, college-sanctioned academic or athletic travel, personal illness or injury, family illness or injury or bereavement. Needless to say, infrequent class attendance will negatively impact your class participation grade.

Paper/test grades:

As a general rule, grades are not negotiable. However, I will gladly discuss the grade on any assignment 24 hours after the work is turned in.

Late Papers:

Papers are due at the beginning of class. Papers that are one day late will be penalized one letter grade. "My computer crashed the night before the paper was due" is not an excuse for a late paper; rather, it is a testament to poor time management on your part. *Papers over one day late will receive an F. However, you must turn in all of the assigned work in order to pass the class.*

Missed Tests:

Make-up exams are available for students who miss class for an excusable reason (see above). Students should contact me and arrange a mutually convenient time within a week of the student's return.

Learning Differences:

I am strongly committed to accommodating students with disabilities, and ask your cooperation in making sure that I'm aware of any such accommodation you might need. For more information, please contact Student Disability Services to alert them of any needs you may have.

Additional Information:

- Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, games, and any other object that can beep, buzz, ring or vibrate. These devices are extremely disruptive when they go off in the middle of class
- ***I reserve the right to amend this syllabus as necessary***

Course Schedule:

Th 8/24	Introduction to course; review of syllabus
T 8/29	Truman and the Origins of the Cold War (<i>Journey</i> , chapter 3; <i>Time</i> , 7 – 35)
Th 8/31	Gender in the Age of Eisenhower (<i>World</i> , chapters 1-2)
T 9/5	Postwar Society and Culture (<i>Journey</i> , chapter 5; Pete Daniel article – public folder)
Th 9/7	Cold War Anticommunism (<i>Journey</i> , 93 – 105; <i>Time</i> , 36 – 67)
T 9/12	The Origins of a Revolution (<i>Journey</i> , chapter 6; <i>Time</i> , 143 – 172)
Th 9/14	<u>Discussion Day/ Primary Source Paper #1 due</u>
T 9/19	“...And then came Baldwin.” (<i>Fire</i> , all)
Th 9/21	Film: “Intolerable Burden”
T 9/26	The Liberal Consensus: The Center Consolidates (<i>Time</i> , 71 – 92; <i>Journey</i> , chapters 7 – 8)
Th 9/28	Youth Culture and the Rise of the New Left (Isserman and Kazin article – public folder)
T 10/3	Feminist Awakenings in the 1960’s (<i>World</i> , chapters 3 – 4; <i>Time</i> 195 – 221)
Th 10/5	Guns and Butter: Vietnam (<i>Journey</i> , chapters 9 – 10; <i>Time</i> , 257 – 296)
<u>Primary Source Paper #2 due</u>	
T 10/10	Film: “Two Days in October” (<i>Time</i> , 297 – 316)
Th 10/12	Midterm

10/13 – 10/17 **Fall Break**

Th 10/19 Liberalism Torn Asunder: The Center Collapses
(Isserman and Kazin article – public folder; *Time*, 317 – 346)

T 10/24 1968: The Center Flies Apart
(*World*, 157 – 188; *Journey*, chapter 12)

Th 10/26 **No Class**

T 10/31 Passionate Politics: The Feminist Revolution
(*World*, chapters 6 – 8)

Primary Source Paper #3 due

Th 11/2 Sleeping Giant: The Rise of the Right
(*Journey*, chapter 13; *Time*, 347 – 359)

T 11/7 Watering the Grassroots: Conservatism, California Style
(*Right*, chapters 1 – 5)

Th 11/9 The Feminist Legacy
(*World*, chapter 9, Epilogue)

T 11/14 The Right Moment? Black Power and White Backlash
(*Right*, chapters 6 – 8; White Flight article – public folder)

Th 11/16 **No Class**

11/21 – 11/27 **Thanksgiving Break**

T 11/28 Conservative Consensus: The Reagan Revolution
(*Right*, chapter 9 – Epilogue)

Research Paper Due

Th 11/30 Slouching towards the Eighties: The Malaise Days of the 1970's
(*Journey*, chapter 14; Schulman article – public folder)

T 12/5 **Discussion:** What are the dominant themes of the post war period?

M 12/11 **Final Exam, 8.30AM**