The United States and the World from 1850 to Present

Student Syllabus

“The United States and the World, Part 2 examines the history of the United States between 1850 and the present. During this period the United States came to play an increasing role on the global stage after its civil war, notably in late 19th century imperialism, the global depression, and two world wars and the Cold War. This course pays particular attention to world historical themes that marked the period, including industrialization, population growth, citizenship, science and technology, urbanization and suburbanization, and the exploitation of natural resources (notably the impact of the increasing reliance on petroleum after 1900). By placing America within the world, we seek to question ideas such as US exceptionalism and the historical roots of U.S. hegemony, as well as more generally the utility of national histories. Finally, this course seeks to incorporate the study of culture, race, class and gender into a new globalized U.S. history.

This syllabus is intended for undergraduate students. It consists of the three parts: the title of each week’s work, together with the reading assignments and titles of the lectures. The required readings are intended to be pulled together as a Class reader. The use of a textbook is optional and at the discretion of the instructor.

Teachers are also referred to the “Teacher’s Syllabus” that accompanies this undergraduate syllabus. It consists of selected readings aimed at assisting your preparation of each lecture, and presumes some prior training or experience with United States history.

Week 1: The Gold Rush and Civil War

Lecture 1: Looking Backward, Looking Forward

Lecture 2: The Civil War in its International Context

Lecture 3: Reconstruction: Promise and Failure to 1877


**Week 2: Agriculture and Industry**

Lecture 1: Reconstruction in a World Perspective: Contract Society

Lecture 2: Immigration from Europe, Mexico, and Asia

Lecture 3: Clearing the Land: Market-oriented Mining, Deforestation, Whaling


**Week 3: The New Urbanity: Space, Society, and Politics (1880-1914)**

Lecture 1: Space: Physical Transformations of the City Landscape

Lecture 2: Social Patterns: New Work and Amusement Opportunities for Immigrants, Women, and the Working Class

Lecture 3: Politics


**Week 4: Conflict Abroad, Conflict Within**

Lecture 1: Imperialism

Lecture 2: World War I: Domestic

Lecture 3: World War I: Bankers to the World


**Week 5: A New America, a New World?**

Lecture 1: Limits of Citizenship and Democracy

Lecture 2: Global Depression

Lecture 3: Reaction to Depression


**Week 6: The Military Industrial Complex and Struggles over Inclusion**

Lecture 1: World War II on the Homefront

Lecture 2: The Bomb


**Week 7: Suburban Nation**
Lecture 1: Fueling the American Dream
Lecture 2: Nuclear Family, Nuclear Holocaust
Lecture 3: Production and Reproduction


Film: The End of Suburbia

Week 8: The Demographic Bump
Lecture 1: Dilemmas of Managing the World
Lecture 2: Freedom Dreams?
Lecture 3: Delusions of Revolution


Film: The Fog of War

Week 9: Paradox of Peace
Lecture 1: Cold Realities
Lecture 2: Hippies to Yuppies
Lecture 3: End of the Cold War


*Susan Douglas, “Introduction,” in Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media
Week 10: A Global Nation

Lecture 1: Casino Economy: Neo-liberalism and New Communications Technology

Lecture 2: Globalization and its Discontents

Lecture 3: The Price of Prosperity
