

HIS 155.05 - FALL 2013

THEMES IN AMERICAN HISTORY: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

Prof. Jonathan Wilson, M.Phil.
Email: [REDACTED]
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Class: MWF [REDACTED]
Office hours: [REDACTED]
Blackboard: [REDACTED]

WHAT THE COURSE IS ABOUT

This semester, you'll study more than 400 years of history, learning about a country that covers nearly 3.8 million square miles. "Themes in American History" is a big course. It's a story about wars, epidemics, crises of faith, natural disasters, enduring love, immense power and unimaginable pain, and the things people live and die for. Above all, it's a story about the lives of ordinary human beings.

By reading about the lives of specific people (our "biographical approach"), you will also learn about the countless people who lived around them. And by studying how great events have affected individuals in the past, you will find new ways to understand life today.

In practical terms, that means this course has three main purposes, which are addressed by the three main components of the coursework.

- I. LECTURES: In a single semester, you will see an overview of the entire history of the United States. That will help you fit together the smaller details of history. And it will help you see the context for the things you study in every other class.
- II. DISCUSSIONS: You will develop skills for thinking analytically and critically about human society. As you will see, similar problems, needs, and desires have appeared in different times and places. By reflecting on what has happened in the past, you will prepare yourself to face the future.
- III. ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS: You will improve your reading and writing skills. People make sense of human life by putting experiences into words. This course will give you practice. The skills you develop will help you professionally and will give you a better basis for participating in American civic life.

HOW THE COURSE WORKS

We will meet in class three times a week. On Mondays and Wednesdays, I will generally lecture. On Fridays, you will come to class prepared to discuss the week's assigned readings (about 30 to 50 pages per week). I may vary this schedule as necessary to accommodate exams and holidays.

Homework related to the readings will be due in class on Fridays. You will also take two exams and turn in two "visual history essays." The first essay will be a paper of two to three pages. The second essay will be a paper of three to five pages. I will provide further information about these assignments later in the semester.

Your final grade will be based on the following activities:

Participation.....	15%
Attendance.....	10%
Discussion.....	5%
Homework.....	15%
Visual History Essay I.....	15%
Midterm Exam.....	15%
Visual History Essay II.....	20%
Final Exam.....	20%

WHAT BOOKS YOU HAVE TO BUY

You must purchase the following books and be prepared to use them by the start of the second week. I expect you to bring your books to class when we discuss them on Fridays. I will also sometimes assign supplemental readings, which I will provide.

- I. Wayne Franklin, ed., *American Voices, American Lives: A Documentary Reader* (W. W. Norton, 1997). ISBN 0393970949.
- II. Herb Boyd, ed., *Autobiography of a People: Three Centuries of African American History Told by Those Who Lived It* (Anchor Books, 2001). ISBN 0385492790.

You must also arrange to purchase *one* graphic memoir (personal narrative in comic-book form) from the following list. These books are not available in the university bookstore, so you will have to find your choice in another bookstore or from an online bookseller. You will read this book and discuss it in your second visual history essay.

- III. Graphic memoir options:
 - a. Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Pantheon, 1996). ISBN 9780679406419. Based on Spiegelman's conversations with his father, a Holocaust survivor who moved from Poland to New York. Note: Contains shocking scenes and stories.
 - b. Emmanuel Guibert, *Alan's War: The Memories of G.I. Alan Cope* (First Second, 2008). ISBN 9781596430969. Based on Guibert's interviews with an American soldier who settled in France after World War II.
 - c. G. B. Tran, *Vietnamerica: A Family's Journey* (Villard, 2011). ISBN 9780345508720. Tells how Tran's family survived the Vietnam War and emigrated to the United States, and what their lives were like afterward.

No general "survey" textbook is required for this course. If you wish to purchase one for your own convenience when studying, I will be happy to recommend one.

WHAT POLICIES AND RULES YOU NEED TO KNOW

ATTENDANCE: The attendance portion of your participation grade will be calculated as the number of times you were marked present, divided by the number of times attendance was taken (minus two). In other words, I allow two absences from class, no questions asked. After that, each additional absence—for any reason—will lower your participation grade. After fifteen or more total absences, I will assign a failing grade for the entire course on the grounds that you have not really taken it. It's your responsibility to plan ahead and leave yourself room for emergencies and conflicting obligations. (If a university commitment or lingering illness or other major crisis requires you to miss several classes, please speak with me about your problem as early as possible; I may arrange a substitute activity in these extraordinary cases.)

DISCUSSION: Your participation grade will also be based on how much you take part in class discussions. Even with perfect attendance, you cannot earn an A or B for participation without regularly communicating your thoughts. I understand, however, that shyness or other problems may affect your ability to participate. If you find it too uncomfortable to speak in class, you should find another way to discuss the course materials with me. (For example, you can visit during my office hours or ask questions about the readings by email.) Please remember that I expect all participation to be respectful and constructive.

HOMEWORK: Homework will normally be due at the beginning of class on Fridays, and it must be presented in hard copy. (Handwritten homework is acceptable if it is neat and legible.) If you are absent on a Friday, it's your responsibility to hand in the homework early or have someone else turn it in for you. In general, homework assignments will consist of questions asking you to reflect on the weekly readings and discuss them in writing. These assignments will be posted on Blackboard. For most students, the reading and homework combined should take three to six hours per week to complete.

LATE WORK: All late assignments, including homework assignments, will be penalized one letter grade (ten percentage points) per calendar day. To turn in a late assignment, you must email it to me (to prove it's finished and stop the penalty clock) and turn in a hard copy at the next class meeting. Missed exams may not be made up except in extraordinary and documented emergencies.

GRADES: In this course, one letter grade is equivalent to ten percentage points. (Scores in the 90s are in the A range, scores in the 80s are in the B range, etc.) Homework will be graded on a simplified but similar scale of 1 to 10. The possible final course grades are A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, and F.

PRIVACY: To protect your privacy, I never discuss grades by email, and I will not discuss your educational records with anyone else except La Salle University officials who need to know about your progress.

EMAIL: You should check your lasalle.edu email account often. It's the main way I will communicate with you outside of class. I expect all of your email communication to be courteous and properly written. Begin with a salutation ("Dear Prof. Wilson" or "Hi, Prof. Wilson" are fine)

and end with a signature. Writing professional email messages is an important part of preparing for almost any career.

EMERGENCIES: If for some reason I must cancel class suddenly, I will try to send a text message through the ExplorerAlert system, so you should register for emergency notifications at [REDACTED].

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Learning requires work. Shortcuts on assignments are short circuits in your education. They are unfair to other students, and they also waste your time and money. So never cheat on an exam, never present someone else's work as your own, and never make up an illness or emergency. If you have any questions about academic honesty, speak with me immediately—before the assignment is due. After you turn in a paper or exam, it will be too late. Plagiarism or another form of cheating will result in an automatic failing grade (0%) on the assignment and may result in a formal referral to the dean's office. A second offense will result in an automatic failing grade for the course.

WHERE TO GET HELP

WRITING: At the Sheekey Writing Center in [REDACTED], tutors are available to give you feedback and help you sharpen your work at any stage of the writing process. The tutors can help you with your paper's organization and clarity, answer grammar questions, help you avoid plagiarism, and help you improve your editing and proofreading. When they can, tutors will work with you on a drop-in basis, but appointments are recommended. In GradesFirst (under Tools in the MyLaSalle portal), schedule an appointment for WRT 101. For more information, contact [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

HISTORY: Subject tutoring is also available for La Salle undergraduates. Subject tutors can help you identify what as well as how to learn, clarify course content, and help you understand your strengths and weaknesses. You can make tutoring appointments through GradesFirst. If you have created your own study group and would like a tutor to help your group with the material, "facilitated study groups" can be arranged. For more information, contact [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

PLAGIARISM: As a college student, you have a responsibility to learn the ethical standards of American universities. For a basic guide to writing plagiarism-free papers, please visit <http://www.lasalle.edu/library/plagiarismandcopyright>. The Sheekey Writing Center (and I) can provide further guidance.

OUR SEMESTER SCHEDULE

AV: American Voices, American Lives

ABP: Autobiography of a People

Week 1—Introductions: The Peoples of North America

- Aug. 26
- Aug. 28
- Aug. 30—*Student Survey due*

Week 2—American Colonies in the Atlantic World

- ~~Sept. 2~~ —*Labor Day Holiday*
- Sept. 4
- Sept. 6

Reading: Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (ABP 13-21); Olaudah Equiano (ABP 22-28); William Moraley (AV 177-183); Martha Ballard (online)

Week 3—The American Revolution and Its Meanings

- Sept. 9
- Sept. 11
- Sept. 13—*Deadline to choose graphic memoir*

Reading: Jonathan Boucher (AV pp. 227-233); Janet Schaw (AV 233-236); Sylvanus Wood (AV 237-241); Sally Wister (AV 271-278); Boston King (AV 279-287); Benjamin Banneker (ABP 52-55); Abigail Abbot Bailey (AV 296-297 and 332-345); Abigail Adams (online)

Week 4—Consolidation: The Constitution and 1812

- Sept. 16
- Sept. 18
- Sept. 20

Reading: Joseph Plumb Martin (AV 383-389); Alexander Hamilton (online); Charles Willson Peale (online); TBA

Week 5—Swept Away: Democracy and the Market Revolution

- Sept. 23
- Sept. 25
- Sept. 27

Reading: Henry Conklin (AV 455-467) Francis Cabot Lowell (online); Harriet Robinson (online); Asa G. Sheldon (AV 468-478); Sylvester Graham (online); Sojourner Truth (online); Joseph Smith (online)

Week 6—Slavery in the Land of the Free

- Sept. 30—*Visual History Essay I due*
- Oct. 2
- Oct. 4

Reading: Richard Allen (ABP 41-43); Old Elizabeth (ABP 44-47); Hercules (online); Nat Turner (AV 390-407); Frederick Douglass (ABP 93-96); Abigail and Jehu Jones (online); Jehu Jones Jr. (online)

Week 7—Another Revolution: Civil War and Reconstruction

- Oct. 7
- Oct. 9
- Oct. 11—*Midterm Exam*

Week 8—Rebirth and Conflict: The Gilded Age

- ~~Oct. 14~~ —*Midterm Holiday*
- Oct. 16
- Oct. 18

Reading: Lee Chew (AV 619-627); Leon Ray Livingston (AV 651-663); Jay Gould and James Fiske Jr. (online); Terence V. Powderly (online)

Week 9—Reform and Control: The Progressive Era

- Oct. 21
- Oct. 23
- Oct. 25

Reading: Rocco Corresca (AV 631-638); Jacob Riis (AV 639-650); Nellie Bly (online); Booker T. Washington (ABP 155-160); W. E. B. Du Bois (ABP 191-197 and online); Ida B. Wells Barnett (ABP 198-203 and online)

Week 10—War and Prosperity: 1917-1929

- Oct. 28
- Oct. 30
- Nov. 1—*Deadline to withdraw with a W*

Reading: Woodrow Wilson (online); Addie Hunton (ABP 219-225); Harry Haywood (ABP 226-228); Langston Hughes (ABP 251-256); Richard Wright (ABP 237-243); Edna St. Vincent Millay (online); Zelda Fitzgerald (online)

Week 11—Depression and War: 1929-1945

- Nov. 4
- Nov. 6
- Nov. 8

Reading: Adam Clayton Powell Jr. (ABP 285-289); Conrad Lynn (ABP 295-297); Franklin D. Roosevelt (online); A. Philip Randolph II (ABP 309-312); Nelson Perry (ABP 301-304); Maya Angelou (ABP 323-325); Richard King (online); June Wandrey (online); Sidney Diamond (online)

Week 12—The Atomic Age

- Nov. 11
- Nov. 13
- Nov. 15

Reading: George F. Kennan (online); Curtis Morrow (ABP 335-339); Bill Bryson (online); Melvin and Maria Mininson (online); Ray Bradbury (online); TBA

Week 13—War and Protest

- Nov. 18
- Nov. 20
- Nov. 22

Reading: Coretta Scott King (ABP 355-359); Constance Baker Motley (ABP 360-364); Rosa Parks (ABP 365-370); Ella Baker (ABP 371-374); Malcolm X (ABP 401-406); Gordon Parks (ABP 409-413); David Parks (ABP 414-416); Gerald Massey (online); Richard Baltzegar (online); Sandy Scheuer (online)

Week 14—Malaise

- Nov. 25—*Visual History Essay II due*
- ~~Nov. 27~~ —*Thanksgiving Holiday*
- ~~Nov. 29~~ —*Thanksgiving Holiday*

Week 15—Ronald Reagan's America

- Dec. 2
- Dec. 4
- Dec. 6

Reading: La Salle College senior (online); Ronald Reagan (online); Colin L. Powell (ABP 500-502); Bari-Ellen Roberts (ABP 511-515); James McBride (ABP 527-530); Bernice King (ABP 538-543); James B. Duke and Wendell Berry's grandfather (online)

Finals Week

Final Exam: TBA

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STUDENT SURVEY

*Please detach, complete, and turn in this page by the end of the first week of classes.
Provide only information you are comfortable giving. Your answers will be kept confidential.*

I have carefully read the entire syllabus for HIS 155 and believe that I understand the course requirements.

SIGNATURE:

NAME:

NICKNAME (if preferred):

PRONUNCIATION (if helpful):

YEAR: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th other

MAJOR:

HOMETOWN:

What do you think is the purpose of a college education?

Why are you taking HIS 155?

What do you hope to get out of HIS 155?

Have you taken college history (or related) courses before? Which ones?

Do you have any concerns about HIS 155 or your ability to complete it?

What kind of work do you want to do after college?