

American Studies

Course Description:

American Studies considers our Constitutional and institutional history from the seventeenth century to the present. It begins with the origins of the Constitution as its precepts were forged in English history and then the Revolution. The course then considers the challenges to the compromises that shaped the Constitution and eventually result in Civil War. The final section of the course takes up the historical legacies that inform contemporary American politics including issues of race, gender, and immigration. While the course is structured around the Constitution and contains some civics, the course itself is historical and follows a progressive arc that is not merely thematic. A composition component also runs through the curriculum and will teach expository writing.

INSTRUCTOR(S):

Name(s): Dr. Patrick Kearney, Dr. Claiborne Skinner, Dr. Eric R. Smith

Text(s) / Materials:

Clarence L. Ver Steeg and Richard Hofstadter, *Great Issues in American History*,
Vols. I-III

On-line documentary materials

Teacher generated handouts

Essential Content:

- Citizenship, ethical behavior and human rights in a democracy. Exploration of the relationship between individual freedom and community responsibility.
- analyze the complexity of constructing public policy in an atmosphere of ethical pluralism.
- express both written and oral opinions clearly and elegantly and defend them with the use of primary evidence.
- evaluate the roles of different groups in the political institutions and social fabric of pluralistic societies over time.

GOALS:

The three primary units will address the following themes:

- I. The Origins of the Constitution.
- II. Civil War and its Legacy
- III. Making of Contemporary America

The Origins of the Constitution.

Students will understand:

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1. Identify the purposes of government
2. Sources of local autonomy in American traditions
3. The conflicting goals inherent in the ratification of the Constitution

Civil War and its Legacy

Students will understand:

1. Geographic, economic, and political forces that strained the Constitution in the decades leading up to the Civil War.
2. Students will understand the expansion of federal power in the Civil War period.
3. Students will understand the extent and limits of the federal Reconstruction effort.
4. How the Constitutional amendment process works.
5. Origins of the filibuster

Making of Contemporary America

Students will understand:

1. Identify the role of demographics and the economy in shaping the politics of the last century.
2. Students will understand the events that encouraged the expansion of executive authority
3. Students will understand the reaction to the changes above.
4. How a bill becomes a law.
5. How Supreme Court is selected.

SSLs and Outcomes:

Students will:

I.A Develop automaticity in skills, concepts, and processes that support and enable complex thought.

by writing essays and discussing documentary materials in class.

Students will:

I.D Evaluate the soundness and relevance of information and reasoning

by undertaking research to assemble historical ideas in their essays

Students will:

II.A Identify unexamined cultural, historical, and personal assumptions and misconceptions that impede and skew inquiry

by discussing materials in class that come up against personal assumptions and present conceptions

V.A Identify, understand, and accept the rights and responsibilities of belonging to a diverse community.

by undertaking writing assignments and engaging in discussions that confront historical materials on the development of American pluralism.

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Instructional Design and Approach:

The course will utilize the engagement of historical material through primary sources and discussion but also through debates. The entire course will serve as an experiment in engagement since we have never offered a course like this before.

The skills common to this course on an iterative basis are:

1. Reading for meaning
2. Expository writing
3. Oral communication
4. Responsible citizenship

The habits of mind derived from the core competencies will be:

1. Study problems, not eras.
2. Recognize the existence of multiple perspectives.
3. Engage in public discourse in an atmosphere of ethical pluralism and mutual respect.
4. Evaluate the quality of evidence drawn from varied media.

Assessment Practices, Procedures, and Processes

American Institutions places great value in its writing assignments in promoting particular habits of mind. There will be three summative essays as well as formative assessments. There will also be an exam on the U.S. Constitution.

GRADING

50 percent for papers and related assignments:

Three papers (5-7 pages) and *other* writing (one pagers, outlines, intros, bibliographies, re-writes, etc.)

The instructors should be including here any formative assessments accompanying the teaching of the skills needed in order to complete the research paper (the need for students to know how to do citations properly, how to identify good sources, write a thesis).

There will also be an in-class **Constitution Exam** in the mid-term and a **final** that will count together toward 30 percent of the semester grade.

20 percent for other assessments:

In-class assessments (quizzes) -- 10 percent

Participation and Group activities -- 10 percent

Individual instructors maintain discretion of 5 percent variation from these in which they can, for example, increase in-class assessments to 25 percent and decrease the papers category by the difference.

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Participation: students are expected to participate in class by asking questions, answer questions, and offering assessments of documents. Students are required to log their participation each time they contribute. This should be done in separate Word documents for each class day that they contribute. Each log entry should then be submitted to the students' folder on the student server. Use the folder created for you for this class not the public server. It can be found at <\\studentserver\DRPBX--SocSci\AmericanStudies\Smith> and then your section number.

Essay #1: Essay on National, State, and Local Authority

SSLs and Outcomes:

Express both written and oral opinions clearly and elegantly and defend them with the use of primary evidence by writing papers that defend a given position or argument with the use of primary evidence.

What historical developments put limits on absolute monarchy and preserved local autonomy? In other words, is the American obsession with self-government a result of: 1) demographics? 2) historical ideas? or 3) is it geography and circumstance that determines the American course toward self-rule? (4 PAGES)

Essay #2: In what way was the Civil War a result of the failure of the Constitution's compromises on federalist separation of powers?

SSLs and Outcomes:

I.A Develop automaticity in skills, concepts, and processes that support and enable complex thought.
I.D Evaluate the soundness and relevance of information and reasoning
V.A Identify, understand, and accept the rights and responsibilities of belonging to a diverse community.

Evaluate the relationship between individual behavior and social expectations by Americans' desire for individuality and personal rights and society's requirements for individual and community responsibilities.

Was the outbreak of the Civil War a result of: 1) a structural failure of the Constitution? (a result of the failure of the Constitution's compromises on federalist separation of powers?) or 2) demographic pressures (social changes pushing on various people)? or a conflict over resources? (5-6 PAGES)

Essay #3: Contemporary America

SSLs and Outcomes:

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Students express both written and oral opinions clearly and elegantly and defend them with the use of primary evidence by writing papers that defend a given position or argument with the use of primary evidence.

I.A Develop automaticity in skills, concepts, and processes that support and enable complex thought.

I.D Evaluate the soundness and relevance of information and reasoning

V.A Identify, understand, and accept the rights and responsibilities of belonging to a diverse community.

The Progressives confronted what appeared to be the subversion of democracy by the new industrial order. Were they successful? (6 PAGES)

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Attendance: Attendance policy in this class is consistent with that contained in your Student Handbook.

Computer Use: In-class computer use for anything other than assigned class work will result in a loss of participation points for the day. This includes viewing Facebook or other social networking sites, checking PowerSchool or e-mail, IM-ing, taking phone calls, or *viewing any other material not pertinent to current classroom discussion*. Students are expected to keep their screens closed unless they have permission to open them. During student presentations, students must keep their computer screens down. Show respect for your peers.

Respect Accorded Students and Faculty: Courtesy and respect to each other and to the instructor should be maintained at all times in both e-mail correspondence and in class. The right to dissent shall not be stifled, but the need to reflect and articulate intelligently is also demanded. Questions should be directed toward the instructor. Class debates should address the issue at hand and its supporting evidence, not differences in student personalities.

LATE WORK AND COLLABORATION

As a simple matter of fairness to all students enduring the same time constraints as their peers and a matter of organization for the instructor, each assignment is expected to be turned in at the time specified. Except in special circumstances and with instructor permission, LATE ESSAYS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Back up your files! Use the student server AND a flash drive. There are no extensions except in the most unusual cases (and with the explicit instruction of Student Life). Students who have not turned in all major essays by the final due dates at the end of the semester will receive an unsatisfactory grade for the course except where the instructor has received explicit directions to enter an incomplete grade.

If you have trouble submitting a paper you must e-mail the instructor immediately. Attach the finished paper. Your essay will not be considered complete, however, until it has been submitted through Turnitin.com.

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All other work must also be in on time. All late work – except essays as explained above – will be assessed at 75 percent of its initial value. You have space on the server. Participation goes in the folder of that name and is dated using the mm-dd format. The instructor will provide precise titles for each other document. Submit those files on the day they are due or suffer the penalty.

This also applies to group projects. Every member of a group is responsible for collaborative assignments. This means that not only is each member responsible for knowing what the other members have found in their research but the resulting final assignment is expected to be turned in on time and with all necessary parts. Each individual grade is affected by the collective effort.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Especially if you complete written work at the last moment, the temptation to pass off other people's work as your own is a great one. In a culture where the value of ideas is rarely in their value for their own sake, it is crucial to appreciate them at an institution that thrives on developing new ones. All of the work you turn in for this course should be your own. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams in their book *The Craft of Research*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) explain:

“You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else's words or ideas but fail to credit that person. . . . You plagiarize even when you do credit the source but use its exact words without using quotation marks or block indentation. . . . You [also] plagiarize when you paraphrase a source so closely that anyone putting your work next to it would see that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow.”

Claiming as your own the work of others, in whole *or in part*, will result in an immediate failing grade for the assignment and referral to Katie Berger for disciplinary action.

See the IMSA Student Handbook for specific details and be sure to refer to the IMSA [Chicago Style](#) website for written assignments.

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Sequences of Events

Week 1 What is Government?

DOCUMENTS: Locke, Montesequieu, Hobbes [Excerpts] (one day) (with **QUIZ** to follow)

PRE-TEST

ACTIVITY: Groups sort themselves into governing bodies (**one day activity**)

Week 2 English Background and the Classical Legacy

DOCUMENTS: Magna Carta (1215), Petition of Right (1628), Commonwealth Instrument of Government (1653), English Bill of Rights (1689)

Week 3 Massachusetts vs. Virginia

DOCUMENTS: J. Winthrop “A City Upon a Hill,” Cotton “On Just Price,” Bacon’s Rebellion

Week 4 Revolution and Origins of the Constitution

DOCUMENTS: Stamp Act Congress vs. Declaration, Articles vs. Constitution

ACTIVITY: What do you know about the American Revolution? Myth vs. Fact. Sarah Palin’s Paul Revere’s Ride. Poll on Americans’ understanding of the Revolution.

Essay #1

Week 5 The Constitution and the Bill of Rights

DOCUMENTS: U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights

II. Legacy of the Civil War

Week 6 Federalists vs. Democrats

Week 7 Westward Expansion

Constitution Exam

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DOCUMENTS: Ordinance of 1784 and Northwest Ordinance of 1787, Report on Manufactures and the American System, Alien and Sedition Acts, Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, *Marbury v Madison*, *McCulloch v Maryland*, Hartford Convention (against small government),

Week 8 Mexico, Texas, and Compromise of 1850

DOCUMENTS: Calhoun's Fort Hill Address, Nullification (against big government), *Dred Scott v Sandford*

ACTIVITY: DEBATE on Compromise of 1850

Week 9 House Divided

DOCUMENTS: Lincoln and Hammond, S. Douglas (Freeport Doctrine),

Essay #2

Week 10 State as Instrument of Social Change

DOCUMENTS: Homestead Act (1862), Morrill Act (1862), Enforcement Acts: Ku Klux Klan Act (1871), XIII, XIV, XV Amendments

ACTIVITY: How does an amendment happen?

III. The Making of Contemporary America

Week 11 Rise of National Markets

DOCUMENTS: Interstate Commerce Act, Sherman Antitrust Act, Pendleton Civil Service Act (1883), *Yick Wo v Hopkins*, *Civil Rights Cases 1883*

Week 12 Bureaucracy and Federalism

DOCUMENTS: Meat Inspection Act, Progressive Constitutional Amendments, Volstead and Harrison Acts (ethnic concerns), Progressive Legislation (handout)

ACTIVITY: Group PPT on Riis photos, Nast Cartoons: Collection of Meat Packing and Drug Industries, Women's Suffrage and Anthony Comstock, Triangle Shirt Waist Factory Fire, Environmental Degradation of late 19th century and conservation movement, who owned the Titanic?

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Week 13 The New Deal and Regulatory Functions

DOCUMENTS/ACTIVITY: Investigating New Deal agencies

Week 14 The Great Society

DOCUMENTS: *Brown v Board*, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965
1965, Immigration Reform, United Farm Workers, *Loving v. Virginia*

ACTIVITY: How a bill becomes a law

Week 15 Reagan Revolution and the Anti-New Deal

DOCUMENTS: Goldwater opening campaign speech, School Busing documents from
Great Issues (court issue), Clinton, Tea Party, Court: *Swann v Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Board of Education*, *Citizens United*

ACTIVITY: How is a Supreme Court justice appointed? What has happened to the court
since Reagan?

ESSAY #3 (end of week 15)

Week 16 National Security State

DOCUMENTS: Espionage Act, War Powers Act, *Korematsu v United States*, E.O.
10730
Patriot Act

ACTIVITY: **Debate** on liberty vs. security (executive authority and the decline of
liberties)

- 11/23 Quiz on How Bill Becomes Law (Smith)
- 11/24 Draft – intro for paper (Smith)
- 12/1 week – work on paper in class with out of class work to supplement (Smith)
- 12/5-tentative Final Essay Due (Smith) All focus is on the final essay. I've put it in the major assessment calendar. This will include a draft outline. The students also have some reading I've given them (a few short documents and some PowerPoints).

POST-TEST