

History 147 Online

U.S.: First Century of Independence

Dr. Tim Heinrichs
Syllabus for Summer, 2008

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WELCOME--

Soon after it was launched as an independent nation, at the dawn of the 19th century, the United States was a small agrarian republic huddled on the Atlantic seaboard and numbering four million souls. Or perhaps it was a diverse collection of 13 republics widely separated by barriers of tradition and geography. Its farm population outnumbered city people more than ten to one. Recognizing that with a population the size of Ireland's, the United States could only be a mosquito among the Great Powers, national leaders had to struggle just to steer clear of involvement with France and Britain in their worldwide struggle for dominance.

By the end of the 19th century the band of states had surged forth to become the world's leading economic power. It manufactured more goods than Britain and France put together. Telegraph, telephone, and train tied together every part of a vast continent, and the Republic now numbered 45 states with a population exceeding 75 million. Farm families in 1900 numbered only two-fifths of an increasingly urbanized population. The Great Powers now counted the United States among their number as it forged an empire of its own and began demanding a voice in overseas affairs. How did this vast change come about?

In tracing U. S. history from the War of 1812 to the early 20th century, **HISTORY 147** has three main themes of change: the evolution of American politics, territorial and economic expansion, and the interaction of social and intellectual change. We shall ask the question of what continuities remained throughout the era. Was there a constant American identity?

As we deal with such issues as the Battle of New Orleans, the Erie Canal, democratization, the Bank war of Andrew Jackson, religious revivals, Edgar Allen Poe, woman as "angel of the home," abolitionism, the annexation of Texas, the Crisis of 1850, secession, the battle of Gettysburg, carpetbaggers, the inventions of Thomas Edison, the Chisholm Trail, barbed wire, the blizzards of 1885-6, trolleys, the panic of 1893, the Sears catalogue, the New Woman, the Spanish-American War, trust-busting, and the Panic of 1907, sort it all out by thinking strategically. What major themes are these facts part of? Specific details will mean little to you unless they are put together into your own overall ideas of American history. An artist doesn't paint every blade of grass in a landscape, but just enough to convey the overall reality and mood.

What you will remember from the course a year or five years from now will not be Martin Van Buren's victory margin in 1836 but that he helped make politics the living of professionals, not the sport of aristocrats. Our goal will be to find central and revealing elements of the nation's past.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS--

BOOKS

* Edward Ayers et al, American Passages, compact edition (Wadsworth, ISBN 053464791X). This is the main text.

* Elliott J. Gorn, ed., The McGuffey Readers: Selections from the 1879 Edition (ISBN: 0-312-13398-1). From the 1830s to the 1920s millions of youngsters were educated, socialized, and morally uplifted by these comprehensive readers.

* Lillian Schlissel, Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey (ISBN: 0-8052-1004-0).

Contains first-person accounts of the five-month Oregon Trail journey, through the eyes of its women participants. The diaries reveal the wide array of emotions and ideals felt by the women as they coped not only with the trail's hardships but also with their role in holding families together--asserting themselves while reasserting their traditional values.

* There will be additional brief on-line readings each Discussion. These may be accessed at "Lectures & Discussions."

STRATEGY--

At the conclusion of this course, successful students will be able to:

1. Explain the significance of key people, facts, and events of the period under study, and develop standards
to judge them from a historical-cultural perspective
2. Demonstrate the importance of traditions of thought and ethical values in historical change
3. Expand their vocabulary

4. Evaluate historical arguments, judging the appropriateness of both logic and content

5. Adapt scholarly processes of analysis, interpretation, and synthesis to articulate their own points of view,

demonstrating a command of relevant facts and a framework of logical deduction...

- *Drawing inferences from data*
- *Differentiating between facts, value judgments, and generalizations*
- *Differentiating between description and explanation*
- *Recognizing the role of cause and effect in historical analysis*

History is absolutely do-able if you think strategically. Think about overall trends. File facts away according to what they mean for major trends. The specific details absorbed in the course material will mean little unless you can do that. You are encouraged to put together your own interpretations of the facts.

COURSEWORK

Be sure to look at the "**Reading Schedule**," located on the "**Assignments**" page (accessible from the Home Page). This will guide your reading through the term for lectures and textbook readings.

Be sure to find the "**Lectures & Discussions**" link on the Home Page. That takes you to the page with the lectures and online readings and assignment for each Discussion. Read the lectures. Access the Discussion Assignment, and follow directions for the listed readings and brief essays.

After doing the reading, you choose one essay question to answer from the Discussion Assignment. Post your essay with the Discussion's **Posts** icon (not with the Paper assignment, please!). Each essay should be 250-400 words. The deadlines for these fall on Mondays and Thursdays. **You don't have to write one every week.** During the term you will write and post a total of **four** brief essays in answer to four Discussion assignments by the deadline given for each. Note: you must do essays from two of Discussions #1-5 and two of #6-#10 (again, by the assigned date for each one you choose).

I like an essay that comes to grips with the student's chosen question--that tries to answer it logically with details and facts. It is especially desirable to use facts and details from the Discussion (especially online) readings and lectures. The Ayers text is helpful, but don't write a mere summary of what the Ayers text says. Don't base your essay on an encyclopedia article (especially that unreliable Wikipedia), though feel free to consult a decent encyclopedia for background. Use paraphrases and quotes from the sources to back your points, not to make them, and avoid both long quotes (more than 40 words) and overly brief ones (less than 10 words). Remember what the assignment says about a purpose statement. Avoid typo's and misspellings.

On most occasions when you don't post an essay, you will do the week's reading anyway and post a **response** to the essay of another student. Access other students' essays through each Discussion Assignment's Posts icon. Each response should be at least 75 words long and should express agreement, disagreement, and reasons for your view. You will do a total of two responses in Discussions #1-#5 and two in Discussions #6-#9. (None for #10; please plan accordingly.)

This means that during the term you must post four bulletin essays of your own and four responses to others' essays. Essays are graded on a 25-point scale; responses on a 5-point scale. There is **no extra credit** with essays or responses. **Note: there is no credit for posting a response on a Discussion for which you have already submitted an essay.**

The following is this term's schedule of due dates for essays and responses for each Discussion:

Assignment	Due Date	Assignment	Due Date
Discussion #1 Essay	Monday June 30	Discussion #6 Essay	Monday July 21
Discussion #1 Response	Thursday July 3	Discussion #6 Response	Thursday July 24
Discussion #2 Essay	Thursday July 3	Discussion #7 Essay	Thursday July 24
Discussion #2 Response	Monday July 7	Discussion #7 Response	Monday July 28
Discussion #3 Essay	Monday July 7	Discussion #8 Essay	Monday July 28
Discussion #3 Response	Thursday July 10	Discussion #8 Response	Thursday July 31
Discussion #4 Essay	Thursday July 10	Discussion #9 Essay	Thursday July 31
Discussion #4 Response	Monday July 14	Discussion #9 Response	Monday August 4
Discussion #5 Essay	Monday July 14	Discussion #10 Essay	Monday August 4
Discussion #5 Response	Thursday July 17	No #10 Response	--

In addition to the brief essays and responses, you will compose a six-page paper (due **August 1**), following a sheet provided under "Assignments."

There will be two exams, each about two hours, on these dates: **July 17-18** and **August 5-6**. You will take them online, and you choose the times to take them on each date. You are responsible for having functioning equipment on test days. The tests will have multiple-choice and essay questions and will be based on the Ayers text and the lectures. There will be preparation sheets for each listing possible questions.

NOTE: Copying material in print or on the Internet is forbidden. A zero grade will be assigned to paper or test in which plagiarized material appears, or if on a Discussion essay, the entire Discussions grade (25% of the total term grade).

A note on late work--

Normally, late discussion essays are accepted but with a penalty of **.5/25** per day (up to a total of 3.5/25). If they are more than three days late, they must be sent to me by Vista email. Late responses are not accepted.

Late papers are assessed 2.5% per day (up to a total of 10%). This can be avoided if you obtain permission for an extension in advance of the due date.

If you miss the midterm or final exam for some legitimate reason, all is not lost. However, if you don't contact me and take the test right away, you will lose 10% right away and another 10% after a week.

GRADING

The following is a breakdown of the final grade by category:

Discussions:	25%
Paper	25%
First exam	25%
Second exam	25%

All items will be assigned percentage grades, whose average will be translated into a letter grade according to the following:

93-plus	A	77-79%	C+
90-92%	A-	73-76%	C
87-89%	B+	70-72%	C-
83-86%	B	67-69%	D+
80-82%	B-	60-66%	D

If you're ever not sure you're on top of it all, if you have any questions about the course, ask questions by WebCT e-mail, or to theinric@bcc.ctc.edu. Or call and leave a message at 425-564-2114.

I am looking forward to exploring with you the lives and minds that made up 19th-century America, an era that seems so familiar and yet exotic at the same time.