

U.S. HISTORY TO 1865

HIST 1301

University of Texas at Dallas

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Jan 18- May 5

Course Description

This course covers the main themes of U.S. History through 1865. The first objective of this course is to provide you with an overview of American history through the Civil War. We will study the main political, economic, social, and cultural developments during this period so that you will have a basic understanding of the chronology of U.S. history. Another objective is to enhance your ability to evaluate historical information. An adequate overview of any historical period requires a balance of factual knowledge and critical analysis. Memorization of facts is useless without an understanding how they fit into a bigger picture. The course will require a good bit of reading and writing. In addition to the examination of U.S. History, this course is also designed to improve your skills as a college student and modern professional, making you more educated, employable, and interesting. All of our required course materials are open-access and entirely free.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will evaluate key questions in early American history.
2. Students will create an original historical argument based on primary sources.
3. Students will demonstrate effective written communication skills.

Grading

		<u>Grading Scale</u>	
<u>Assignments</u>		100-93	A
Participation	10%	92- 90	A-
Weekly quizzes	15%	89-88	B+
Choose Your Own Assignment	10%	87-83	B
Exam 1	15%	82-80	B-
Exam 2	20%	79-78	C+
Final Essay	30%	77-70	C
		69-	F

Readings

You will not need to purchase any books for this class, unless you want to. Our [textbook](#) and [primary source reader](#) are both available free and online. Each week you will need to read at least one chapter of the textbook and all of the corresponding primary sources. If you would prefer to read a physical book, low-cost copies of the textbook are available online at [Stanford University Press](#) or [Amazon](#). Be aware, however, that the print textbook does not include the primary sources, so you will still need to read those online.

Technology

In addition to a confident level of computer and Internet literacy, certain minimum technical requirements must be met to enable a successful learning experience. Please review the important technical requirements on the [Getting Started with eLearning](#) webpage. All electronic communication must take place through official UT Dallas email accounts. Please note that individual assignment grades posted to eLearning will be accurate. [Grade](#)

totals, however, do not weigh the assignments correctly nor do they account for missed assignments. Check the weighting listed above in this syllabus if you would like to calculate your own grade estimate.

Email policy

There are a lot of students in this class. In order to maintain my sanity and make sure I have enough time to prepare course lectures, grade assignments, and do the other things required of me, I ask that you email your TA before you email me. If you have a question that your TA can't answer, they will email me. If you haven't gotten a response to an email in 2 business days, feel free to email your TA again. If they haven't responded to two emails, then email me. There will be other opportunities for you and me to connect. I do look forward to getting to know you.

AccessAbility Services

It is the policy and practice of The University of Texas at Dallas to make reasonable disability-related accommodations and/or services for students with documented disabilities. However, written notification from the Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA) is required (see <http://www.utdallas.edu/studentaccess>). Students with a documented accommodation from OSA may record lectures. Students without this documentation may not. Teams can be buggy so I recommend both recording through Teams and using your cell phone to record the lecture audio.

Academic Honesty

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Academic dishonesty includes, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication and collaboration/collusion. Consequences for academic dishonesty will include an automatic failing grade for the class as well as additional discipline to be administered by the university. Additional information related to academic dishonesty and tips on how to avoid dishonesty may be found here: <https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/integrity/>. You cannot use any materials outside of those explicitly assigned in this syllabus. Random Googling will get you nowhere but the deans office. Don't be a cheater.

Mask Policy

My mother is receiving cancer treatments this semester. While I am not legally allowed to require you to wear a mask, I am earnestly asking you to do so. Failure to wear a mask will be interpreted as an act of disrespect to our learning community and an attack on the health of my mother. If you are uncomfortable wearing a mask for any reason, please consider participating in the class through Teams. No one is required to attend any of our class sessions in person.

Student Health:

Your physical, emotional, and mental health are of the utmost importance. It will be difficult for you to succeed in my classroom or anywhere else if you neglect your well-being in the interest of finishing an assignment or completing a reading. If you need help, whether from me or from another resource on campus, please ask for it. Asking for help is always courageous. Find more information about the Student Counseling Services here: <https://counseling.utdallas.edu/>

Online Learning

Until at least February 4, we will only be meeting online via Microsoft Teams. Students are required to have a working webcam and mic. Students must keep their webcam on for the entirety of the class session.

[For more details on this course, please see this introductory video.](#)

Other university policies and procedures relevant to this course can be found at:

<http://provost.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies/>

Course Structure

Every Monday and Wednesday, we will all gather from 5:00-5:50pm for the weekly lectures. Until February 4, these will be held entirely online. Thereafter you may attend these lectures in person or on Teams. These lectures will not be recorded, and the details of the lectures are essential for your two exams. Take detailed notes.

You will also meet with your TA and discussion group sometime on Thursday or Friday (check your schedule for what the registrar calls your “supplemental lecture.” These discussion review the lecture, weekly primary sources, and exam questions. You may attend these sessions in-person or online through Teams. Working webcams and microphones are required if you join your discussion sessions virtually. If you do not actively speak up and share ideas in most of these discussion sessions, it is impossible to earn an A in the class.

Description of Assignments

Participation = 10%

These points reflect how you have actively helped other students learn during the discussion sessions. The only way to earn these points is to attend and positively participate in the discussion sessions. That means speaking up and, if you are joining virtually, keeping your camera on for the entire session.

Quizzes = 15%

You will be required to complete brief online quizzes through eLearning. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that you have a basic understanding of the events covered in class. You may take each quiz up to 10 times, but you should take each at least once before the week’s lecture begins. I want you to do this on your own. Sharing answers constitutes academic dishonesty.

Exam 1 = 15%

Your first exam has two components.

1. Essay questions. These questions are drawn directly from the discussion questions that frame our lectures and class discussions. Attending the lectures, taking good notes, participating in discussion sessions, and reviewing all of the above is the only way to prepare. You may **ONLY** use your lecture notes to answer this exam. Using any material besides your lecture notes constitutes cheating. Also, share notes with caution. If students have identical language in their exams, they will be referred to the dean of students for investigation.
2. Write brief annotations for any 15 primary sources you have read in the first six chapters of *The American Yawp Reader*. The purpose of this assessment is to make sure you are preparing for your final exam. For each of the sources, identify who wrote the document, what it says, and how it relates to the final essay question: “What actions did early Americans take that made the world a better place?”

Exam 2 = 20%

Like the midterm, you will answer several short essay questions drawn directly from the weekly discussion questions. You may **ONLY** use your lecture notes to answer this exam. Using any material besides your lecture notes constitutes cheating.

Final Essay = 30%

Answer the final essay question with a well-structured, coherent argument that draws upon all relevant primary sources. Only consult your course notes and the documents we have read in class. This paper should be between 1,800 – 3,000 words. The question is “Did the people we have studied this semester make more decisions out of fear or love?”

Choose your own assignment (10%)

Students can select an additional assignment based on their personal interests. See the last page of the syllabus.

*** Descriptions and timelines may change at Professor Wright’s discretion ***

Course Schedule

WEEK	DISCUSSION	CHAPTER(S) TO READ
WEEK 1	Jan 19	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 1
WEEK 2	Jan 24, 26	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 2
WEEK 3	Jan 31, Feb 2	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 3
WEEK 4	Feb 7, 9	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 4
WEEK 5	Feb 14, 16	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 5
WEEK 6	Feb 21, 23	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 6
WEEK 7	Feb 28, Mar 2	EXAM 1
WEEK 8	Mar 7, 9	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 7
WEEK 9	Mar 14, 16	SPRING BREAK
WEEK 10	Mar 21, 23	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 8-9
WEEK 11	Mar 28, 30	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 10
WEEK 12	Apr 4, 6	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 11
WEEK 13	Apr 11, 13	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 12
WEEK 14	Apr 18, 20	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 13
WEEK 15	Apr 25, 27	AMERICAN YAWP CHAPTER 14
WEEK 16	May 2, 4	EXAM 2

Final Essay: What is more powerful, fear or love? Did the people we have studied this semester make more decisions out of fear or love?

*** due via eLearning by 11:59pm Monday, May 9**

Choose your own assignment

Due by 11:59pm on Friday, April 22

1. **For the health professionals or COVID-curious.** Read any one of these monographs about disease in early American history and write a 500-700-word reflection on what we can learn from the past as we navigate our present. Focus on giving us details from the book you've chosen.
 - a. [Peter McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering in the Southern Lowcountry* \(Cambridge: 2011\).](#)
 - b. [Jo Ann Carrigan, *The Saffron Scourge: A History of Yellow Fever in Louisiana, 1796-1905* \(Lafayette: 2015\).](#)
 - c. [Margaret Humphreys, *Yellow Fever and the South* \(Rutgers: 1992\).](#)
 - d. [J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith, eds., *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic* \(Science History: 2013\)](#)
2. **For the musicians:** Write and record an EP of at least three original songs based on American history through the Civil War. Upload your songs to SoundCloud, YouTube, or a hosting platform of your choice. Send me a link along with brief 200-250-word explanations for each song that discuss how it engages with American history through the Civil War.
3. **For the DJs:** Create a 30-song Spotify playlist based on the material covered in chapters 1-14 of *The American Yawp*. Write 50-100-word explanations for each song, relating each to American history through the Civil War.
4. **For the visual artists.** Produce at least one original work of visual art that engages this era of American history. Write a 700-900-word explanation of how your piece engages American history through the Civil War.
5. **For the creative writers.** Produce a collection of poems, short story, or novel chapter that engages with American history through the Civil War. Your creative piece(s) should total at least 2,000 words. In addition to your creative writing, please also write a short 600-800 word explanation of how your work relates to this era of American history.
6. **For the cinephiles and binge-watchers:** Watch a movie or TV series, read academic commentary, and write an 800-1,000-word essay about how that media relates to the course. Draw on both the media and the linked articles. Here is a list of movies/TV shows and articles to read. Be aware that many of these movies contain explicit depictions of violence and/or sex.
 - a. *John Adams* (2008) – Available on HBOMax or for purchase on Amazon. [Read this.](#)
 - b. *TURN* (2014-2017) – watch at least one season. Currently available on Netflix. Read [this](#) and [this](#).
 - c. *12 Years a Slave* (2013) - rent on Amazon or iTunes for \$4. Read [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#). [This roundtable](#) might also be of interest, but this is optional.
 - d. *Glory* (1989) - Rent on Amazon for \$3 or \$4 on iTunes. Read [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#).
 - e. *The Underground Railroad* (2021) – Amazon Prime. Read [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#).
 - f. *Harriet* (2019) – rent on Amazon or iTunes for \$6. Read [this](#) and [this](#) and [listen to this](#).
 - g. *Lincoln* – rent on Amazon or iTunes for \$3. Read [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#).
 - h. *Amistad* - Amazon or iTunes for \$3. Read [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#).
7. **For the gamers:** Write a 1,000-1,200 word reflection on video games and American history through the Civil War. Your essay should do one of the following:
 - a. Write a review of as many video games as you can find that speak to an era of American history prior to the 1865. This review should focus on the historical content of the videogames not their playability or other gaming issues. What is revealed and what is obscured about history through this game? How does this game relate to the perspective on history offered by this course?
 - b. Pitch your own game based on this era of American history. Questions of playability and other issues can be briefly addressed, but the bulk of your proposal should explain how the game would engage with specific events, issues, and themes in American history through the Civil War.
8. **For the memelords:** Create 10 memes based on the course content. Write 100-150-word explanations for each meme, explaining how they illustrate an important historical concept.
9. **For the geographers, coders, and/or graphic designers.** Help me think through a future side project – *The American Yawp Atlas*. This project envisions a series of maps that teach the key events, processes, and themes of American history through spatial representations. After reading the relevant chapters in the textbook, write five, 300-word proposals for five different maps. Your proposal should explain what the map would depict, why the issue is important, and why the issue requires spatial representation. If you have graphic design or GIS skills and might wish to create a sample map, let me know.