

HIST 233 US in the 20th Century

Saxe - Section 10225, 114 Clough, 12-12:50 MWF

E-mail - saxer@rhodes.edu; Phone – 843-3249

Office Hours: 11-12, MF or by appointment 307 Clough

The American Dream in the “American Century”

Course Description:

The concept of the American Dream was a guiding force in the development of the American nation in the 20th Century and continues to shape how Americans view their country. This course will survey US history and competing notions of the American dream 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 what the American dream is and whether it is only a dream or a reality for many Americans. In addition to completing the reading and written assignments for the course, students will be active participants in class discussions. At the semester’s end, students will draw conclusions about changes in the American Dream and hypothesize about the relevance of this concept for the 21st Century.

Required Texts:

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*

Richard Polenberg, *The Era of Franklin Roosevelt, 1933-1945*

Upton Sinclair, *The Flivver King*

Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*

The professor will provide additional readings throughout the course.

Course Requirements:

Exams

First Exam, October 12 – 20% of final grade

Second Exam, December 12 – 25% of final grade

Essays

Short essays throughout semester – 10% of final grade

Essay 1, due in class September 25 – 15% of final grade

Essay 2, due in class December 4 – 20% of final grade

Class Participation

Active participation in class discussion – 10% of final grade. Students may also improve their participation grade by meeting with the professor during office hours or by appointment.

Course Policies:

Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed three 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. Please consider this policy when planning for extracurricular activities (sports, mock trial, etc.)

Due dates and times for writing assignments and exams are fixed. All assignments are due in class, not in the professor's mailbox. Late assignments will receive a failing grade. All assignments must be turned in to the professor. Failure to complete an assignment will result in a failing grade for the class. If you have questions about plagiarism, please talk to me directly.

The professor supports the Rhodes College Honor Code. To demonstrate commitment to the Code, each student must write "pledged" and sign his/her name on every assignment.

Course Calendar:

August 26

Introduction

August 28

Crisis for Jefferson's America: The Decline of the Independent Farmer
(Foner, Ch. 16, pg. 597-624)

August 30, September 2, 4

Pulling Up by the Bootstraps – America and Industry
(Sinclair all)

September 7 - Labor Day; no class

September 9, 11

How "Progressive"? – The Progressive Era and Reform; The Color Line, 1900-1929
(Foner, Ch. 18)

September 14, 16, 18

Exporting the American Dream: Imperialism and World War I
(Foner, pg. 624-636, Ch. 19)

September 21, 23, 25

Living the Dream: Years of Plenty, Seeds of Disaster in the Roaring 20s
(Foner, Ch. 20)

Essay 1 due in class, September 25

September 28, 30 October 2

The American Dream Imperiled – The Great Depression and the New Deal
(Polenberg; 1-23, 37-183; Foner, Ch. 21)

October 5, 7, 9

The "Good War" - World War II and Its Effects
(Polenberg, 24-36, 184-227; Foner, Ch. 22)

October 12

First Exam

October 14, 16

Exporting the Dream II - Origin of the Cold War Abroad
(Foner, Ch. 23)

October 19 (fall break)

October 21, 23

A Dream for All - Cold War at Home and the Consensus Culture
(Foner, Ch. 24)

October 26, 28, 30

Building the Dream – The Great Society, The Liberal Consensus, and the African-American
Freedom Struggle
(**Baldwin, all**; Foner, pg. 912-928)

November 2, 4, 6

Is This My America? – Black Power and Vietnam
(Foner, pg. 928-943)

November 9, 11, 13

The End of the Consensus –The Movements of the Sixties
(Foner, pg. 943-956)

November 16, 18, 20

The dark Side of the American Dream – Watergate; the Rise of Conservatism
(**Thompson, all**; Foner, 957-982)

November 23

Renewal and Fracture - the Schizophrenic 80s
(Foner, 982-995)

November 25, 27 - Thanksgiving

November 30, December 2, 4

The End of the Cold War; A Divided Nation? - America in the 90s
(Foner, Ch. 27)

Essay 2, due in class December 4

December 7, 9

Still Dreaming? The American Dream and the New Century

Wednesday, December 16 - **Final Exam, 9AM**