

History 1005. Modern American History

Baruch College, CUNY • Spring 2003
XZ13 (Monday and Wednesday, 4:10 – 5:25)

Professor Zachary M. Schrag
Vertical Campus 5/257 • Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 10-11 am.
646/312-4318 • zachary_schrag@baruch.cuny.edu • www.schrag.info

Introduction

The United States was the only country in the world that began with perfection and aspired to progress. -- Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform.

By winning the Civil War, Americans in the northern part of the United States gained the chance to build the nation in the North's image, based on free labor, widely distributed suffrage, industrial development, and growing cities. Yet despite general acceptance of these principles, Americans continued to argue passionately about the future of their country. Many Americans embraced the notion of progress, while others feared that progress was the enemy of cherished tradition. And even those who championed some form of progress debated the best strategies for effecting change.

This course will explore American history since the 1870s by examining a series of debates over the nature and desirability of progress. Students will learn to analyze primary documents and life histories in order to understand the decisions faced by previous generations of Americans and the nature of change over time.

Readings

There are two required texts, which have been ordered at the Baruch College bookstore on the first floor of the Vertical Campus:

Mary Beth Norton et al., *A People and a Nation, Brief Sixth Edition*, vol. 2: Since 1865 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003)

John Hollitz and A. James Fuller, *Contending Voices: Biographical Explorations of the American Past*, vol. II: Since 1865 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003)

I have asked that the bookstore order packages in which these two books are shrink-wrapped together and priced at a significant discount. The shrink-wrapped package also includes a thin atlas which is not necessary for this course.

You should also have a copy of Ann Raimés, *Keys for Writers*, Third Edition, which has been issued to all freshmen on CD.

Other material may be handed out in class or posted to the Blackboard site.

Assignments

Short essays (50%).

On twelve occasions you will submit brief essays based on the assigned readings. Your highest ten scores will be counted toward your grade. Papers should be written as one- or two-paragraph essays and run between 200 and 300 words.

Each paper must answer one of the assigned questions by presenting a thesis statement and supporting it with evidence in the form of quotations or facts. Please underline or **boldface** your thesis statement.

Grading standards are as follows:

9-10: Paper has clear thesis statement supported by evidence from the readings, especially the primary documents.

7-8: Paper has clear thesis statement but lacks evidence, or shows grasp of the readings but inability to interpret them.

5-6. Paper shows some familiarity with the readings but not significant understanding of them.

0. There is little evidence that the student read the assigned readings.

Within each grade range, higher scores will go to better written papers. You should review the materials in my History Undergraduate's Handbook <<http://www.schrag.info/teaching/handbook.html>>, especially "The Thesis Statement," "Style Guidelines," and "How to Avoid Common Mistakes."

Papers must be posted to the Digital Dropbox on the course's Blackboard site by the Monday morning at 10am. No credit will be given for late papers. Note that Blackboard is taken down for maintenance between 7am and 8am and is sometimes down until 9am, so you should plan to submit your assignment any time before 7am on Monday or on Monday between 9 and 10. In the event of a server failure, you should e-mail the papers to zachary_schrag@baruch.cuny.edu

Exams (Midterm 15%; Final 25%).

Two exams will be given. The final exam will focus mainly on the second half of the course, but it will also draw on the first half. In order to succeed on the exams, you will need to take good notes on the readings, lectures, and

discussions. If you are unsure about your note-taking skills, please see me early in the semester so we can discuss the best strategies.

Attendance and Participation (10%).

You are expected to arrive in class promptly, with cell phones and beepers turned off. By 4:10 you should be in your seat, ready to take notes. Late arrivals or early departures may be counted as absences. All students must sign-in on arriving in class; if you do not sign in upon arrival you will not get credit for attending.

Students are responsible for checking the Blackboard site at least twice a week for announcements and e-mail regarding the course.

How to Fail the Course

Freshmen and sophomores missing who miss four classes, juniors and seniors who miss six classes, and any student who is habitually tardy will be dropped from the course. Students who miss an exam and fail to make it up will be dropped from the course. Students who violate the College policy on Academic Honesty may not only fail the course but also be subject to additional penalties.

Schedule

Note: PN stands for *A People and a Nation*. CV stands for *Contending Voices*. Numbers refer to chapters. Thus, "Read PN 18, CV 2" means that you are to read *A People and a Nation*, chapter 18 and *Contending Voices* chapter 2. I expect it will be most efficient for you to read the essay questions first, then the *People and a Nation* chapter, then the *Contending Voices* essay, and finally the *Contending Voices* documents, but you are free to find your own way.

Introduction

Week 1.

January 27. Tradition and Progress

January 29. Lecture: The Rise of Industrial America

Week 2.

For Monday: Read PN 18, CV 2. PAPER # 1 DUE.

February 3. Discussion

February 5. Lecture: Populists Against the City

Week 3.

For Monday: Read PN 20, CV 3. PAPER #2 DUE

February 10. Discussion

February 12. NO CLASS (Lincoln's Birthday).

Week 4.

For Wednesday: Read PN 19

February 17. NO CLASS (Washington's Birthday).

February 19. Lecture: Progressivism

Week 5.

For Monday: Read PN 21, CV 4. PAPER #3 DUE.

February 24. Discussion

February 26. Lecture: Culture Wars of the 1920s

Week 6.

For Monday: Read PN 23, CV 6. PAPER #4 DUE.

March 3. Discussion

March 5. Lecture: Mass Production, Mass Consumption

Week 7.

For Monday: Read PN 24, CV 7. PAPER #5 DUE

March 10. Discussion
March 12. Lecture: Depression and New Deal
Week 8.
For Monday: Read PN 25, CV 8. PAPER #6 DUE.
March 17. Discussion
March 19. Midterm Review
Week 9.
March 24. MIDTERM EXAM
March 26. Lecture: America at War
Week 10.
For Monday: Read PN 27, CV 9. PAPER #7 DUE
March 31. Discussion
April 2. Lecture: The Specter of Communism
Week 11.
For Monday: Read PN 29, CV 10. PAPER #8 DUE
April 7. Discussion
April 9. Lecture: Suburbs and Cities
Week 12.
For Monday: Read PN 28, CV 11. PAPER #9 DUE
April 14. Discussion
April 15. (Wednesday schedule) Civil Rights
April 16. NO CLASS (Spring recess)
Week 13.
For Monday: Read PN 30 and 31, CV 12. PAPER #10 DUE
April 28. Discussion
April 30. Lecture: The Rights Debates
Week 14.
For Monday: Read PN 32, CV 13. PAPER #11 DUE
May 5. Discussion
May 7. Lecture: Reagan's America
Week 15.
For Monday: Read PN 33, CV 15. PAPER #12 DUE

May 12. Discussion

May 14. Course Review

Final Exam

Monday, May 19, 3:30 – 5 pm.