Contemporary America
U.S. History since 1973

Tuesday & Thursday, 12:30 - 1:45 p.m.
Lafayette Classroom, Tower Residence Halls

This course offers a survey of American politics, society, and economy from 1973 through the present. Characterized as the "Age of Fracture" by historian Daniel Rodgers, the past four decades of American life have witnessed the fragmentation of racial and gender identities, dramatic fluctuations between prosperity and economic crisis, the intensification of partisanship alongside widespread political apathy, and profound uncertainty over the role of the United States in world affairs. As we examine these turbulent years, we will identify key changes and continuities in the American experience. At the same time, we will consider what it means to think historically about the recent past (and the present).

Participation (30% of course grade). Your participation grade will be assessed on the quality and frequency of your contribution to in-class discussion. This, in turn, relies on the careful reading of assigned materials ahead of class meetings.

Paper (35%). You will write one substantial research paper (12-15 pages) in this course that explores a particular event, individual, organization, or theme related to the course by examining outside sources and scholarship. There will be a number of deadlines and submissions throughout the semester that you are required to meet; failure to meet the deadlines will result in points deducted from the final paper grade. The first deadline is October 1, by which date you must submit by email a paragraph explaining your paper topic in some detail.

Midterm Exam (10%). The midterm exam will consist of three short-answer identifications and one longer essay question. One week before the exam, you will be given three possible essay questions, of which one will appear on the actual exam. Though you will not have advance notice of possible short-answer IDs, you will be able to select the IDs you wish to write on from a list that appears on the exam.

Final Exam (25%). The final exam will follow the same format as the midterm exam, except that there will be four IDs and two essay questions (one of these will be cumulative and the other will cover material from the second half of the term). As with the midterm exam, you will be given possible essay questions one week ahead of the final exam.

Readings. All readings will be available on our HuskyCT course website.

Academic Integrity. Plagiarism and cheating are the gravest violations of academic conduct. They will be punished to the fullest extent possible, including failure in the course. Plagiarism consists of reproducing or utilizing ideas or text from other sources without proper attribution. For more information, see http://www.plagiarism.org and http://www.community.uconn.edu/student_code.html.
Accessibility. To request accommodations for a disability you must first contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (room 204 of the Wilbur Cross Building; http://www.csd.uconn.edu). You must have the appropriate forms from this office before we can arrange accommodations.

SCHEDULE & READING ASSIGNMENTS

Note: readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available on the course website.

WEEK 1
9/1: America at the Crossroads
9/3: Watergate

WEEK 2
9/8: Vietnam Syndrome
9/10: Busing & Affirmative Action

WEEK 3
9/15: Feminism & Sexual Liberation
9/17: The Religious Right & the Politics of Family

WEEK 4
9/22: Environmentalism
9/24: Stagflation & the Tax Revolt

WEEK 5
9/29: Deindustrialization & Urban Crisis
10/1: Free Enterprise, Free Markets
WEEK 6
10/6: MIDTERM EXAM
10/8: Reagan Revolution

WEEK 7
10/13: Wall Street
10/15: From Hippie to Yuppie

WEEK 8
10/20: War on Crime, War on Drugs
10/22: The AIDS Crisis
   *We Were Here* (2011), directed by David Weissman.

WEEK 9
10/27: Individual Meetings on Papers
10/29: The End of the Cold War & the Rise of the New World Order

WEEK 10
11/3: Clinton’s Third Way
11/5: Culture Wars

WEEK 11
11/10: Globalization
   *Battle In Seattle* (2007), directed by Stuart Townsend.
11/12: Dot.com Boom & Bust

WEEK 12
11/17: The Election of 2000 to 9/11
11/19: Wars in Afghanistan & Iraq
THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 13
12/1: Financial Excess

12/3: Crash & Bailout

WEEK 14
12/8: Obama’s Hope & Change

12/10: Immigration
Peter Schrag, “They Keep Coming,” in Not Fit for Our Society: Immigration and Nativism in America (2010).

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 18, 10:30 am - 12:30 p.m. (to be confirmed later in the term).