

Postwar United States, 1945-1973

History 331. George Mason University. Fall 2010

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12 – 1:15 pm. Krug Hall 7.
Syllabus last revised: 24 August 2010.

Course Blackboard site: <http://courses.gmu.edu>
Primary sources: <http://delicious.com/zschrag/331>
General advice: <http://historyprofessor.org>

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3-5 pm.

While I greatly enjoy meeting students individually, department meetings and other commitments occasionally force me to cancel scheduled office hours, so please let me know in advance if you are coming to office hours. If you would like to meet some other time, please send me an e-mail with two or three proposed times, preferably on Mondays or Fridays.

Course Description

For the United States, the years between 1945 and 1973 were marked by extraordinary economic growth, dazzling technological innovation, and immense military and political power abroad. Yet in the same period, Americans argued, fought, and sometimes killed each other over basic issues of identity, justice, and democracy. This course will explore three of the most serious conflicts: the debates surrounding communism in the 1940s and 1950s, the Civil Rights movement, and the general turmoil recalled as “the Sixties.” Rather than learn about these events by passively absorbing books and lectures, students will conduct original research and share their findings with their classmates.

Goals

In this course, students will:

- Study some of the deepest divisions in American society of the period 1945-1973, especially debates about communism, civil rights, and the general turmoil of the late 1960s.
- Practice critical reading of primary and secondary sources, including texts, images, music, and motion pictures.
- Practice research skills using sources in electronic databases.
- Practice skills of discussion, writing, editing, and revision.

Administrative information

The **University Catalog**, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

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.

Gordon Harvey's *Writing with Sources* is required reading and should answer most questions about **citation**, but 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.

All work for this course must be original. You may not submit work based whole or in part on work you have done for credit in **other courses** without written permission of the instructor.

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 Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>.

Students must use their **Mason email accounts**—either the existing “MEMO” system or a new “MASONLIVE” account—to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information..

Please do not send **Microsoft Works** (.wps) attachments; I cannot open them. Please save your files as .doc, .rtf, or .pdf formats.

Laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices may not be used in the classroom expect by written permission.

Please do not eat in the classroom, before or during class.

Readings

- Richard M. Fried. *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*. Oxford University Press, 1991. ISBN 0195043618. ISBN13: 9780195043617. .
- Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne. *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*. Second edition. Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. ISBN 0742551091. .
- Michael W. Flamm and David Steigerwald. *Debating the 1960s: Liberal, Conservative, and Radical Perspectives*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2008. ISBN 074252213X. .
- Gordon Harvey. *Writing With Sources: A Guide for Students*. Second edition. Hackett, 2008. ISBN13: 9780872209442
- Zachary M. Schrag, "Guidelines for History Students," <http://historyprofessor.org/>

Collaboration

This course is designed to encourage the kind of collaboration that makes scholarship so much fun. While you are responsible for your own essays, you will get a great deal of help from each other identifying and interpreting primary and secondary sources, and revising your work.

You must credit your classmates for the help that they give you, since a scholar should be proud of the use she has made of others' work. Citation need not be terribly formal, but I suggest the following forms for citing work by your classmates:

- Joanna Student, "Lincoln's Imagery," 26 January 2010, History 331 Discussion Board.

For a document posted by a student, but written by someone else:

- Lisa Rein, "Daring to Dream of Reducing Tysons Traffic," *Washington Post*, 10 December 2009 (posted by Joanna Student).

Online Components

Except for the peer-editing, this course is designed to be paperless; all assignments except for the essay drafts should be posted on Blackboard, <http://courses.gmu.edu>. You will also receive essay comments electronically.

Please include your **last name in the file name** of any attachment you post to Blackboard or send by e-mail; e.g., jones_essay2.doc, not essay2.doc.

Assignments

Fall for the Book (1 percent)

On September 21 the class will meet in the Johnson Center Cinema for a Fall for the Book session concerning the Civil Rights movement. Prompt attendance at this event is worth 1 percent of the course grade.

Attendance and Participation (12 percent. 4 percent per unit)

Much of this course is discussion based, which means that each student's learning depends on the other students' being prepared, punctual, and active. The participation grade is designed to encourage you to help other students learn, and to prepare you for a lifetime of meetings.

The participation grade is based on your prompt arrival and active participation in discussions. The highest participation grades will go to students who animate class discussions by asking questions of their peers. The most valuable contributions often begin with the words, "I don't understand." Answering such questions, and questions posed by the instructor, is also helpful.

You should be in your seat, ready to take notes at 12 noon; chronic tardiness will lower your grade. To be counted as on time, you must sign in by 12 noon. To be counted present, you must sign the late attendance sheet. If you need to leave early, please speak to me before class. If you leave early without notifying me, you will be counted absent. Occasional absence or tardiness is not a big deal, but chronic absence or tardiness will affect both your participation score and the grades on your written work. Attendance is particularly important on peer-editing days.

At the end of each unit, you will submit a **participation memo**, explaining your contribution to the class discussions and your plans for future discussions. Please include this at the end of the final draft of each essay.

You will receive a participation grade at the end of each unit.

Reading Responses (6 percent. 1 percent each)

On six occasions during the course, you are assigned short responses to the assigned readings. Questions will be posted on Blackboard. Responses should be posted on Blackboard by **9 am on the day indicated**. On discussion days for which you submit a response, you should be prepared to be called on to describe your findings to the class.

The goals of this assignment are to ensure that you read the assigned texts carefully and promptly and prepare for class discussions.

Choose one of the questions for that day's reading and write a one-paragraph response, roughly 125 – 175 words. Use parentheses to indicate page numbers. I suggest you compose your response in a word processor or text editor, then paste it into the discussion board.

Research Responses (9 percent. 3 points each)

On three occasions, you are asked to complete small research assignments. You will be assigned to a group, which will determine specific deadlines. Responses should be posted on Blackboard by **9 am on the day indicated.**

The goals of this assignment are:

- Develop skills in finding historical evidence.
- Develop skills in analyzing historical evidence.
- Create a body of evidence that you and your classmates can use for your essays.

Points are based on the ability of your choice of documents and analysis to spark class discussion, and the usefulness of your documents to the essay assignment.

Specific assignments will be posted on Blackboard. All research assignments require the following steps:

1. Find a document or image according to the specific assignment instructions.
2. Summarize the document or image in one paragraph.
3. Write a one-paragraph analysis of the document or image. For instructions and examples, see <http://historyprofessor.org/research/>
4. Post the response on the appropriate Blackboard discussion, along with the document as an attachment.

Extra Credit (1 percent each; up to 3 percent)

The goal of this assignment is to get you to think about the course in relation to your daily life. Up to three entries will count toward course credit, but you may only submit one per unit. The first paragraph should describe something that happened to you or that you witnessed involving the history of the United States in the period we are studying. It can be something that just happened, a news story or article you saw, or a story from your past—but make it something you're willing to share with the class. The second paragraph should explain how that event or item illustrates or complicates the themes of the course.

To receive credit, you must post your item on Blackboard and be prepared to speak about it to the class. Extra credit points will not raise the final course grade above a B+. To earn an A- or A, you must do so with the other assignments.

Essays (72 percent. 24 percent each)

On three occasions, you are assigned essays that will address the main themes of the course. Each essay should run between 1000 and 2000 words, roughly 4 to 8 pages. This is a broad range, so I will be disappointed to receive papers outside those bounds.

Please keep in mind the instructions at <http://historyprofessor.org>, especially those on thesis statements and topic sentences.

The essays require the following steps:

1. Read the essay question, posted on Blackboard. Then define a narrower question for yourself.

Each unit poses a broad question about how Americans understood consensus, protest, and dissent during the period 1945-1973. You are not expected to answer the question definitively, but you do have the power to contribute to an answer by choosing a smaller, more focused question. For example, you might look at a particular place, event, group of people, or type of argument that helps us understand the larger picture.

2. Assemble evidence

The most important source of evidence for your answer are the primary sources gathered by you and your classmates. You should use **at least four primary sources** gathered by other students in your paper. For units 2 and 3, you should also use **at least two primary sources** from the textbooks.

Other evidence may come from the assigned readings, from lecture, and from music and films played in class. Evidence from other units of the course may be helpful as well. And you may wish to conduct additional research using the databases for the course. But such research is no substitute for engagement with your classmates' sources.

3. Develop a thesis.

Develop a thesis statement that answers the question and can be supported by your evidence. See <http://historyprofessor.org/argument/> for suggestions.

4. Outline your paper

For an ten-paragraph essay (about 1250 words), I suggest a two-paragraph introduction, two paragraphs to present one point of view, two paragraphs presenting an opposing point of view, two paragraphs analyzing the similarities and differences, and a two-paragraph conclusion. If you need more space for the body sections, you will end up with a longer paper. Make sure that each body paragraph begins with a strong topic sentence.

5. Write and rewrite your paper.

Write a rough draft of your essay. **Bring two copies to class.** Share your rough draft with two of your classmates during the peer editing session. If you do not receive helpful comments, demand them. Revise the draft according to the helpful comments you received. Add your **participation memo** at the end of the final draft. Post your final draft to Blackboard.

Peer Editing Instructions

On three occasions you will exchange drafts with classmates and edit their work. Your job as a peer editor is not to correct spelling and minor errors, or to provide uncritical encouragement. Rather, it is to demand that your peers teach you something you did not know before. Your comments should begin with one of the following forms, or a close approximation:

1. Your paper corrected a misconception I had. Before reading it, I thought _____. But you showed me . . .

2. Your paper answered a question I had. Before reading it, I could not understand why _____. But you showed me . . .

3. Your paper explained the significance of _____. Before reading it, I couldn't understand why _____ was important. But you showed me . . .

4. For the most part, this paper did not teach me anything that wasn't pretty obvious from attending class and reading the book. But I was struck by your comment that "_____." This comment [insert phrase 1, 2, or 3]. Could you expand this point into a thesis for the whole essay?

Evaluation

- Students who do everything that is asked of them for a given assignment can expect to earn B's. Students who challenge themselves to exceed expectations earn higher grades, while students who do not meet the expectations earn lower grades.
- There is no fixed curve for the course. At the end of the course, I rank students according to the points they have accumulated on various assignments, and then set cut-off points for letter grades to reflect the level of achievement represented by various point totals. For example, the cut-off between a B and a B+ may be 88 or 89 depending on which grade I feel better reflects the achievements of students with 88.5 points.
- Extra credit points will not raise the final course grade above a B+. To earn an A- or A, you must do so with the other assignments.

Schedule

Week 1

August 31 Introduction

Unit I: Communism and Anticommunism

September 2 Lecture: Who Feared Communism?

Week 2

September 7 Discussion. **Reading 1 due:** *Nightmare in Red*, 3-86.

September 9 Workshop: What is a Primary Source? Reading due: <http://historyprofessor.org/research/> (four web pages).

Week 3

September 14 Movie and Discussion: *The Salt of the Earth*

September 16 Discussion. **Group 1. Research I-1 due.**

Week 4

- September 21 Special Event. Fall for the Book, Civil Rights Panel.
Meet in Johnson Center Cinema, lower level.
September 23 Discussion: **Reading 2 due:** *Nightmare in Red*, 87-192.

Week 5

- September 28 Discussion. **Group 2. Research I-2 due.**
September 30 Discussion. **Group 3. Research I-3 due.**

Week 6

- October 5 Peer Editing. **Essay 1 draft due**

Unit II: Civil Rights

- October 7 Lecture: Who Killed Jim Crow? **Essay 1 final due.**

Week 7

- October 12 NO CLASS (Columbus Day; Monday schedule)
October 14 Discussion: **Reading 3 due:** *Debating the Civil Rights Movement*, 1-113.

Week 8

- October 19 Movie: *Dare Not Walk Alone*
October 21 NO CLASS (Instructor absent). **Group 1. Research II-1 due.**

Week 9

- October 26. Discussion: **Reading 4 due:** *Debating the Civil Rights Movement*, 115-209.
October 28. Discussion: **Group 2. Research II-2 due.**

Week 10

- November 2 Discussion: **Group 3. Research II-3 due.**
November 4 Peer Editing. **Essay 2 draft due**

Unit III: The Sixties

Week 11

- November 9 Movie and Discussion: *Berkeley in the Sixties*, part 1. **Essay 2 final due**
November 11 Discussion: **Reading 5 due:** *Debating the 1960s*, 1-98.

Week 12

- November 16 Discussion: **Group 1. Research III-1 due.**
November 18 Movie: *Berkeley in the Sixties*, part 2.

Week 13

- November 23 Discussion: **Group 2. Research III-2 due**
November 25 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Week 14

- November 30 Lecture: Backlash
December 2 Discussion: **Reading 6 due:** *Debating the 1960s*, 99-202.

Week 15

- December 7 Discussion: **Group 3. Research III-3 due.**
December 9 Peer Editing. **Essay 3 draft due.**

December 16 **Essay 3 final due**, 1:15 pm.