HIS 3016: Contemporary American History

History 3016  
Course #: 29095  
Mon, Wed, 2:20-3:40

Dr. Mitchell Lerner  
LeFevre Hall, room 288  
Office Hours: M, W, 12:30-2:00  
Phone: 740-366-9433 (office) 740-587-4945 (home)  
E-mail: lerner.26@osu.edu

Course Description:
This course offers an examination of American history since 1963. We will start with a brief look at the evolution of the United States in the years after World War II, and then will take a more detailed look at the years between 1963-88. Specific topics that will be addressed include: the Vietnam War and other Cold War conflicts; the globalization of American business; the civil rights struggles of women and African-Americans; the protest movements of the 1960s; Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society; Richard Nixon and Watergate; détente; the conservative counter-revolution of the 1970s and 1980s; and the end of the Cold War. Some background in American history is helpful but is not essential.

Academic Objectives:
1. Students will gain a basic factual knowledge of this period of United State history.
2. Students will develop or improve skills in analyzing historical data and drawing informed conclusions about such material.
3. Students will gain or further develop critical skills necessary to assess arguments based on historical facts or analogies.
4. Students will cultivate the logical and persuasive communication and analytical skills that are the marks of a liberally-educated person.

Expected Learning Outcomes:
History courses develop students’ knowledge of how past events influence today’s society and help them understand how humans view themselves.

1. Students acquire a perspective on history and an understanding of the factors that shape human activity.
2. Students display knowledge about the origins and nature of contemporary issues and develop a foundation for future comparative understanding.
3. Students think, speak, and write critically about primary and secondary historical sources by examining diverse interpretations of past events and ideas in their historical contexts.

Enrollment:
All students must be officially enrolled in the course by the end of the second full week of the semester. No requests to add the course will be approved by the Chair of the Department after that time. Enrolling officially and on time is solely the responsibility of the student.
Course Requirements:
1. The course will be conducted through lectures and class discussion. Students are strongly encouraged to raise questions and make comments in class. Class attendance and active participation will thus count significantly toward the course grade.
2. Students are required to complete each reading assignment on the date that it is assigned, and should be prepared to discuss it in class. Keeping abreast of the readings will facilitate understanding of the lectures. It is highly recommended that students take notes of the readings in order to help them with weekly discussion sessions.
3. Students are responsible for all material presented in the lectures and discussions. Regular attendance is therefore essential, and will be part of your grade.
4. Students will be required to complete a long research paper on a topic of his/her choice related to this period in American history. This paper must be at least 10 pages, must be typed, and must conform to accepted rules of grammar and style. All paper topics must be approved by the instructor in advance. Whenever possible, papers should make use of primary sources. Papers are due on April 28 at 4:30 PM, and late papers will be accepted only under the most extraordinary circumstances.
5. Students are required to submit a research prospectus on or by the date of February 5. Details about the prospectus will be given out in class, but it should consist of three parts: 1) a proposed thesis statement, indicating what the central argument of the paper will be; 2) a 1-2 paragraph description of the focus of the paper; and 3) a list of sources to be used, which should include at least 3 secondary and 2 primary sources.
6. Students are required to write a series of short papers on narrowly focused topics assigned by the instructor. These papers must be typed, and may not exceed two pages. Papers are designed to ensure that students are familiar with the central topic of discussion for that day, and thus no late papers will be accepted.
7. Students are expected to conform to established classroom etiquette. Disruptive behavior, such as smoking, sleeping, talking and persistent tardiness is unfair both to the instructor and to serious students, and will not be tolerated.
8. Students will scrupulously observe all university policies on academic honesty. All cases of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course, in addition to any sanctions imposed by the university.
9. The instructor reserves the right to make jokes whenever the spirit so moves him. Students are expected to laugh uproariously every time they hear one, regardless of whether or not it is actually funny.

Grading:
Your course grade will be determined according to the following breakdown:
- 40%: Short papers
- 35%: Research Paper
- 10%: Attendance
- 10%: Participation
- 5%: Research Prospectus

To earn an “A” for the class, students must attain a final average of 89.5%; to make a “B,” the average must be 79.5%; to make a “C” the average must be 69.5%; to make a “D” the average must be 62.0%. Anything below 62.0% will be considered failing.
**Required Reading:**
Four books are required for the course, all of which can purchased at the school bookstore or on-line. If you purchase them on-line, be sure to get the correct edition. There are also a number of short articles, available on-line at the course webpage. The books are as follows:


**Academic Misconduct:**
It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors are required to report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee. For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct: [http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp).

Here is a direct link for discussion of plagiarism: [http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/handouts/research_plagiarism.cfm](http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/handouts/research_plagiarism.cfm)

**Disability Services:**
Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs.

**Electronic Device Policy:**
No extraneous devices, including but not limited to such items as cell phones, laptop computers, blackberries, pagers, tablet PCs, digital recorders and cameras, beepers, ipods, MP3 players, ipads, camera phones, are permitted to be used during class unless the professor authorizes their usage for an academic purpose. Students with disabilities or exceptional needs who require electronic devices for their day-to-day functioning in the academic setting are to coordinate the use of electronics during class sessions with the course professor.
Course schedule and assigned reading:

Week 1: Let’s Get It Started
Jan 6: Course Introduction
Jan 8: The Kennedy Mystique  (Document #1: “John Kennedy’s Inaugural Address,” Jan 20, 1961)

Week 2: Been to the Mountaintop
Jan 13: The Rise of the Modern Civil Rights Movement
Jan 15: The Peak of the Modern Civil Rights Movement

Week 3: Civil Riots?
Jan 20: NO CLASS
Jan 22: The Decline of the Modern Civil Rights Movement

Week 4: That Bitch of a War
Reading: Michael Hunt, *Lyndon Johnson’s War*
Jan 27: Getting into the Quagmire (Documents #2 and 3: Statements by Ho Chi Minh)
Jan 29: Getting out of the Quagmire
Paper #1: Is it accurate to describe the Vietnam War as “Lyndon Johnson’s War”?

Week 5: Building a Great Society?
Feb 3: A Bottom-up Look at the Great Society
Feb 5: A Top-down Look at the Great Society  (Document #4, Excerpt from Michael Harrington, *The Other America*
RESEARCH PROSPECTUS DUE

Week 6: You Say You Want A Revolution?
Reading: NONE
Feb 10: Port Huron and Beyond  (Document #5: Port Huron Statement, June 15, 1962)
Feb 12: You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know which way the Wind Blows (Document #6, Communiqué #1 from the Weatherman Underground, May 21, 1970)
Week 7: All: You Need is Love
Reading: Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values*
Feb 17: Drinking the Electric Kool-Aid
Feb 19: LIBRARY MEETING

Week 8: Hippies, Porn, and God
Reading: NONE
Feb 24: The Hippies and their Legacy
**Paper #2: Timothy Miller argues that the hippies "made a lasting impact on the ethos of America." Do you agree or disagree?**
Feb 26: The Warren Court (Document #7: Supreme Court decision in *Engel v. Vitale*, 1962)

Week 9: 15 Minutes of Fame
Reading: Echols: *Hot Stuff*
Mar 3: The Culture of the 1960s
Mar 5: NO CLASS

SPRING BREAK
Mar 10: NO CLASS
Mar 12: NO CLASS

Week 10: The 1970s Reconsidered
Reading: Echols: *Hot Stuff*
Mar 17: We’re Moving on Up
Mar 19: The Culture of the 1970s
**Paper #3: How, according to Alice Echols, did disco play a central role in the changes emerging in American life in the 1970s?**

Week 11: Nixonland
Reading: Joan Hoff, “Re-evaluating Richard Nixon”
Mar 24: The Sunbelt and American Politics (Document #8: Excerpts from *Time* Magazine special issue on the South)
Mar 26: Richard Nixon: Forgotten Liberal?

Week 12: The Dark Side of the Nixon Years
Reading: NONE
Mar 31: Nixon and the World
Apr 2: A Cancer on the Presidency (Documents #9: Two documents on the Watergate scandal)

Week 13: Globalization and Stagnation
Reading: LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*
Apr 7: A Crisis of Confidence? (Document #10, Excerpts from Jimmy Carter’s “Crisis of Confidence” speech, July 15, 1979)
Apr 9: Globalization and its Consequences
**Paper #4: What, according to Walter LaFeber, is the relationship between Michael Jordan (or at least what Jordan symbolizes) and the attacks of September 11?**
Week 14: Morning in America
Apr 14: The Conservative Counter-revolution
Apr 16: The End of the Cold War

Week 15: The End of the Class as We Know It
April 21: Research Paper Discussions

FINAL PAPERS DUE: APRIL 28

Important Dates:
Jan 6: My birthday
Jan 31: Last day to drop without a “W”
Feb 2: Super Bowl XLVIII (Seattle over Denver)
Mar 10-14: Spring Break
Mar 21: Last day to drop without a petition
May 18: Spring commencement
June 16: First day of summer term
Helpful Websites for Study of the 1960s

(This is a basic list only. A more complete list of web sites can be found at: http://www.newarkcampus.org/departmental/history/links/default.htm)

Some Good Places to Start:

http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/gateway/bib/history.html  The Gateway history link, with connections to hundreds of historical sites

http://www.eyewitnessstohistory.com/  A collection of firsthand accounts from critical events in American history

http://www.historynet.com/index.html  The HistoryNet, with an assortment of essays and links


http://faculty.tamu-commerce.edu/sarantakes/stuff.html  The mother of all foreign policy history websites, with links to everything you can imagine

http://www.publichistory.org/  An introduction to various public history links and materials

http://chnm.gmu.edu/  The award winning site of the Center for History and New Media, with a focus on everything related to American history

Some General Document Collections:

http://www.cwihp.org  Home of the Cold War International History project, with on-line bulletins and documents

http://www.archives.gov/  The National Archives and Records Administration home page, with a little bit of everything

http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/  A great collection of State Dept. documents starting in 1861

http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/  An extensive collection of policy-related documents, organized by decade.

http://www.gwu.edu/%7Ensarchiv/index.html  The National Security Archive with many good documents focused on government, intelligence, and security issues, post-1945

http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/feros-pg.htm#documents  Assorted documents primarily related to government and policy

http://www.byu.edu/ipt/vlibrary/curriculum/ushistory.html  Historic documents of the United States, organized by era
Documents in American law and diplomacy

Cultural history records, organized by decade

An assortment of collections from the National Digital Library

A great collection of materials related to modern politics and policymaking

Assorted primary sources, consisting primarily of speeches and significant laws

The DDRS (Declassified documents reference system) page, full of thousands of government records (accessible through OSU library only)

Presidential Libraries:

Assorted CIA analyses of the Soviet Union, 1947-91

Collections from the National Security Agency's Venona Program, which intercepted Soviet communications during the Cold War

The records of the US Commission on Civil Rights, since 1957

Various NSA documents about cryptology and the Cold War

A collection of Vietnam War documents with a focus on American military strategy

Assorted collection of Vietnam War documents and oral histories

Various documents and more regarding the Vietnam War
http://www.un.org/ The United Nations website

http://www.loyola.edu/dept/politics/milintel.html Various military intelligence documents and links


http://www.oyez.org/ The website for the Supreme Court, with searchable case archives

http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/g_three_sections_with_teasers/oralhistory.htm The oral history collection of the US Senate

http://www.loyola.edu/dept/politics/intel.html Various strategic intelligence links and documents

http://www.library.kent.edu/page/11247 Good collection about the 1960s and Kent State

http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/ Civil Rights documents, focused on Mississippi

http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/FSM/ The Free Speech Movement digital archives

http://library.cqpress.com/ The digital archive of Congressional Quarterly, with various databases and resources related to American politics

**Media Links** (most can only be accessed through OSU Library Web page)

http://pao.chadwyck.com/home.do: Periodicals Index Online, a searchable collection of hundreds of journals and magazines

http://www.jstor.org/ The J-Stor archive, the largest searchable collection of scholarly journals

http://www.time.com/time/archive/index.html?id=ad_archive_728x90 The searchable website of *Time* Magazine