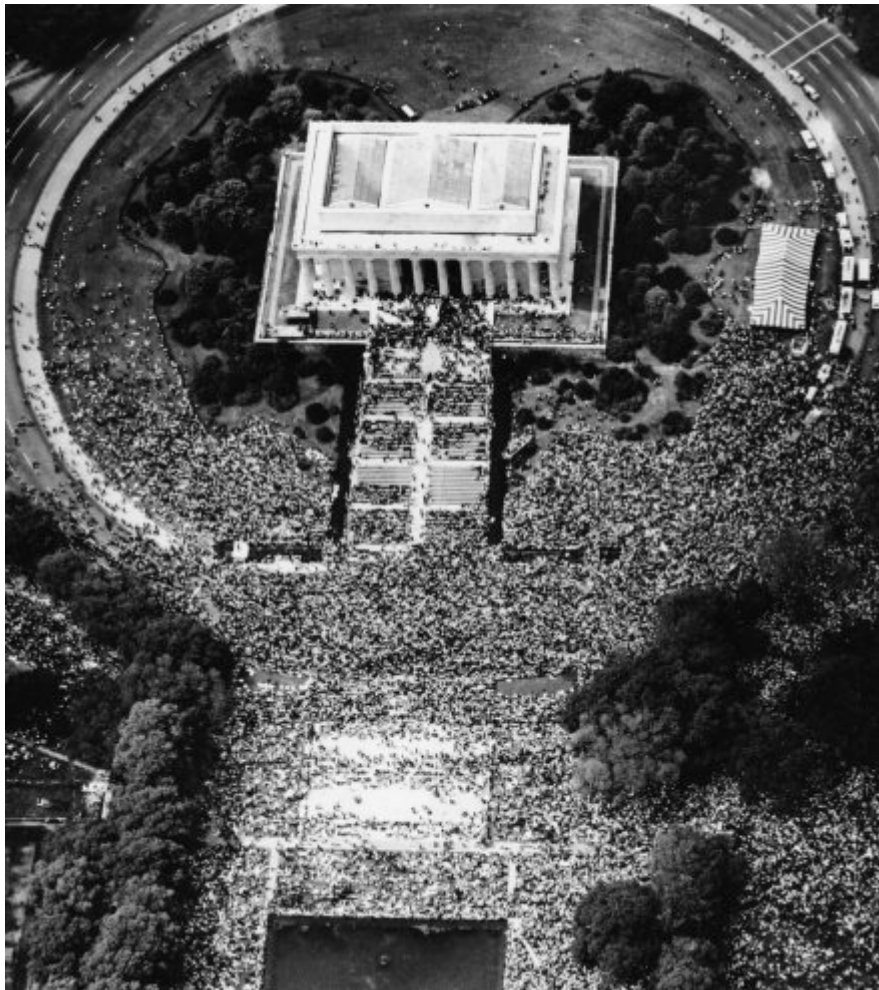


# HIST 292: Readings in Modern US History

Spring 2013  
Tuesdays/Thursdays: 1:10-2:20  
305 Comenius Hall

Professor: Jane Berger



Office: 301 Comenius Hall  
Office hours: T/Th 10:15-12:15  
And by appointment

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## **Course Description:**

This course is intended give you the opportunity to study some of the main events of twentieth-century U.S. history in detail. For each class meeting you will read two or three essays that explore the same historical event or topic. The readings and our discussion of them should expand your knowledge of modern U.S. history. In addition, as we learn about the narrative of U.S. history, we are also going to attend to the ways that the historians whose work we are reading are attempting to shape our understanding of the past and convince us that their interpretations of history are correct. As you are aware, historians do not always agree on how to interpret history or on what constitutes appropriate objects of historical study. For most of our class meetings, the essays you will read will be by historians who study the same topic or time period but who differ in their interpretation of what they study, in their methodology, or in their ideology or use of theory. Reading the competing accounts critically will help you to identify the subjective nature of our understanding of history.

For this course you will also participate in a project on the civil rights movement. We are very fortunate that civil right luminary James Lawson will be visiting campus this semester. Lawson was and is a leading proponent of nonviolent activism, and he trained many young activists who adopted his methods and became leaders in the movement. For the project you will be doing, we will be investigating the prevalence and variations of violence in the Jim Crow South. You will each read a book that explores the topic from a different angle. After you have reviewed your books, we will put the information you have learned together to form a composite, which you will create by synthesizing the work each of you has done. The overview on violence that emerges will help us to better understand and appreciate the context in which activists made the unexpected and brave decision to pursue nonviolent activism. You will be sharing the results of the project with the campus community.

## **Learning Goals:**

By the end of the course, students should have improved their ability to:

- 1.) Identify and describe with a sense of chronology major themes in modern U.S. history.
- 2.) Analyze secondary sources (articles and books) written by historians for the theoretical arguments their authors make about the causes of historical change.
- 3.) Critically evaluate secondary sources written by historians by identifying perspectives their authors develop well and overlook.
- 4.) Write thesis-driven essays composed of paragraphs with identifiable and logically-linked arguments that incorporate knowledge gleaned from secondary historical sources.
- 5.) Make oral presentations describing your research and arguments in a style that is engaging and in a manner that clearly and logically communicates the points you intend to make.

- 6.) Articulate your opinions clearly in the presence of your peers during class discussions. Much of our class time will be dedicated to discussion. Over the course of the semester you should become increasingly comfortable expressing your opinions publicly and describing them effectively.
- 7.) Think and read critically. As you analyze secondary sources, you will have to think carefully about the assumptions the scholars you are reading have made and the points of view they are trying to convince you to believe. The critical thinking and reading skills you develop should help you become more discerning interpreters of the information you encounter in all aspects of your life.

**Students are expected to have completed the readings assigned for each class by the start of the class meeting.**

### **Required Readings:**

- 1.) Books: Elizabeth Hobbs-Coffman, *Major Problems in American History, Volume II* (Major Problems in American History Series) [Paperback, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition] (Wadsworth Publishing, 2011).
- 2.) Blackboard readings (E-reserve).
- 3.) Journal articles

### **Assignments:**

Paper One: 15%  
Paper Two: 10%  
Paper Two Presentation: 5%  
Paper Three: 20%  
Paper Three Presentation: 5%  
Reading Journals: 30%  
Participation: 15%

### **Attendance and Late Papers:**

Class attendance is critical to your performance in this class. Attendance will be monitored, and unexcused absences will be frowned upon and imperil students' participation grade. Students who accrue three or more unexcused absences run the risk of having their final grade lowered a full step (i.e. A to B, B to C, etc.).

Students will be penalized for turning in papers late. Grades will be lowered by 1/3 of a grade for each day a paper is late. In other words, an A paper will become an A- paper if it is one day late, a B+ paper if it is two days late, etc.

### **Academic Honesty:**

Plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct will be dealt with in accordance with Moravian College's Academic Honesty Policy as described in the Student Handbook. The Handbook describes plagiarism as: "the use, deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgment. While the work of others often constitutes a necessary resource for academic research, such work must be properly used and credited to the original author. This principle applies to professional scholars as well as to students....All work that students submit or present as part of course assignments or requirements must be their own original work....When students use the specific thoughts, ideas, writings, or expressions of others, they must accompany each instance of use with some form of attribution to the source. Direct quotes from any source (including the Internet) must be placed in quotation marks...and be accompanied by an appropriate citation." We will be discussing footnoting and other forms of citation in our class.

### **Disability Policy:**

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

### **Class Schedule:**

\*\* Reading assignments must be completed before the start of each class \*\*

#### Week One

Jan. 15: **Introduction**

Jan. 17: **Reconstruction and the New South**

Reading Assignment: The first two scholarly readings for this class concern the history of Reconstruction. Reconstruction was the period between the end of the Civil War and 1877 when the traditional elites of the South (Democrats) were out of power, and the region was largely run by Republicans, a small minority of who hoped to create real change for African Americans. Ultimately, Reconstruction came to an end when a disputed presidential election led to a political compromise in which Democrats gave Republicans the White House in exchange for the withdrawal of federal troops from the South. The traditional southern elites returned to power, and the fate of African Americans in the region was in their hands. Next came disenfranchisement, chain gangs, economic exploitation, segregation, the continuation of lynching, etc.—in other words, the oppressive white-supremacist regime known as Jim Crow. When you read the essays in *Major Problems*, think about what you read in relations to that chain of events. Then respond to King and Tuck. We think of white supremacy as a distinctly southern phenomenon. Should we?

- 1.) *Major Problems in American History, Volume II*, "Introduction: How to Read Primary and Secondary Sources," xvii-xx.
- 2.) *Major Problems in American History*, 18-36.

- 3.) King, Desmond, and Stephen Tuck. "De-Centering the South: America's Nationwide White Supremacist Order after Reconstruction." *Past & Present* 194.1 (2007): 213–254.

### Week Two

#### **Jan. 22: How the West Was Won and Lost**

Reading Assignment: The settlement of the American West has become a romanticized chapter in U.S. history, the authors of the essays from *Major Problems* argue. What "myths" is each concerned with, and how does each approach the history of western settlement differently? Is their work complementary (can it work together to paint a picture of the Frontier), or are the arguments mutually exclusive? Why or why not? Do and, if so, how do the second set of readings complicate the first set? The second set of readings was published in the 1980s. Do the problems the authors identify persist today?

- 1.) *Major Problems in American History*, "Essays," 50-68.
- 2.) Vine Deloria, Jr., "Revision and Reversion," 84-90 and Michael Dorris, "Indians on the Shelf," 98-105 in *The American Indian and the Problem of History* (1987). (Blackboard)

#### **Jan. 24: The Gilded Age From the Left and the Right**

Reading Assignment: The two scholars you will read for class have diametrically opposed political ideologies. Try to sort out who is the lefty and who is the conservative. How do you know? Find examples of when they interpret the same event differently.

- 1.) Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005) Chapter 11: Robber Barons and Rebels (253-296). (Blackboard)
- 2.) Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, *A Patriot's History of the United States* (Sentinel Trade, 2007) (Blackboard)

### Week Three

#### **Jan. 29: The Farmers' Revolt**

Reading Assignment: These readings are about American farmers (Populists) who, during the late nineteenth century, began to feel very taken advantage of by American big business and especially by the railroad industry. Their problems led them to critique the industrial capitalist system that was emerging in the United States. Before you do the readings, try to imagine how scholars might characterize the Populists depending on their ideas and beliefs about American capitalism. Advocates of free-market capitalism and those who favor government regulation of the economy would likely start out with different assessments of the Populists. The two scholars whose work you will read cannot easily be characterized as right-leaning or left-leaning. They do offer differing interpretations of the motivations of Populists. Identify the differences in their views and try to explain what might account for the differences.

- 1.) Thomas Frank, "The Leviathan with Tentacles of Steel: Railroads in the Minds of Kansas Populists," *The Western Historical Quarterly* (February 1989) 37-54.
- 2.) Jeffrey Ostler, "The Rhetoric of Conspiracy and the Formation of Kansas Populism," *Agricultural History* Vol. 69, No. 1 (Winter, 1995), pp. 1-27.

## Jan. 31: **Workers' Revolt**

Reading Assignment: During the late nineteenth century as the United States industrialized, large numbers of people in American society became concerned with what they called at the time “the labor question.” Workers, many of them immigrants, labored very long hours for very minimal wages in very dangerous contexts. Many viewed this as immoral and also worried about the social strife it caused that was manifest, for example, in big strikes and other iterations of worker unrest. Many workers and others beyond their ranks believed that unionization was the solution to the labor question. If workers organized themselves into groups, then workers would have more power to determine their fates than each worker had individually. Even though many workers believed unionization was the right decision, they did not agree on what the goals of unionization should be and on the ways unions should be run. In the essays you will read, first pay more attention to the differences between the American Federation of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World. How were the ideologies of the unions different? Second, think about the historiography. Currarino’s article is recent and cutting-edge. What issues does she address that might not typically be associated with labor history? How might she be influenced by her own times? Foner, a Marxist historian, published his article in 1970. How might he be influenced by his times and his ideology?

- 1.) Roseanne Currarino, “The Politics of ‘More:’ The Labor Question and the Idea of Economic Liberty in Industrial America,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 93, No.1 (2006) 17-36.
- 2.) Philip Foner, “The IWW and the Black Worker,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 55, no. 1 (Jan. 1970) 45-64.

## Week Four

### Feb. 5: **Imperialism**

Reading Assignment: Imperialism refers to conquest of inhabited lands by powerful nations. Your readings for today are on American imperialism during the late nineteenth century. How do the scholars explain how Americans justified engaging in imperialism? Why are the explanations more or less convincing?

- 1.) Essays from *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations* (Blackboard).

Paper One due by email on Feb. 6 by 5 pm. Hard copy due in class on Feb. 7.
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### Feb. 7: **Progressivism**

Reading Assignment: The Progressive Era in the United States occurred between the 1880s and 1920. The era is lauded by liberals because it was during that time that there was a flurry of legislation intended to improve the lives of working-class people. Workplace safety laws, anti-child labor laws, maximum-hours provisions, and public-health initiatives are among the achievements of the era. The scholars of the first two essays you will read differ in their assessment of which groups of people were the engine behind progressivism. How do their views differ, with whom do you agree, and why? The third reading focuses on another aspect of Progressivism. In concert with efforts to pass legislation that protected the working class, some native-born, middle-class progressives also undertook effort to Americanize working-class immigrants. Your third reading deals with Henry Ford’s Americanization efforts. Ford differed

from many progressives in ways that we will discuss in class. As you read the essay about him, think about the price Ford asked his workers to pay for high wages. What are the pros and cons of his approach?

- 1.) *Major Problems*, 155-163.
- 2.) Kathryn Kish Sklar in *Major Problems in American Women's History* (Blackboard).
- 3.) Stephen Meyer in *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History* (Blackboard).

#### Week Five

Feb. 12: **Guest Speaker: Prof. Kim Gallon, Muhlenberg College**

Reading Assignment: TBA

Feb. 14: **The Depression and the New Deal**

Reading Assignment: Since at least the 1960s, historians have by and large shared a positive assessment of the New Deal. To the extent that they have been critical of the construction of the nation's welfare state, they have argued that the New Dealers did not go far enough in building a regulatory state, or they have focused on groups (people of color and women, in particular) who were left out of certain provisions or unintentionally negatively impacted in some way. Recently, conservative scholars have begun a reassessment of the New Deal. Burton Folsom, whose essay you will read, is among them. As you read the assignment, consider how a historian's political orientation might impact his or her scholarship.

- 1.) *Major Problems*, 244-263.
- 2.) Start reading your book on southern violence if you haven't already.

#### Week Six

Feb 19: **World War II: Home Front**

Reading Assignment: The Zoot Suit riots occurred mostly in California in 1943 during World War II. During the riots, white servicemen beat up Mexican-American youth who were dressed in zoot suits (check the web for a picture). The fantastic article you will read about the riots differs in approach from the other scholarly work you have read this semester. Identify how.

- 1.) Eduardo Obregan Pagan, "Los Angeles Geopolitics and the Zoot Suit Riot, 1943," *Social Science History*, vol.24, no.1 (2000) 223-256. (Blackboard)
- 2.) Continue reading your book on southern violence.

Feb. 21: **The Cold War Abroad**

Reading Assignment: The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union lasted from 1945 to 1991. It cost the globe millions of lives and billions of dollars that might otherwise have been put to more productive use. Who was responsible for the start of the Cold War?

- 1.) *Major Problems*, 312-329.
- 2.) Continue reading your book on southern violence.

## Week Seven

### Feb. 26: **Non-violence and the Civil Rights Movement**

Reading Assignment: In anticipation of James Lawson's visit to campus, we will spend a couple of weeks reading about violence, non-violence, the South and the southern civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. As you do today's reading, think about the racist violence that was so prevalent in the South. Would you have followed James Lawson and Dr. Martin Luther King and made a commitment to practicing nonviolence given the context?

- 1.) <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1130>
- 2.) Wesley Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*, first chapter. (Blackboard)
- 3.) Interview with James Lawson (Blackboard)

Paper Two due by email on Feb. 27 by 5 pm. Hardcopy due in class on Feb. 28.

### Feb. 28: **Violence in the South**

Assignment: Prepare a 10-minute presentation on Paper Two that you will deliver in class on Feb. 28. If possible, link your book to the assigned readings. You do not have to do a journal entry for Feb. 28.

- 1.) Simon Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun* (Blackboard)
- 2.) George Lewis, *Massive Resistance: The White Response to the Civil Rights Movement* (Blackboard)
- 3.) Complete your book on violence in the South.

## Week Eight

### **Spring Break!**

## Week Nine

### March 12: **James Lawson campus event/discussion**

Assignment: TBA

### March 14: **James Lawson's Address** – Class will watch “At the River I Stand”

Reading Assignment: Our campus guest Rev. James Lawson played a significant role in the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968. Lawson served as the chair of the strike committee and invited Dr. Martin Luther King to Memphis to address the strikers. Why do you think Lawson was interested in the issues of the sanitation workers?

- 1.) Michael Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road* (Blackboard)
- 2.) Table of Contents of *A Companion to Post-1945 America*. Choose an essay you want to read for the next class.

## Week Ten

### March 19: **The Cold War on the Home Front**

Reading Assignment:



- 1.) *Major Problems*, 352-360.
- 2.) Chapter from *A Companion to Post-1945 America*. Be prepared to share with your peers an overview of the field you read about in a 5 to 7 minute informal presentation.

March 21: **The Infamous 60s**

Reading Assignment: Even people who know very little about U.S. history believe they know a lot about the 1960s. What do historians make of the decade in terms of its influence on American culture?

- 1.) *Major Problems*, 407-425.

Proposal and annotated bibliography for Paper Three due by email on March 20. Bring a hard copy to your individual meeting. Your proposal should be about a paragraph in length and identify the topic you would like to write about. You will be well served by picking a topic we have read about since March 19 or will be reading about in a future class. Your annotated bibliography should identify four secondary sources on the topic, and you need annotations (summaries) for two of the sources.

Week Eleven

March 26: **Individual meetings with the professor- no class meeting**

March 28: **Vietnam**

Reading Assignment: What were some of the reasons the U.S. got involved in the Vietnam War, and was there a strategy the nation could have pursued that would have led to an American victory? What do you think?

- 1.) *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations*, 427-450.

Week Twelve

April 2: **Vietnam**

Reading Assignment: Most Americans have come to the conclusion that the Vietnam War was a mistake, but some dissension persists. What ideological backgrounds might lead scholars to fall down on one side of the issue or the other? What is your view on the matter? How might Vietnamese accounts of the war differ from the five essays on it that you have read?

- 1.) *Major Problems*, 439-461.

April 4: **Historicizing the Environmental Movement**

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) *Major Problems in American Urban and Suburban History* (Blackboard).
- 2.) Ian Tyrrell, "Modern Environmentalism," in *A Companion to Post-1946 America*, Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., 328-342.
- 3.) Get started on Carter's *From George Wallace*.

## Week Thirteen

### April 9: **Conservative Ascendency**

Reading Assignment: For nearly forty years following the Great Depression, liberal ideas remained mainstream in the United States. Most Republicans, even if they believed that the government had grown too big, still had faith in the fundamentals of the American welfare state. By the late 1960s, more conservative ideas began to win a wider audience. And in 1980, Ronald Reagan won the presidency after a campaign during which he espoused very conservative ideas. Historians try to explain why many Americans shifted from an allegiance to liberal ideas to conservative ideas. How does Carter explain the shift? What is convincing and not convincing about his argument?

- 1.) *From George Wallace*, 1-87.

### April 11: **Conservative Ascendency**

Reading Assignment: How do the interpretations of the two scholars you are reading for the first time today differ from Carter in their assessment of the causes of the conservative ascendency? Who do you think is more and less correct?

- 1.) Daniel Williams, "Jerry Fallwell's Sunbelt Politics: The Regional Origins of the Moral Majority," *Journal of Policy History*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2010) 125-147. (Blackboard)
- 2.) *Major Problems*, 486-95.
- 3.) Finish *From George Wallace*.

## Week Fourteen

### April 16: **Globalization and Terrorism**

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) *Major Problems*, 510-523.
- 2.) *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations*, 511-537. (Blackboard)

### April 18: **Wrap-up/Catch-up**

## Week Fifteen

### April 23: **Presentations**

### April 25: **Presentations**

Paper Three is due the day after you do your class presentation. Please send an electronic copy and drop off a hard copy.
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