

United States History

History 120, section 6. George Mason University. Spring 2004

MWF, 12:30 – 1:20 pm. Robinson Hall B228

Course website: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~zschrage/hist120spring05/home.htm>

Professor Zachary M. Schrag

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Office Hours: Mondays 2:15 – 4:15 pm and by appointment.

Syllabus revised: January 20, 2005

This course provides an introduction to United States history from the 1770s through the 1970s. We will examine major debates and developments in politics, culture, and the economy, paying particularly close attention to debates over such institutions of political economy as slavery and industrial capitalism, and to the question of what makes a good citizen. And we will practice the skills of interpreting evidence and building effective arguments.

Readings

Required

- John Hollitz and A. James Fuller, *Contending Voices: Biographical Explorations of the American Past* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), volumes 1 and 2.

These texts are in stock at the bookstore in the Johnson Center.

- Zachary M. Schrag, “Guidelines for History Students,” <http://www.schrage.info/teaching/teaching.html>.

These guidelines offer suggestions for reading efficiently, building strong thesis statements, and organizing essays. Following them closely will improve your grade.

- Primary sources, to be posted on the course website.

Recommended

- Steven Mintz et al., “Hypertext History,” http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/hyper_titles.cfm (2003)

Requirements

Participation (15 percent)

You are expected to attend class three times a week. The participation grade is based on your prompt arrival and active participation in discussions, especially on those weeks when you have a paper due. You should be in your seat, ready to take notes at 12:50 pm; chronic tardiness will lower your grade.

Basic classroom rules:

- Bring the appropriate volume of *Contending Voices* to class on discussion days.
- Do not eat in the classroom, before or during class.
- Turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other noisemakers.

Papers/Presentations (15 percent each, total 45 percent)

On four occasions you will submit five-paragraph essays (roughly 500-750 words or two double-spaced pages) in response to the assigned readings. Each student is assigned four papers, but only the three highest grades will count. Questions will be posted on the course website. In each case, your essays should conform to the guidelines for thesis statements, essay form, and style posted at <http://www.schrag.info/teaching/teaching.html>. Before submitting them, you should follow the steps on the pre-submission checklist at <http://www.schrag.info/teaching/checklist.html>.

Due dates vary. In each case, your essays must be brought to the start of class. Late papers, including papers brought late to class, will be penalized a full grade and 1/3 of a grade for each additional 24-hour period or fraction thereof. Late papers may be e-mailed to zschrag@gmu.edu. At the start of class you are expected to present your argument to the class and, with other members of your group, to lead the discussion.

Exams (15 percent and 25 percent)

We will have two exams. For each exam you will be given a choice of primary documents and asked to interpret them in an essay, drawing on the views of people you have read about in *Contending Voices*. The midterm exam will be a 48-hour take home. The final exam will be a 165 minute in-class closed-book essay exam.

Administrative information

All assignments are governed by the George Mason University **honor code**, online at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/unilife/honorcode.html>. You are expected to work independently and to acknowledge all sources, including assigned texts and materials found online. Consult Gordon Harvey's "Writing with Sources," <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/sources> for instructions on when and how to cite, and ask me if you need clarification. In general, any sentence in your work that can be traced to a single sentence in someone else's work should bear a footnote. Any collaboration, such as consultation with the Writing Center, should also be acknowledged. Violations of academic integrity will be reported to the administration and may result in grade penalties, including failure of the course.

In case of **inclement weather**, please call the main switchboard at 703-993-1000 or consult the main web page at <http://www.gmu.edu/> to see if classes are cancelled. I expect to cancel class only when the university cancels all classes.

If you are a student with a **disability** and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

All students are expected to check their **gmu.edu e-mail** regularly and are responsible for information sent to their GMU addresses.

Schedule

Each student is expected to read the chapters and additional material prior to each discussion section, regardless of which group has a paper due. Please consult the assignments section of the course website for more detailed instructions for each assignment.

CV₁ = *Contending Voices*, volume 1. CV₂ = *Contending Voices*, volume 2.

Week 1

January 24. Course Introduction

January 26. Lecture: Revolutionary Gentlemen

January 28: **Group 1 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 4

Week 2

January 31. Guest lecture

February 2. Lecture: Looking West

February 4. **Groups 2 and 3 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapters 5 and 6

Week 3

February 7. **Group 4 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 7

February 8. Last day to add a class or to drop without tuition liability.

February 9. Lecture: Religion and Reform

February 11. **Group 5 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 8

Week 4

February 14. **Group 6 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 9

February 16. Lecture: The Nation United

February 18. **Group 1 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 10

Week 5

February 21. **Group 2 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 11

February 23. Lecture: The Nation Divided

February 25. **Group 3 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 12.

Last day to drop with no academic liability

Week 6

February 28. **Group 4 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 13

March 2. Lecture: The Cause of the Conflict

March 4. **Group 5 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 14

Week 7

March 7. **Group 6 papers due.** Discussion: CV₁, chapter 15

March 9. **Take-home midterm distributed**

March 11. **Take-home midterm due at start of class.** Movie

SPRING BREAK

March 14-18.

Week 8

March 21. Lecture: Agrarian Tradition, Industrial Progress

March 23. **Group 1 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 2

March 25. Lecture: Populists against the City

Week 9

March 28. **Group 2 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 3

March 30. Lecture: Progressivism

April 1. **Group 3 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 4

Week 10

April 4. **Group 4 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 5

April 6. Lecture: The Tribal Twenties

April 8. **Group 5 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 6

Week 11

April 11. **Group 6 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 7

April 13. Lecture: Depression and New Deal

April 15. **Group 1 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 8

Week 12

April 18. Lecture: America at War

April 20. **Group 2 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 9

April 22. **Group 3 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 10

Week 13

April 25. Lecture: Suburbs and Cities

April 27. **Group 4 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 11

April 29. Lecture: Civil Rights

Week 14

May 2. **Group 5 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 12

May 4. **Group 6 papers due.** Discussion: CV2, Chapter 13.

May 6. Conclusion

Final Exam

Monday, May 16, 10:30 am - 1:15 pm