

## **History 114: The United States Since the Civil War Fall 2008, Moravian College**

I reserve the right to revise this syllabus at anytime during the semester.

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Class meets Monday and Wednesday 12:50-2:00

### Course Overview:

This course will 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:

Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, Harper, 1980.

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

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

A note on the readings: Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* is a classic history text which covers the important features of American history since 1492. We will only be reading sections related to the time period covered in this class. Zinn provides factual background to the events he covers, but also analyzes the meaning of the events, and challenges each of us to draw our own conclusions. I encourage you to critique Zinn's opinions, and to argue against them at points. You will note that Zinn's book does not have photographs or other visual materials that would help provide a context for the topics covered—I will supplement these readings in my classroom exercises, providing photographs, films, oral histories, dance lessons, and special guests to enliven our meetings. For anyone who would like to supplement the Zinn text with other more standard American history textbooks, I will provide an assortment of texts available throughout the semester and available in the History Department lounge.

### Course Requirements:

#### *Participation/Preparation: 5%*

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.

Late assignment policy: 5 points are deducted from the grade for each day an assignment is late. When handing in an assignment late, please indicate the amount of days late on the front cover along with your signature. Without the days noted and your signature, late assignments will be considered incomplete. *You may not email me assignments*—as evidence by past experience—too much can go wrong. I encourage you not to prognosticate and be sure to use your file on the Student X drive and back up your work!

Make Up Exam Policies: In order to avoid receiving a zero on a missed test you must provide notification and verification. Notify me before hand or as soon as possible. Notification more than two days after the missed exam is not acceptable. Also if you miss an exam you must provide appropriate documentation (doctor's notes, court orders, family note upon death of family member) at the time of the make up. I encourage you to contact and work with Student Services if your absence will be extensive. I reserve the right to schedule make up exams for 7:30am on any day suitable to my schedule.

Several 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.

Anyone needing to schedule exams with the Counseling Center must do so by notifying the teacher of this arrangement at least two weeks before the scheduled exam.

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: 20% each*

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.

*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: Zinn, Chapter 9, "Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom," 171-210. Begin Reading Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie*.

Aug 25: Introduction to the class.

Aug 27: Background on the Early American Republic to the Civil War: Free Labor and the Promise of American Citizenship

Week 2: Reconstruction, 1865-1877

Reading: continue Zinn Chapter 9, *Little House*

Sept 1: Labor Day No Class

Sept 3: Reconstruction

Week 3: Reconstruction Continued.

Reading: Continue *Little House*, and class handout.

Sept 8: Reconstruction

Sept 10: In class film: *Eyes on the Prize*.

Week 4: The Transformation of the Western United States

Readings: Zinn, Chapter 7, "As Long as Grass Grows or Water Runs," complete *Little House*.

Sept 15: The Western Myth in the American Imagination.

Sept 17: Discussion on Zinn

Week 5:

Zinn, Chapter 10, "The Other Civil War"

Sept 22: The "Other" West in perspective.

Sept 24: Discussion on *Little House on the Prairie*.

Week 6:

Readings: Zinn, Chapter 8, "We Take Nothing By Conquest, Thank God," and Chapter 12 "The Empire and the People."

Sept 29: The Spanish American War

Oct 1: America in a Colonial Age

Week 7

Oct 6 Fall Break

Oct 8: Midterm Exam

Week 8 Radical Alternatives and Progressive era

Zinn, Chapter 11, Robber Barons and Rebels, and chapter 13, The Socialist Challenge

Oct 13: Labor struggles

Oct 15: labor continued

Week 9: Women

Zinn, Chapter 6, "The Intimately Oppressed."

Oct 20: Visit to Moravian College archives

Oct 22 *Iron Jawed Angels*

Week 10 World War One

Zinn, Chapter 14 "War is the Health of the State."

Oct 27: The Origins of the Great War.

Oct 29: The First World War and Social Impacts.

Week 11: The 1920s

Nov 3: Babe Ruth, Flappers and the New Consumer Society.

Nov 5: Dance Crazes!

Week 12: The New Deal

Zinn chapter 15, "Self Help in Hard Times."

Nov 10: The Origins of the Great Depression

Nov 12: New Deal reforms.

Week 13: The New Deal Continued

Nov 17: The New Democratic Party

Nov 19: Conclusions

Week 14: World War Two  
Zinn, Chapter 16, "A People's War?"  
Nov 24: The Origins of the War  
Nov 26: Thanksgiving Holiday, No Class

Week 15: World War Two.  
Dec 1: The Soldier's Experience  
Dec 3: The War at Home.

Week 16: The postwar era, Zinn "Or Does It Explode?"  
Dec 8: The End of the White Republic?  
Dec 10: Looking into the Twentieth Century.

