

The United States Since 1877

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Website: <http://www.sfu.ca/~kjfergus/> (syllabus is available at this site)

Office Hours: Thursdays, 11:00-1:00

Lecture: Thursday, 1:30-3:20, ASSC10081

Content:

In the late nineteenth century, the United States began a great shift from the Victorian to the modern era, transforming American social, cultural, political, and economic institutions. This course will focus on that transformation and its rationalization and institutionalization in the 20th century. Lectures will be explorations of clusters of ideas or themes regarding this transformation, arranged primarily in a topical manner, but conforming in a general way to the chronology of the course readings. The first set of lectures will deal with the "Gilded Age" in American society, when the American ideal of the autonomous farmer-freeholder was threatened by market and railroad industrialism, along with mass immigration, resulting in the enraged political response of populism. The second set of lectures will focus on the emergence and rationalization of urban-industrial culture, those modern social forms in which we will still live. Lectures will focus on the transformation from commercial to industrial cities, from boss rule and robber barons to progressivism and oligopolistic capitalism, and the growth of American imperialism. We will conclude this section with the creation of the modern welfare state in the Roosevelt era with the depression, the New Deal and WWII. The final set of lectures will concern American society and ideas since 1945, and American society in a time of the nation's global economic, military, and cultural dominance growing out of its industrial development. Lecture topics will include the Cold War and its demise, Vietnam, race relations, liberationist movements, and neo-liberalism.

Texts:

Eric Foner, Give Me Liberty, Vol. 2, Seagull Edition

Eric Foner, Voices of Freedom, Vol. 2

E. L. Doctorow, Ragtime

James Olson and Randy Roberts, My Lai Massacre

Links to additional course texts and images are marked in the Class Schedule below.

Schedule of Grades

Academic Policies

Grades will be assigned based on the schedule below. Hard copies (not electronic) of papers are to be submitted by the beginning of class on the day they come due. The grade of a late paper is reduced by one-half a letter grade for every 24 hours, or any portion thereof, of tardiness. Thus an A+ paper received one minute or 24 hours late

becomes an A. If it is received sometime between 24 and 48 hours late, it becomes an A-, and so on.

Academic dishonesty in any form will result in a grade of zero for the assignment in question and a letter to the chair recommending that the student/s in question fail the course. No excuses, including ignorance of what constitutes academic dishonesty will be accepted.

Academic dishonesty not only includes plagiarism, but also a number of other offences, including “submitting identical or virtually identical assignments by students who studied together,” which comprises written assignments that use identical examples, organization, and/or analysis. You also cannot submit the same academic work in more than one class without the consent of both instructors. Please familiarize yourself with academic dishonesty and the university’s policies concerning it at <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/t10-02.htm>

For general help with writing, researching and documenting your work, along with avoiding plagiarism, please visit the library’s excellent “Tutorials” website at: <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/researchhelp/tutorials/index.htm>

Distracting behaviour, including talking or eating while I am lecturing, will result in the application of a penalty to your semester participation mark. If you choose to use a **laptop** to take lecture notes, you must sit behind all other students. Laptop use is not permitted in tutorials.

Students adding the course late will not be able to make up missed meetings, but may turn in missed assignments within a week of adding without penalty.

Extensions or makeups will only be given on the occasion of a death in the family or a documented medical emergency, or in accordance with SFU policy on religious accommodation. **In the interest of fairness, exceptions will not be made.**

I will send all emails to your sfu account. If you do not check your sfu.ca account, please set up email forwarding at <https://my.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/WebObjects/manage>.

<u>Assignments and Grading:</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Tutorial participation	15%	
Mid-term exam	15%	Feb. 14
Mid-term takehome essay based on class materials and <u>Ragtime</u>	15%	Feb. 21
Term Paper based on class materials and <u>My Lai Massacre</u>	25%	March 27
Final exam	30%	TBA

Description of Assignments

Attendance and Class Participation: Your class participation grade will be determined by two things: attendance and informed participation in tutorial discussions and activities based on the weekly reading assignment marked in the syllabus. You should come to tutorial having read the weekly assignment and with both Foner texts and hard copies of any other weekly readings with you. You will be marked for attendance and class participation during every tutorial. After a grace of one tutorial absence for which you do not have to provide documentation or explanation, you will receive zero credit for each additional unexcused absence. The only absences considered "excused" are those resulting from a documented medical emergency, a death in the family, or for religious accommodation, as per SFU's policy. If you attend tutorial but do not participate in the at-large discussion, you will receive a grade of "D" for that tutorial.

Examinations: The midterm will be 50 minutes long and the final will be three hours. The midterm exam will ask you to identify four terms chosen from a list of eight and to contextualize them for their historical significance. The final examination will contain an identification section of identical format as the midterm examination, but will draw upon the post-midterm material. The final will also include two essay questions dealing with the entire era covered by this class. I will distribute the essay questions on the last day of classes in preparation for the final exam. Both exams will draw on the entirety of class materials, including readings, lectures, films, tutorial exercises, and discussions.

Midterm Essay (5 pages or approx. 1500 words): Students will be asked to write an analytical, argument-driven essay using Ragtime and all pertinent class materials. The midterm essay assignment will be distributed one week prior to it being due. No non-course sources permitted.

My Lai Massacre Essay (8 pages or approx. 2400 words): Students will be asked to write an analytical, argument-driven term paper using the Roberts and Olson text, contextualized by all pertinent class materials, to answer the question, "Why did the My Lai massacre happen?" No non-course sources permitted.

GRADING RUBRIC FOR ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

	Substance	Style
A	Thesis is original and interesting. Paper recognizes the complexity of its thesis by acknowledging its contradictions or qualifications. Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding and analysis of sources. Copious, specific, and convincing evidence. The reader learns something new.	Immaculate, and a pleasure to read. Choose words for their precise meaning and uses an appropriate level of specificity. Sentences are varied, yet clearly structured and carefully focused. Contains few gratuitous elements. Gracefully guides the reader through a chain of reasoning or progression of ideas.
B	A solid paper, responding appropriately to assignment. Clearly states a thesis that makes an argument. Shows careful readings of sources. Uses evidence appropriately and effectively, providing sufficient evidence and explanation to convince.	Very few errors. No problems with sentence structure. Generally uses words accurately and effectively. Sentences generally clear and focused. Each sentence clearly relates to the paragraph's central idea, and each paragraph clearly relates to the paper's central idea. Effective organization.
C	Adequate but weaker and less effective. Presents thesis in general terms. Thesis and argument can be sensed but are not clear or not explicit. Evidence does not entirely convince.	Contains several mechanical errors, which temporarily confuse the reader but do not impede understanding. Paragraphs might have an extraneous sentence, or paper might have an extraneous paragraph. Bumpy transitions might disrupt the paper's flow.
D	May present a central idea rather than a thesis. Evidence is not convincing. Connection between evidence and central idea not always clear.	Contains either many mechanical errors or a few important errors that do impede understanding. May have random organization, lacking internal paragraph coherence and using few or inappropriate transitions. Paragraphs lack main ideas, are too general or too specific, or are irrelevant to the thesis.
F	Does not respond to the assignment, or lacks a thesis or central idea, and may neglect to use sources where necessary.	Contains many important errors, or critical organizational problems.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan. 10: Introduction

Begin Reading Ragtime

PART I: INDUSTRIALISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Week 2 The Gilded Age

Lecture January 17

GML, Ch. 15, 510-528.

VOF, Ch. 15-16

Week 3 Industrialism's Impact

Lecture January 24

GML, 528-556

VOF, 52-57

Selections from William Riordan, Plunkitt of Tammany Hall, 1906, p. 1-4, 14-15:
nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/power/text7/plunkitt.pdf

Week 4 Imperialism, Immigration and Racism

Lecture January 31

GML, 556-581

VOF, 57-81

Week 5 Progressivism

Lecture February 7

GML, Ch. 18

VOF, Ch. 18

PART II: INDUSTRIAL CULTURE: FORGING A MODERN STATE AND SOCIETY

Week 6 World War I

Lecture February 14

GML, Ch. 19

VOF, Ch. 19

****No Tutorials****

****In-Class Midterm (1st 50 minutes of February 14 Lecture period)****

Week 7: The Roaring Twenties

Lecture February 21

GML, 660-688

VOF, Ch. 20

**** Ragtime Essay Due in Class****

Week 8 The Great Depression and New Deal

Lecture February 28

GML, 688-735

VOF, Ch. 21

“Losing the Business”:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/118>

“Black Americans Write to FDR”:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/137>

“The Public Responds to FDR’s First Fireside Chat”:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8126>

(Start reading My Lai Massacre)

PART III: THE AMERICAN CENTURY: THE UNITED STATES AS GLOBAL POWER

Week 9 World War II

Lecture March 6

GML, Ch. 22

VOF, Ch. 22

“Powers of Persuasion,” US Propaganda Exhibit:

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasion_home.html#

“To Buy Is Patriotic”:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6793>

“Company Dismissed” Barbasol Ad:

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/adaccess/BH/BH06/BH0650-72dpi.jpeg>

“I Pledge Myself...” Palmolive Ad:

http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/dynaweb/adaccess/beauty/soaps1940s/@Generic__BookTextView/536

Week 10 Cold War America

Lecture March 13

GML, 776-833

VOF, Ch. 23-24

Film March 13: *The Fog of War* (This film will be one of the sources that you are expected to apply to your My Lai paper and will potentially be included in i.d. questions for the final exam).

Week 11 The Civil Rights Era

Lecture March 20

GML, 833-864

VOF, Ch. 25

NO FRIDAY TUTORIALS

Week 12 The Consensus Unravels

Lecture March 27

GML, 864-926

VOF, Ch. 26-27

**** Essay on My Lai massacre due in class****

NO MONDAY TUTORIALS

Week 13 The Road to 9/11

Lecture April 3

GML, Ch. 27-28

VOF, Ch. 28

Conclusion

Common Writing Errors to Avoid

Next to the skills of critical analysis and using sources, I hope to help you develop your writing skills. The point of grammar is to make yourself understood. Communication with others is difficult enough; if you do not write grammatically it can make it impossible for others (professors, work colleagues, friends) to understand your meaning quickly and accurately. Your brilliant analysis and superb use of sources will all be for naught if readers cannot understand your meaning. Below are a few common errors to avoid.

Caution: Do not rely on the grammar checker of your word processor. Artificial intelligence has not advanced sufficiently for these to be reliable grammatical guides.

I have no objection to the use of the first person singular (“I”) in writing. It is preferable to clumsy passive constructions: “In this paper I argue that the key to Eminem’s success is his astute reading of Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham” is preferable to “In this paper it will be argued that...”

Don’t use contractions—such as don’t—in formal writing like essays.

“It’s” **always** means “it is” (and should not be used in formal writing because it is a contraction). The possessive “its” does not take an apostrophe: “The Jim Crow period came to the beginning of its end with *Brown v. Board of Education*..”

More generally, be aware of the difference between the plural and possessive. The possessive takes an apostrophe (The apple’s redness appealed to Karen), while the plural does not (three apples).

Titles of books and journals should be underlined or italicized, but not both. Be consistent. Titles of articles or chapters in books, journals, or magazines should be placed in quotation marks.

In a series of three or more terms, use a comma after each term except the last: “John F. Kennedy, J. Kenneth Galbraith, and Sargent Shriver form the triumvirate of 1960s liberalism.”

Footnotes and Bibliographies: for essays in this course, you should use footnotes and bibliographies using Chicago/Turabian style. Please refer to the library’s handy citation guide for this style at:

http://www.lib.sfu.ca/researchhelp/writing/citing_guides/chicago.htm

Dangling modifier: a participle phrase at the beginning must refer to the subject of the sentence. Failure to observe this rule often has comic results: “Being in a dilapidated condition, I was able to buy the house very cheap.”

Run-on sentences: do not join independent clauses with a comma. “Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois were very much men of the same era, despite their ideological differences both believed that the ‘uncivilized’ black poor needed to be uplifted by the black elite.” Use a colon, a semi-colon, or break the sentence into two.

Sentence fragments: “Washington had an enormous capacity for hard work. A man who had walked from the mountains of Kentucky to coastal Virginia.” The second sentence is a fragment.