

HISTORY 293: United States History Since 1974
Fall 2009

Dr. Francis Ryan

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Office Hours: M 9-11, and by appointment.

Classroom Memorial Hall 302, T-TR 2:35-3:45

Class Overview: One of the most rapidly developing areas of American historiography focuses on the major social, political and cultural transformations of the nation since the 1970s. This class will provide a critical overview of how historians interpret the major events of this era.

Texts:

James T. Patterson, *Restless Giant*.

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*.

Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Limits of Power*.

William Graebner, *Patty's Got A Gun*.

James Howard Kunstler, *The Long Emergency*.

Requirements:

Class participation: 10 percent

Research Paper: 30 percent

Analysis Paper: 10 percent

In class exams: 30 percent (15 percent each)

Final Exam: 20 percent

Class Policies: Each Student is expected to read all assigned materials closely and critically, and to come to class prepared to discuss the author's core ideas and interpretations. Excessive absences (more than two) will necessarily affect your grade.

Three movies will be scheduled for viewing outside of regular class hours. If you can not make it to the screenings, you are still responsible for viewing these films on your own by the first class meeting after the officially scheduled time.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (Ex 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from this office.

I reserve the right to edit or change this syllabus at anytime during the semester.

Week One: "We Didn't Start the Fire:" Living Memory and the Challenges of Recent History.

September 1: Class Introductions.

September 3: Prologue to the 1970s.

Reading: Bruce J. Schulman, "The Sixties and the Postwar Legacy," from *The Seventies: the Great Shift in American Culture, Society and Politics*.

Week 2: "I've Been Through the Desert on a Horse With No Name."

September 8: The Political World of Nixon.

September 10: The Oil Crisis in Perspective.

Patterson, 1-44. Kunstler 1-98.

Film: *All The President's Men* (1976)

Week 3: "Rock the Boat:" The mid-1970s

September 15: Gender Challenges.

September 17: Discussion: Judging Patricia Hearst.

Patterson, 45-75. *Patty's Got A Gun*, entirety.

Week 4: "Sheila Is A Punk Rocker:" Assessing the Popular Cultural in the mid-and late 1970s.

September 22: Gay Liberation and Disco.

September 24: Discussion: The Historiography of Dissent.

Patterson, 76-107, Schulman, "This Ain't No Foolin' Around: Authority and Rebellion in Seventies Popular Culture."

Week 5: "The Tide is High:" America Encounters Radical Islam

September 29: Historians View the Carter Presidency.

October 1: Global Perspectives on the Energy Crisis.

Patterson 108-151; Kunstler, 99-184

Week 6: "We Need a Holiday"

October 6: Mid-term Exam 1.

October 8: Introduction to the 1980s.

Gil Troy, "Ronald Reagan's Defining Vision for the 1980s," from *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s*.

Week 7: "Beat It!:" Do the 1980s Really Matter?

October 13: Fall Break

October 15: Politics in the Age of Reagan.

Patterson, 152-192

Week 8: "Don't You Forget About Me:" Competing Visions of the 80's in Perspective

October 20: Suburbia.

October 22: Discussion on Youth Culture.

Patterson, 193-217, selections, Kunstler "The Geography of Nowhere."

Film: *The Breakfast Club* (1985)

Week 9: "Don't Believe the Hype:" Interpretations of Race in the late Twentieth Century

October 27: Interpretations of Multiculturalism.

October 29: The LA Riots: Seventeen Years Later.

Film: *Do the Right Thing* (1989)

Patterson, 218-253. Troy, "1985: Brooklyn, New York."

Week 10: "Here's Where the Story Ends:" Rethinking the 1990s

November 3: Midterm 2.

November 5: The Challenges of Recent Historiography.

Patterson, 254-317.

Week 11: "These Are Days:" The 1990s and the Culture Wars

November 10: Poverty in the Age of Affluence.

November 12: The Politics of the Clinton Years.

Analysis Paper Due in class November 10.

Nickel and Dimed, entirety, Patterson, 318-345.

Week 12: "Smells Like Teen Spirit:" The Contemporary City in Perspective and the Shift in Identity Politics

November 17: Urban history meets the suburbs.

November 19: Youth Culture in the iPod Age.

Michael Barry Katz, "Why Aren't American Cities Burning?" *Dissent* (Summer 2007) and "What is An American City?" *Dissent* (Summer 2009): 19-26.

Wesley Yang, "The Face of Seung-Hui Cho," N+1 6 (Winter 2008)

Week 13: "Master of Puppets:" The Limits of Power

November 24: Discussion: The Bacevich Thesis and the Obama Presidency.

November 26 THANKSGIVING

Week 14: "It Ain't Over Till it's Over."

December 1: Debate: The Long Emergency Thesis.

December 3: Paper Presentations.

Kunstler, 235-307, Patterson 346-425.

December 9: Paper Presentations

Final Exam to be Announced by Registrar's Office.