

The Development of Modern America

HIST 122 Spring 2026

Instructor: Mr. Seabrook

Meeting Times: Mondays & Wednesdays, 3 to 4:15 pm

Location: Horizon Hall 2017

Office Hours: Virtual by appointment only

Email: tseabroo@gmu.edu

About the Course:

In this course, you will examine the historical development of the modern United States from 1877—the end of Reconstruction—to the present day. We will discuss the people who lived through these dynamic times and the choices they made that have brought us to where we are now. Topics will include Gilded Age tensions between capital and labor, westward expansion, the World Wars, the turbulent nineteen-sixties, and more. Methodologically, you will learn how to engage with historical evidence, especially primary sources and scholarly secondary sources.

Learning Objectives:

This course satisfies the Social and Behavioral Sciences requirement for the Mason Core curriculum. Upon completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and understand key concepts in American history from the post-Civil War era to the present.
2. Demonstrate historical thinking by contextualizing and analyzing primary sources and evaluating the nature and limits of historical evidence.
3. Construct knowledge about self-awareness and conscientious thinking through collaborative teamwork.
4. Explain how individuals, groups, or institutions are influenced by contextual factors.
5. Demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs.
6. Use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles, and theories in the analysis of significant human issues, past or present.

Content Warning:

Some of what you read, listen to, or watch for this course may make you uncomfortable. Engagement with a diversity of viewpoints is an essential part of the historian's craft. In this class, we welcome open, honest debate and we won't shy away from "the hard stuff." I look forward to hearing your valuable and unique perspectives.

Required Materials:

All required materials are posted on Canvas, or links have been provided. No books are required to be purchased for this class. However, all materials listed in the syllabus, including podcasts, videos, films, and graphics, are required. The only cost you will be asked to cover is the purchase of a notebook for your reading journal.

Assignments and Grading:

Reading Quizzes (40%)

One reading quiz is due almost every week of the course. You'll take these timed quizzes in class, directly on Canvas. (Learning Objectives 1, 4, 5, & 6)

Primary Source Presentations & Participation (40%)

Every Wednesday, we're going to flip our classroom around: you get to be the teacher! I will assign primary sources from the American Yawp Reader to each of you throughout the semester. Before class on the day you are assigned to present, you must prepare a lesson on your assigned source; then you will teach it to your classmates. Visuals such as PowerPoint presentations are encouraged, but not required.

The whole class will be quizzed on the material you present, as taken from the American Yawp Reader. The better you do at teaching the material, the better the whole class will do on quizzes. These presentations will also count for a significant part of your participation grade. Feel free to have fun with this assignment, as long as you stay within our class parameters of mutual respect!

At the end of the course, you will also be asked to fill out a self-evaluation form grading your participation in class. Attendance in this class will not be tracked, but it will be difficult to achieve a good grade without coming to class. Please communicate with me ahead of time if you have to miss class for any reason. I will not grant makeup times for missed in-class quizzes or assignments without a good, and preferably documented, reason. (Learning Objectives 1, 2, 4, 5, & 6)

Reading Journal (QOCs) (20%)

Throughout the semester, you will be keeping a "reading journal" to help you absorb and process our course material. You will need to purchase a physical notebook and write your responses by hand. For each class period when textbook readings, primary source readings, or other homework assignments are assigned, please prepare a handwritten response in your notebook to the following prompt: **What is one question you have about the readings (including other course media) this week? What is one quote from the readings that you found interesting or thought-provoking? What is one connection you can draw between this week's material and other material from our class, your other classes, or current events?**

I will grade your journals at the end of the semester. They should serve you well during discussions in class, and I may call on you to share your thoughts at any time. **You must complete the assigned readings and prepare your journal response for each date before the start of class.** (Learning Objectives 1, 2, & 3)

Grading Policy:

This course will be graded on the Undergraduate Regular Scale:

A = 94-100 A- = 90-93
 B+ = 87-89 B = 84-86 B- = 80-83
 C+ = 77-79 C = 74-76 C- = 70-73
 D+ = 67-69 D = 64-66 D- = 60-63
 F = 59 and below

I do not accept late work without a good, and preferably documented, reason.

AI Policy:

As part of each written assignment for the course, you will be **required to disclose** any use of generative AI tools, including (but not limited to) ChatGPT. The use of generative AI tools is generally permissible in this class, but you are required to include an AI consultation form as an appendix to your written work. Be aware that generative AI tools can produce incorrect or biased outputs. It is your responsibility to ensure that any content you use from AI tools is correct, unbiased, and not harmful. AI consultation forms are found on our course Canvas site.

Email Etiquette:

To maintain the easy flow of communication between you and me, please follow these rules:

- **You must use your official Mason email to communicate in this class.**
- Always include a subject in your subject line (Outlook will often prompt you if you forget to do this).
- Include your full first and last name in body of your email.
- Please address me as Mr. Seabrook or Professor in your email greeting.
- If you are responding to an email, please reply in the thread instead of composing a new email.
- Before you email me with questions, check the syllabus and Canvas site for answers.
- I answer most non-emergency emails during normal business hours (9-5) in the order in which they are received.

Common Policies Addendum:

Please follow this link to access Common Policies Affecting All Courses at George Mason University: <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/home/gmu-common-course-policies/>

This syllabus is my contract with you during our time together this semester. While I reserve the right to change parts of the syllabus or schedule at any time, I will always communicate these changes with you and provide an updated copy of the syllabus on Canvas.

Course Schedule:

All readings can be found on Canvas or at www.americanyawp.com, unless otherwise noted.

WEEK 1

January 21: Capital & Labor

Read:

- The syllabus
- Our course Canvas site
- Chapter 16, *The American Yawp*
- William Graham Sumner on Social Darwinism (ca.1880s)
- Lucy Parsons on Women and Revolutionary Socialism (1905)
- **No reading quiz or reading journal assignment this week.**

WEEK 2

January 26: The West

Read:

- Chapter 17, *The American Yawp*

January 28: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- Chief Joseph on Indian Affairs (1877, 1879)
- Frederick Jackson Turner, “Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893)
- Laura C. Kellogg on Indian Education (1913)

WEEK 3

February 2: Life in Industrial America

Read:

- Chapter 18, *The American Yawp*

February 4: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- Andrew Carnegie on “The Triumph of America” (1885)
- Henry Grady on the New South (1886)
- Ida B. Wells-Barnett, “Lynch Law in America” (1900)
- Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)

WEEK 4

February 9: American Empire

Read:

- Chapter 19, *The American Yawp*

February 11: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- William McKinley on American Expansionism (1903)
- Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” (1899)
- James D. Phelan, “Why the Chinese Should Be Excluded” (1901)
- Chinese Immigrants Confront Anti-Chinese Prejudice (1885, 1903)

WEEK 5

February 16: The Progressive Era

Read:

- Chapter 20, *The American Yawp*

February 18: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- Booker T. Washington on Black Progress (1895)
- W.E.B. DuBois on Black Progress (1903)
- Alice Stone Blackwell, Answering Objections to Women’s Suffrage (1917)
- Woodrow Wilson on the “New Freedom” (1912)

WEEK 6

February 23: World War I & Its Aftermath

Read:

- Chapter 21, *The American Yawp*

February 25: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- Woodrow Wilson Requests War (April 2, 1917)
- W.E.B DuBois, “Returning Soldiers” (May, 1919)
- Lutiant Van Wert describes the 1918 Flu Pandemic (1918)

WEEK 7

March 2: The New Era

Read:

- Chapter 22, *The American Yawp*

March 4: NO CLASS MEETING

- No reading quiz this week.

WEEK 8

NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

- No reading quiz or reading journal assignment this week.

WEEK 9

March 16: The Great Depression

Read:

- Chapter 23, *The American Yawp*

March 18: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- Herbert Hoover on the New Deal (1932)
- Second Inaugural Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1937)
- Huey P. Long, “Every Man a King” and “Share our Wealth” (1934)

WEEK 10

March 23: World War II

Read:

- Chapter 24, *The American Yawp*

March 25: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- Charles A. Lindbergh, “America First” (1941)
- The Atlantic Charter (1941)
- Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga on Japanese Internment (1942/1994)
- Harry Truman Announcing the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima (1945)

WEEK 11

March 30: The Cold War

Read:

- Chapter 25, *The American Yawp*

April 1: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read/Watch:

- The Truman Doctrine (1947)
- Joseph McCarthy on Communism (1950)
- Paul Robeson's Appearance Before the House Un-American Activities Committee (1956)
- Duck and Cover (1951)

WEEK 12

April 6: The Affluent Society

Read:

- Chapter 26, *The American Yawp*

April 8: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- Migrant Farmers and Immigrant Labor (1952)
- *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954)
- Richard Nixon on the American Standard of Living (1959)
- Rosa Parks on Life in Montgomery, Alabama (1956-1958)

WEEK 13

April 13: The Sixties

Read:

- Chapter 27, *The American Yawp*

April 15: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- Barry Goldwater, Republican Nomination Acceptance Speech (1964)
- Lyndon Johnson on Voting Rights and the American Promise (1965)
- National Organization for Women, "Statement of Purpose" (1966)

WEEK 14

April 20: The Unraveling

Read:

- Chapter 28, *The American Yawp*

April 22: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968)
- Statement by John Kerry of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (1971)
- Gloria Steinem on Equal Rights for Women (1970)
- Native Americans Occupy Alcatraz (1969)

WEEK 15

April 27: The Triumph of the Right

Read:

- Chapter 29, *The American Yawp*

April 29: Primary Source Presentations & Quiz

Read:

- First Inaugural Address of Ronald Reagan (1981)
- Statements of AIDS Patients (1983)
- Pat Buchanan on the Culture War (1992)
- Jesse Jackson on the Rainbow Coalition (1984)

Assignments due:

- Turn in Reading Journals

WEEK 16

May 4: The Recent Past - LAST DAY OF CLASS

Read:

- Chapter 30, *The American Yawp*

Assignments due:

- Complete Participation Self-Evaluation form in class
- **No reading quiz or reading journal assignment this week.**