



Fall 2019

Comprehensive Course Syllabus

American Studies

Instructor: Eric R. Smith, Ph.D.

Email address: esmith@imsa.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Class Location: A149

Course Description:

American Studies considers United States history since the late nineteenth century. The course considers the United States in the twentieth century through three thematic lenses: foreign policy, civil rights and immigration, and the economy and the state. It ends with a unit on the US Constitution. A composition component also runs through the curriculum.

Text(s) / Materials:

Clarence L. Ver Steeg and Richard Hofstadter, eds., *Great Issues in American History*, Vols. 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 four primary units will address the following themes:

- I. US Constitution
- II. The American Economy
- III. America in the World

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IV. Civil Rights and Immigration

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.

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

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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.)

There will also be an in-class **Constitution Exam** that will count together toward 10 percent of the semester grade.

40 percent for other assessments:

In-class assessments (quizzes) -- 20 percent

Participation and Group activities -- 20 percent

Essays: All essays will be submitted with Chicago Style citations. However, no cover page is necessary nor header because Turnitin.com provides that automatically.

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 Google Classroom.

There course will be divided into four sections by theme:

- I. Civil Rights and Immigration**
- II. Economy and Growth of the State**
- III. Foreign Policy**
- IV. Constitution**

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.

Essay #1: CIVIL RIGHTS

SSLs and Outcomes:

Students express both written and oral opinions clearly 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.

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- 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.

Option 1: Students will construct an imagined meeting where Malcolm X and Martin Luther King meet with President Johnson to discuss Civil Rights. In this essay students will write a history of what transpired at that fictional meeting. (5-6 PAGES)

Option 2: Students will construct an imagined meeting between Betty Friedan and Phyllis Schlafly to discuss the role of women in American society. In this essay students will write a history of what transpired at that fictional meeting. (5-6 PAGES)

Essay #2: ECONOMY

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.

Option #1: Utilizing all of our information from this unit including the past forty years, how radical was the New Deal?

Option #2: How effective has Reaganomics been? Can it be compared to the New Deal in terms of effectiveness?

Option #3: The New Deal and Reaganomics both had achievements but also failures. How do we determine which one is the better approach and what would need to change to reduce the failures?

Essay #3: UNITED STATES IN THE WORLD

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.

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Was the United States' emergence as a global power a result of imperialism or historical circumstances?

Syllabus Addenda Policies & Procedures

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

My expectation is that, at least once per class, you voluntarily respond to a question or comment from your teacher or another student. I want this class to be based on your questions and discussions about them. As to why participation in class is important beyond your grade, consider these statements from some of today's business leaders:

"We are routinely surprised at the difficulty some young people have in communicating: verbal skills, written skills, presentation skills. They have difficulty being clear and concise; it's hard for them to create focus, energy, and passion around the points they want to make."

-- Mike Summers, VP for Global Talent Management at Dell

"I want people who can engage in good discussion—who can look me in the eye and have a give and take. All of our work is done in teams. You have to know how to work well with others. But you also have to know how to engage customers—to find out what their needs are. If you can't engage others, then you won't learn what you need to know."

-- Clay Parker, engineer and president of the Chemical Management Division of BOC Edwards

"People who've learned to ask great questions and have learned to be inquisitive are the ones who move the fastest in our environment because they solve the biggest problems in ways that have the most impact on innovation."

-- Mike Summers, VP for Global Talent Management at Dell

All quotations taken from Tony Wagner, *Rigor Redefined* (2008).

Study Habits: I expect you to take notes in this class. If I think a topic is important enough to put on the board, or to have groups research and present, it's probably important enough to be on an assessment and something I expect you to know. It would also be wise to take notes as you read and to review those notes after we have covered the material in class. This is effective studying!

Electronic Devices: Use of the electronic devices in class is forbidden unless the instructor explicitly indicates that they can be used. The recording of this class in either audio or video form is forbidden by the instructor except where the student has a documentable condition in which it would be necessary in which case the student can meet with instructor after class to discuss accommodations.

This means, from the moment class starts, unless I ask you to use it, I don't expect to see devices in use. Here's why:

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Researchers have repeatedly found that students who use laptops in class learn less than their “disconnected” peers (see Cornell’s 2003 study “The Laptop and the Lecture”). Studies at Princeton and the University of California have found students who take notes on laptops performed worse on evaluations such as quizzes than those who took notes by hand “even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing”

--“The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard,” 2014

But electronic device use in class harms more than just the user – it also negatively impacts students seated nearby. Sana, Weston, et al (2013) found that:

participants who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored lower on a test compared to those who did not multitask, and participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not. The results demonstrate that multitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both users and fellow students and can be detrimental to comprehension of lecture content.

Therefore, I require that you please keep your devices away during class unless you have been specifically asked to use it, and I would encourage you to keep it closed in other classes, as well.

If you have a special need that requires accommodation in this area, please see me.

Attendance: Attendance is expected in this class. Athletes or students in activities will need to remind the instructor of upcoming events.

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. All written correspondence to me should follow the form it would if being sent to the head of a company you are working for. I expect your best grammar, punctuation, and language use.

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 or opinions. Although we are seeking informed opinions and an analytical bent to our discussions.

Please do not expect instant feedback on assignments or to inquiries. The instructor does not have an undergraduate sleep schedule in which texts are sent at 3:00 AM and responses come at 3:01 AM. Please be considerate of this and be patient. The instructor will offer the most timely feedback possible. Written work will require at least a week (at which point you should feel free to nag). Email inquiries have at least a 24-hour turnaround.

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Late Work: Be on time, turn in assignments as scheduled, back up your files! Use a USB drive. Late assignments are otherwise penalized a half a grade per day except where otherwise indicated in the syllabus. All writing assignments must be submitted in order to pass the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

All of the work you turn in for this course should be your own. Claiming as your own the work of others, in whole *or in part*, will result in a referral to the appropriate campus office. 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 that:

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.