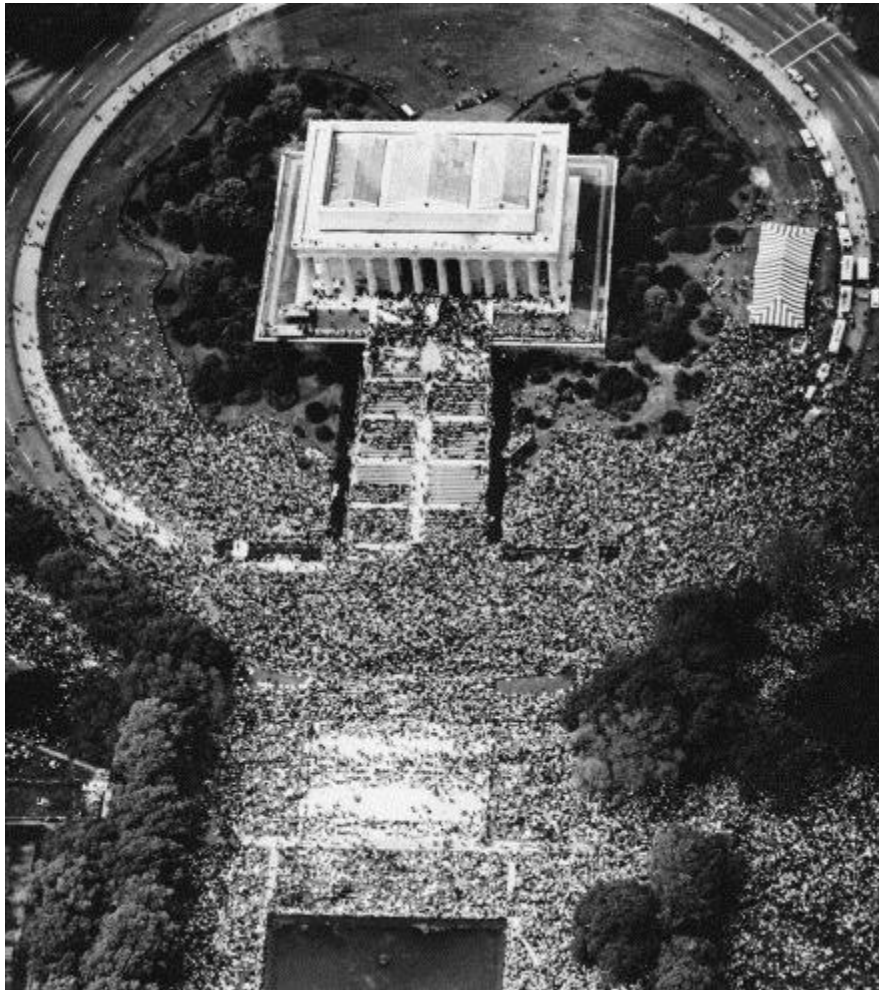


# HIST 291: Politics and Protest in Modern US History

Spring 2015  
Monday/Wednesday: 11:45-12:55  
305 Comenius Hall

Professor: Jane Berger



Office: 308 Comenius Hall  
Office hours: M/W 1:00-2:30  
And by appointment

E-mail: [bergerj@moravian.edu](mailto:bergerj@moravian.edu)  
Phone: 610-861-1402

## **Course Description:**

This course is intended give you the opportunity to study some of the main political events of twentieth-century U.S. history. You will prepare for many of our class meetings by reading two or three essays that explore the same historical event or topic but come at it from different perspectives. The readings and our discussion of them should expand your knowledge of modern U.S. history. In addition, we will be analyzing our readings in an attempt to figure out different strategies that professional historians use to explain the past. 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 that involves putting recent incidents of police brutality, such as the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, in historical context. To complete the project, you are going to have to think critically about the ways historians tell us the story of the “civil rights movement.” There is a long history in the U.S. of police brutality against African Americans. There is also a long history of protest against police brutality. Yet police brutality is rarely mentioned in discussions of the civil rights movement. Why not? How does it change our understanding of the civil rights movement if we include in it the study of protests against police brutality? Do we have to think differently about periodization or, in other words, reconsider the years we use to signal the start and end of the movement? We usually focus on the South when we talk about the civil rights movement, but police brutality has occurred throughout the United States. Do we need to challenge the conventional understanding of where the civil rights movement happened if we study activism against police brutality? How does thinking about protest against police brutality as a part of the civil rights movement change the way we think about African-American history and modern U.S. history? In this class you will answer these questions and present your findings to 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.) Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counter-Revolution, 1963-1994* (Louisiana State University Press, 1999).
- 3.) Blackboard readings (E-reserve).

### **Assignments:**

Paper One: 10%  
Paper One Presentation: 5%  
Paper Two: 20%  
Paper Three: 20%  
Paper Three Presentation: 5%  
Reading Journals: 25%  
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 Academic and Disability Support, located in the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling [610-861-1401](tel:610-861-1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

### **E-mail Accessibility**

From time to time, the professor will communicate with the students via email. Students are responsible for checking their moravian.edu email accounts on a regular basis to ensure that they are current with all course-related information.

### **Technology Policy:**

During class sessions, students are expected to use electronic devices for course-related purposes only. The professor reserves the right to reduce the grade of students found to be using devices for non-course related purposes by as much as a full step (A to B, B to C, etc).

### **Class Schedule:**

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

#### Week One

Jan. 19: **Introduction**

Jan. 21: **The New Jim Crow?**

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘Slangin’ Rocks...Palestinian Style:’ Dispatches from the Occupied Zones of North America,” in *Police Brutality: An Anthology*, ed. Jill Nelson (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2000) 21-59.
- 2.) <http://gawker.com/unarmed-people-of-color-killed-by-police-1999-2014-1666672349>
- 3.) Start your book.

Week Two

**Jan. 26: Debating the Civil Rights Movement**

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) Hall, Jacquelyn. “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91 (2005): 1233-63.
- 2.) Your book.

**Jan. 28: The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism?**

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) Desmond King and Stephen Tuck. “De-Centering the South: America’s Nationwide White Supremacist Order After Reconstruction.” *Past and Present*, 194 (2007): 213-253.
- 2.) Your book.

Week Three

**Feb. 2: Making Sense of Police Brutality**

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) Your book.
- 2.) Select one of the following websites to read or find something else in the media on our topic that helps you understand a question you have about police brutality and African Americans and the criminal justice system. In addition, there are articles on Blackboard that you can read.
  - a. Military/Police [http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/coming-home-to-roost.html#.VLvqS\\_LDWS0](http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/coming-home-to-roost.html#.VLvqS_LDWS0)
  - b. Felony Disenfranchisement: [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/19/opinion/the-racist-origins-of-felon-disenfranchisement.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/19/opinion/the-racist-origins-of-felon-disenfranchisement.html?_r=0)
  - c. African-American unemployment: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/report/2011/07/25/9992/the-black-and-white-labor-gap-in-america/>
  - d. Prison Labor articles: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/prison-labor/>
  - e. Weakening of the Voting Rights Act of 1965: <http://www.thenation.com/blog/195281/honor-kings-legacy-protecting-voting-rights>
  - f. Militarization of the Police: <https://www.aclu.org/blog/tag/militarization-police>

**Feb. 4: Individual Meetings—No class**

Bring an outline of paper one to your meeting. Be prepared to discuss the argument of your book and your critiques of it. Also be prepared to explain how your book helps us to put recent incidents of police brutality in historical perspective.

Paper One due by email on Sat., Feb. 7. Bring a hard copy to class on Monday.

#### Week Four

##### **Feb. 9: Presentations**

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) Continue reading from the websites listed above or find alternative readings that answer questions you have about current events.

##### **Feb. 11: Presentations Planning Sessions**

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) Bring to class something in writing that describes how we might organize the lunch and learn sessions.
- 2.) Continue reading from the websites listed above or find alternative readings that answer questions you and help you with your research.

#### Week Five

##### **Feb. 16: Lunch and Learn Planning and Rehearsal**

Assignment:

- 1.) Continue reading from the websites listed above or find alternative readings that answer questions you have and help you with your research.

**\*\*\*You will be leading a Black History Month Lunch and Learn session on Tues., Feb. 17. Location TBA.\*\*\***

**Feb. 18: No Class (We'll be meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> instead.)**

Paper two is due by email on Sun., Feb. 22 by 5 pm. Bring a hard copy to class on Monday.

#### Week Six

##### **Feb. 23: 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)

**Feb. 25: Western Expansion**

Reading Assignment: The two historians both assert that their scholarship challenges myths about westward expansion. What myths are they challenging? What stories do they tell instead? What do their essays have in common, and how are they different? The second set of readings describe Indian relationships with the frontier army and responses to American westward expansion. How do the accounts complicate standard understandings of “the” Indian experience in the West during the late nineteenth century?

- 1.) *Major Problems in American History*, 50-68.
- 2.) Indians: Resistance and Tradition, Blackboard.

### Week Seven

#### March 2: **Imperialism and World War I**

Reading Assignment: The scholars who wrote the first set of readings differ in opinion concerning the causes of American imperialism. How? Whose account(s) do you find most convincing? The historians who wrote the second set of readings differ in their assessment of Woodrow Wilson. How? Whose view do you find more convincing?

- 1.) *Major Problems in American History*, 115-131.
- 2.) *Major Problems in American History*, 178-192.

#### March 4: **Woman’s Suffrage**

Reading Assignment: Most scholarship on suffrage focuses on women activists who fought for the right to vote. McRae instead offers a study of women who opposed suffrage and interrogates the significance of race and class privilege. What accounts for the anti-suffragists’ opposition to women voting? What does McRae contend they had to lose?

- 1.) Elizabeth McRae, “Caretakers of Southern Civilization: Georgia Women and the Anti-Suffrage Campaign, 1914-1920” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 82., no. 4 (Winter 1998) 801-828.

### Week Eight

#### March 9: **Spring Break**

#### March 11: **Spring Break**

### Week Nine

#### March 16: **The 1920s and the Culture Wars**

Reading Assignment: Although they were nearly a century ago, on close inspection, the 1920s seem very familiar. Use the readings to explain why.

- 1.) *Major Problems in American History*, 207-227.
- 2.) *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*, 320-336, 348-365. (Available on Blackboard.)

#### March 18: **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. In the second set of readings, historians debate the extent to which radical ideas were prevalent during the Depression years. What accounts for the historians' different findings?

- 1.) *Major Problems in American History*, 244-263.
- 2.) *Were the 1930s Radical Years?*, Blackboard.

### Week Ten

#### March 23: **World War II: The Zoot Suit Riots**

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.

#### March 25: **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 in American History*, 312-329.

### Week Eleven

#### March 30: **The Cold War at Home**

Reading Assignment: Our view of the post-World War II United States tends to be very influenced by stereotypes. Are the stereotypes accurate or misleading? The Cold War era is also often remembered as a period of conformity and repression. How does the third reading complicate that notion?

- 1.) *Major Problems in American History*, 344-360.
- 2.) *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*, 393-403. (Available on Blackboard.)

#### April 1: **Conservative Ascendancy**

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 Self explain the change? What factors (political, economic, cultural, etc.) does he argue were critical?

- 1.) Robert Self, *All in the Family*, Blackboard.



2.) Start reading *From George Wallace...*

### Week Twelve

#### April 6: **Conservative Ascendancy**

Reading Assignment: How does Carter explain the conservative ascendancy? In what ways is his argument similar to and different from Self's? What is convincing and not convincing about his argument?

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

#### April 8: **Conservative Ascendancy**

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 ascendancy? 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 Thirteen

#### April 13: **Guest Speaker (Please also attend the panel discussion on Moravian and the Vietnam War)** (7 p.m., Prosser Auditorium, HUB)

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) *Major Problems*, 439-461.
- 2.) Vietnam Readings, Blackboard.

#### April 15: **Historicizing 9/11**

Reading Assignment: Select two or more essays from the special issue of the *Journal of American History* on 9/11. The journal you need is: Vol. 89, No. 2, Sep., 2002. Be prepared to describe and assess what you read with the class.

First draft of paper three due by email on Fri., April 17.

### Week Fourteen

#### April 20: **Individual Meetings—No class**

#### April 22: **James Lawson and the Strategy of Non-Violence**

Reading Assignment:

- 1.) Lawson readings, Blackboard.

Students are required to attend the public address by Rev. James Lawson on Thurs., April 23 at 7. Location: TBA.

Week Fifteen

April 27: **Presentations**

April 29: **Presentations and Wrap Up**

Students should submit the final draft of paper three two days after their presentation.