

Postwar America, 1945-1976

History 389, section 17. George Mason University. Spring 2007

Tuesdays, 4:30 – 7:15 pm. Robinson A 243

Course website: <http://postwaramerica.pbwiki.com>

Course discussion board: <http://schrag.s4.bizhat.com>

General advice: <http://www.schrag.info/teaching>

Professor Zachary M. Schrag

E-mail: zschrag@gmu.edu (please include “389” in subject header).

Office: Robinson B 375C. Tel. 703/993-1257. www.schrag.info

Office Hours: Thursdays, 3-5 pm, and by appointment.

This course will explore the United States from the end of World War II to the Bicentennial of 1976. The intervening three decades were a period of extraordinary economic growth and rising expectations, but also wrenching social change and political conflict. Main themes will be the emergence of the civil rights movement and feminism; the domestic and international events of the Cold War, especially the Vietnam War; and the rise and fall of the presidency’s prestige in the years of the Great Society and Watergate. We will pay particular attention to the ways in which Americans debated the significance of these events, leading to political and cultural polarization.

Goals

This course seeks to give students an understanding of an important period in American history. In addition, it seeks to develop skills useful to the study of history and in civic and professional life: critical reading of primary and secondary sources, writing, editing, revision, group discussion, and basic historical research.

Books

The following books are required and have been ordered at the university bookstore in the Johnson Center.

Appy, Christian G. *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*. 2003. Reprint, New York: Penguin, 2004. ISBN 0142004499

Durr, Kenneth D. *Behind the Backlash: White Working-Class Politics in Baltimore, 1940-1980*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006. ISBN: 0807854336

Harvey, Gordon. *Writing With Sources: A Guide for Students*. Hackett, 1998. ISBN: 0872204340

Raines, Howell. *My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered*. 1977. Reprint, New York: Penguin, 1983. ISBN 0140067531

Rosen, Ruth. *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women’s Movement Changed America*. 2000. Reprint, New York: Penguin, 2001. ISBN 0140097198.

Rome, Adam. *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. ISBN: 0521804906

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.

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. I reserve the right to submit your drafts and papers to the **turnitin.com** database.

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 703-993-2474. 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.

Discussion Board: <http://schrag.s4.bizhat.com/>

You will use this site to post responses to readings and lectures. You will need to register to use the board:

- a. On the first page of the board, click "Register." For your user name, please type your full name, e.g., "Zachary Schrag," not "Zach," "zschrag," or "RetroGirl92." Please use your gmu.edu address to register. I will need to approve your registration.
- b. Once you have received the registration confirmation, please login and edit your Profile (link from the first page). Change the Timezone to GMT - 4 hours.
- c. To test the system, go to the home page, then click "Practice Forum." You will see one topic: restaurants. Hit "Post Reply" to answer the question.

Assignments

Your final grade is based on:

- Attendance and participation: 15 percent
- Weekly responses: 70 percent
- Final exam: 15 percent
- Extra credit: 10 percent

See below for detailed instructions.

Attendance and Participation (15 percent)

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 4:30 pm; chronic tardiness will lower your grade. To be counted as on time, you must sign in by 4:30. 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 for the week.

You are expected to attend class once a week. Up to two weeks' absence is excused. After that, absence for any reason will sharply lower your grade, until you have missed half the course. At that point, you will receive no credit for participation. Chronic absence or tardiness will also affect the grades on your written work.

Basic classroom rules:

- Bring the assigned text to class on the day it is being discussed.
- Bring materials for taking notes. If you take notes on a computer, bring a pen or pencil anyway to make notes on handouts and classmates' papers.
- Do not eat in the classroom, before, during, or after class.
- Turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other noisemakers.
- Wait until the end of class to begin packing up your belongings.

Responses (7 percent each; 70 percent total)

On twelve occasions, you are assigned responses to the readings and lectures. The top ten scores will count toward your final grade. You may miss two weeks without penalty, to allow for illness, family emergencies, and other misfortunes, but I encourage you to complete all the assignments to maximize your grade and to prepare for the final exam.

Goals

The responses are designed to get you to:

- Pay close attention to readings and lectures, and to complete the readings prior to class discussions.
- Think critically about both readings and lectures, asking questions rather than passively accepting information and arguments.
- Find answers to some of your questions by finding documents from the period we are studying.
- Come prepared with something to say for class discussions.
- Work with your classmates to learn how their reactions differ from yours.
- Learn the difference between a rough and final draft by editing others' drafts and revising your own.

Task

There are two types of responses;

1. **Reading responses.** On eight occasions, you have reading assigned. In these cases, your task is to choose one significant fact or statement in the reading that you found surprising or confusing.
2. **Lecture responses.** On four occasions, no reading is assigned. In these cases, your task is to ask yourself a question about something I say in lecture and then answer it using a document from the period being discussed.

Your question should show that you have grasped not only the specific fact but also its relationship to the broader argument of the lecture.

The easiest source of materials is the ProQuest Historical Newspapers database, linked at http://oscr.gmu.edu/sql/subdb.php?Arts_&_Humanities. An article, editorial, or advertisement from the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* should be sufficient material, though you are welcome to choose other primary sources.

Process

1. Complete the assigned readings and take careful notes during lectures. As you read and listen, consider questions you have about the material.
2. For lecture responses, find a primary source that helps answer your question. Print or photocopy a copy of the source.
3. Compose your response. I suggest you do this off-line. Then post your response to the class discussion board: <http://schrag.s4.bizhat.com/>. Print two copies to bring to class. **Postings are due at 9:30 am every Tuesday except March 20.**

4. At the start of class, give the copies of your response to two classmates and get copies from two classmates. (You need not read the responses of the same people who are reading yours, but you are welcome). Write “Edited by” with your name and the date on each copy you receive. Follow the instructions for editing, to be given in class.
5. At the end of the workshop period of class, return the drafts you have edited and collect yours.
6. At home, revise your draft as appropriate and print out a final copy.

Submission

On four occasions, you will submit packets of your responses to me on paper. Each packet should include the following items, stapled together:

- The two draft copies of each response with your editors’ markings.
- A clean, double-spaced final copy of each response.
- A process memo explaining how you revised your drafts based on your editors’ comments and, for packets after the first one, my feedback.
- Copies of all primary sources used for lecture responses.

Grading Criteria

Each response will be graded on a 7-point scale.

- Timeliness (1 point). First drafts must be posted on time and packets submitted at the start of class for this point. Packets submitted more than one week late will receive no credit at all.
- Completeness (1 point). See above for all the components of a packet. If you are missing any, you will be penalized. This is especially true if you fail to bring drafts to class and are therefore missing your peers’ comments.
- Final draft. (5 points) Here I am looking for:
 - **Evidence.** History is based on facts, and you need to show a detailed understanding of the facts you are writing about. Cite your sources carefully, including page numbers for assigned readings.
 - **Critical reading.** Serious readers do not take what they read at face value, but ask what is most and least surprising, confusing, and persuasive.
 - **Analysis.** The point of these responses is not just to narrate facts, but to explain their significance. I will look for an analytical argument showing how particular facts help us understand change over time.
 - **Style.** The final drafts should be free from errors of spelling and grammar. If I point out such an error in one packet, I expect not to see it again.

Final Exam (15 percent)

A final essay exam will be distributed on the last day of class. It is due on Tuesday, May 8. 7:15 pm in my office (Robinson B 375 C) or the history department office (Robinson B 359).

Extra Credit (2 percent each, up to 10 percent total. Maximum 4 points per week)

There are two kinds of extra-credit assignments. You may get credit for only one of each kind each week, for a maximum of ten points in the semester.

1. Glossary entries

Some of the readings will include words and terms with which you are unfamiliar. If you find one of these terms, do the following:

1. Look up the term in a reputable reference source. Wikipedia is not a reputable source; consult the course website, a librarian, or me for suggestions. For words, I suggest the *American Heritage Dictionary*, searchable at <http://www.bartleby.com/61/>.
2. Write a one-paragraph entry showing how the term is used in the reading, what it means, and how knowing what it means helps you understand the reading. Be sure to cite both the assigned reading by page number and the reference source you used.
3. Post your entry in the discussion-board forum for glossary entries.

2. News items

History helps us understand the world we live in, and current events give us perspective on events in the past. To encourage you to make these connections, I will give credit for the following:

1. Find a news item that bears some comparison with the week's topic. The item must be less than a month old and must come from a reputable source—newspaper, magazine, or website. I will not consider any blog to be reputable unless you show me that it is.
2. Write a one-paragraph entry explaining how the course material helps us understand the news item or vice versa. The relationship must be precise. I will give no credit for a vague comparison like, "Iraq is a lot like Vietnam." Instead, focus on the details: "Unlike the Viet Cong, who were supplied by North Vietnam, the Iraqi insurgents support themselves through crime." Be sure to cite course materials—readings or lectures.
3. Post your entry in the discussion-board forum for news entries. If your source is online, include a link.
4. Print-out a copy of the news item and submit it with a printout of your entry at the start of class.

Schedule

1. January 23.
 - Introduction
 - Lecture: America at 1945
2. January 30
 - DUE: Response 1: Behind the Backlash, 1-82; “How to Read a History Book,”
<http://www.schrag.info/teaching/book.html>
 - Lecture: The Specter of Communism
3. February 6
 - DUE: Response 2: Communism:
 - Lecture: Suburbs and Cities
4. February 13
 - DUE: Response 3: *Bulldozer*, 1-152 (and images following)
 - Lecture: The Dawn of the Civil Rights Movement
5. February 20
 - DUE: Response 4: *My Soul Is Rested*, 1-74, 297-323
 - DUE: Packet 1 (Responses 1-3, revised)
 - Lecture: Missiles and rockets
6. February 27
 - DUE: Response 5: Missiles
 - Lecture: The Peak of Civil Rights
7. March 6
 - DUE: Response 6: *My Soul Is Rested*, 233-293; *Behind the Backlash* 83-111.
 - Lecture: The Great Society
- March 13 NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)
8. March 20
 - Movie
9. March 27
 - DUE: Packet 2 (Responses 4-6, revised)
 - DUE: Response 7: *The World Split Open*, 63-93, 143-195
 - Lecture: Johnson’s Vietnam
10. April 3
 - DUE: Response 8: *Patriots*, 35-149.
 - Lecture: The Counterculture
11. April 10
 - DUE: Response 9: The Sixties
 - Lecture: Nixon’s Vietnam
12. April 17
 - DUE: Packet 3 (responses 7-9)
 - DUE: Response 10: *Patriots*, 343-429.
 - Lecture: Watergate
13. April 24.
 - DUE: Response 11: Watergate
 - Lecture: Backlash
14. May 1
 - DUE: Response 12: *Behind the Backlash*, 112-206.
 - DUE: Packet 4 (Revised versions of responses 10 and 11, plus raw version of response 12)
 - Lecture: America at 1976
 - Exam distributed.

FINAL EXAM: Take-home exam.

Due Tuesday, May 8. 7:15 p.m. Robinson B, 375C, or Robinson B, 359.