

History 114b: The United States Since the Civil War Spring 2008, Moravian College

Dr. Francis Ryan

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Office: Comenius 301

Office Hours: Wednesday 10-12, and by appointment.

Classroom: Comenius 305

Class Meets: Tuesday and Thursday 2:20-3:30.

Course Overview:

This course is designed to provide a general introduction to the significant events that shaped United States history since the end of the Civil War to present times. Through readings, class discussions, lectures and films, the course will highlight such questions and themes as the period of Reconstruction, the settling of the Western states, the rise of cities and industry, Progressivism, the 1920s and the New Deal periods, the experience of the First and Second World Wars and the emergence of mass consumer society in the post-war period.

Required Texts:

The American Story: Volume II, Since 1865. (3rd Edition) Penguin, 2006.

Laura Ingalls Wilder, Little House on the Prairie. Harper Trophy, 1935.

Michael Gold, Jews Without Money. Carroll & Graf, 1930.

Course Requirements:

Participation/Preparation: 20%

Each student is expected to read all assigned materials closely and critically, and to come to class prepared to discuss the readings thoughtfully. Each week, students will be provided with "Focus Questions." It is expected that students will be able to respond to these questions in depth; however, it is also hoped that you will be able to go beyond these questions and be able to discuss connections to course material and related reading and presentations. The class may have periodic unannounced quizzes to test student knowledge, and these will be included as part of the overall participation grade. It is imperative that each student be present and on time so that they may contribute to discussions. Excessive absences (more than two) and/or lateness will necessarily affect your final grade. If you anticipate that you will be late or absent, please inform me via email or telephone. While such notification will be appreciated and understood as courtesy, it will not be viewed as excusing the absence or lateness. Cases of absence based on medical reasons will be excused, provided a doctor's note is provided. Movies will be shown in this course, and will be arranged for viewing at a scheduled evening

period. Although all efforts will be made to accommodate student schedules, each student is responsible for viewing the movie on their own if they are unable to attend the scheduled viewing.

Please also observe common courtesy in class in regard to cell phones and eating in class.

Mid-term exams: 15% each

Students will take two in-class examinations based on assigned readings, lectures, films and discussions.

Short papers: 15% /10%

Students will write two essays (4 pages each) analyzing specific themes from the assigned primary readings. Further details will follow. Out of justice to the other students in this class, all late papers will be downgraded one letter grade for each day of lateness. Please be familiar with the Moravian College Code of Academic Conduct provided in the Student Handbook covering issues of academic integrity. The first paper is worth 15%, and the second worth 10%.

Final in-class Examination: 25%

This final exam, to be scheduled by the Registrar during finals week, will focus primarily on topics raised in class since the previous mid-term exam. However, students can expect to address a final essay question that draws on the major cumulative themes raised in this class.

Note: All of the course requirements listed above must be successfully completed to pass the course.

Topics and Readings (tentative)

Week 1: Introductions

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 16. Begin reading Laura Ingalls Wilder, Little House on the Prairie.

January 15: Introduction to the class.

January 17: Background on the Early American Republic, the Civil War and Reconstruction

Week 2: The Crisis of Reconstruction, 1865-1877

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 16. Little House.

January 22: Reconstruction

January 24: Reconstruction Continued.

Week 3: The Transformation of the Western United States

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 17; Little House.

January 29: The Western Myth in the American Imagination.

January 31: The West Continued.

Week 4: Urban and Industrial Society

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 18-19; Little House.

February 5: New Urban Communities.

February 7: Discussion on Little House on the Prairie.

Week 5: The 1890s and the Spanish-American War

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 21.

Begin reading Michael Gold, Jews Without Money.

February 12: The War of 1898

February 14: Social Changes of the 1890s

Week 6: Midterm Week

February 19: **1st mid-term exam.**

February 21: Visit to Moravian College Archives. Details to follow.

Week 7: The Suffragette Movement and Progressivism in the United States

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 23.

Continue reading Jews Without Money

February 26: Introduction to Progressivism

February 28: Movie: *Iron Jawed Angels* (Time and Place to be Announced)

Week 8: Spring Break

Finish Jews Without Money.

March 4: No Class

March 6: No Class

Week 9: Industrial Reform and Progressivism Continued

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 22.

March 11: Progressivism

March 13: Industrial reform **1st short analysis paper due in class, March 13**

Week 10: World War One

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 25

March 18: The Origins of the “Great War”

March 20: The First World War and Social Impacts.

Week 11: Midterm

March 25: 2nd Midterm

March 27: Babe Ruth, Flappers and the New Consumer Society

Week 12: The Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal.

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 26.

April 1: The Origins of the Great Depression

April 3: New Deal Reforms

Week 13: American and the Origins of World War II

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 27.

April 8: Easter Break

April 10: Background on the War

Week 14: World War Two

Reading: The American Story, Chapter 27.

April 15: The Soldier’s Experience

April 17: The War at Home and the Challenges of Victory

2nd Short Analysis Paper Due in Class, April 17.

Week 15: The Post-War Experience

April 22: The Rise of Consumer Society

April 24: Challenges and Affirmations: The Contradictions of Post-War Society

Final Exam time and location to be announced by Registrar.

Class Writing Assignments

Analysis Paper on Little House on the Prairie and Jews Without Money

Both Laura Ingalls Wilder in Little House on the Prairie and Michael Gold in Jews Without Money address the theme of community in American life. Set in dissimilar environments (the western frontier and the urban neighborhood), these two families clearly face obstacles and confront everyday realities that are vastly different from one another. What role does community play in these novels? Do the families have opposing views of the meaning of the ideal community, or do they share similar notions of what a good community is? After reading these novels, can you assert that there is a common notion of the meaning of American community? What does your answer say about how we understand U.S. history? Be sure to back up your points with specific illustrations from the novels.

The essays should be about 4-5 pages in length.

Papers must be typed, double spaced and stapled. Please hand in two (2) copies of the paper.

Oral History on World War Two

Talk to a person who remembers World War Two and conduct an oral history interview with them. The person can be someone who served in the military, or someone who remembers the home front during the war years. (In selecting a person to do an oral history with, it is usually good to select someone from your own family or a close neighbor or friend.)

Write up a 4 page review of the interview, commenting on how the person's comments reflect the themes we have covered in class. Does the person's memories add any new insight to what we know about the experience of World War Two in the United States?

Some possible themes to focus on may include the role of women on the home front either as industrial workers or homemakers, the experience of military training and the life of soldiers overseas, race relations in the military and community, the roles that children played on the home front, the lives of teenagers and the experience of veterans after the war. Please feel free to explore whatever issues you find most engaging.

Although most oral history projects are recorded on cassette tape, for this project, you need only take handwritten notes during the course of the interview. Please make sure that you hand in these notes along with your typed final paper, along with the contact information (phone number) of the person you interviewed.

Please do not wait until the week before the paper is due to begin this assignment. You may have difficulty in finding someone to interview and may need to get help from others in the immediate Moravian community to assist you in locating a person who recalls these years. The sooner you start, the better.

Remember again to hand in **2** copies of the paper.

