

Dr. Eric Platt (eplatt@sfc.edu)  
HIS 1201-3: MWF 10:10-11:05, Room 6318  
Office: Room 7008  
Office Hours: M 3:30-4:30 WF 11:15-12:15 & by appointment

## **US History 1896 to Present**

### *Course Description:*

This course traces the political, economic, cultural, and social history of the United States since 1896. In the process we will examine the events, ideas, institutions, and people that have helped make the United States of America what it is today.

### *Goals:*

Students who take this course will learn:

- The narrative arc of twentieth century American history.
- Key methods, ideas, and analytical frameworks in American history.
- How historical interpretations change over time.
- Historical continuity and change.
- The difference between primary and secondary sources.
- Critical thinking, research, and communication skills.

### *Objectives:*

At the end of this class, students should be able to:

- Explain the causes and consequences of the defining events in the twentieth century, including the World Wars, the Great Depression and New Deal, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and various culture wars.
- Identify the defining features, successes, and failures of significant political movements, including Progressivism, Liberalism, and Conservatism, and explain how those movements influenced party politics.
- Summarize the major economic developments during the twentieth century and their impact on the average American worker.
- Compare and contrast the historical experiences of diverse groups in American society during the twentieth century and analyze these groups' roles in shaping American society.
- Situate social movements and cultural trends in their contexts, and identify the factors that created and influenced them.
- Analyze the United States' foreign policy and stature in the world over the course of the twentieth century and describe the relationship between world and U.S. affairs.
- Explain the influence twentieth century U.S. history has had on current political affairs, social movements, and cultural trends.
- Trace change across time and space.
- Interpret primary and secondary sources, and understand how historians utilize both to create an analysis.
- Create and clearly communicate historical arguments.

### *Requirements:*

- Attend and **participate** in class
- Complete assigned readings and responses
- Complete blog postings
- Exam 1: Wednesday, October 10; Exam 2: Monday, November 12
- Coney Island project: Wednesday, October 31
- Final exam: TBD

### *Readings:*

- Jennifer D. Keene et al., *Visions of America: A History of the United States*, Vol. 2 (Since 1865), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.
- Charles Denson, *Coney Island: Lost and Found* [Do **NOT** purchase. This book will be given to you during the second week of class.]
- Additional readings from the class website [Angel]

### *Class Schedule and Assignments:*

#### **Week 1: Introductions**

September 5: Introduction to the Course

September 7: The Gilded Age

#### *Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapter 16 (pp. 470-480)

#### **Week 2: Turn-of-the-Century America**

September 10: Immigration and Urbanization

September 12: Introduction to Coney Island

September 14: Word Press Training/Documentary Film: "Coney Island"

#### *Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapter 17
- Denson, *Coney Island: Lost and Found* (Chapter 3)

#### **Week 3: Turn-of-the-Century America (cont.)**

September 17: American Imperialism

September 19: Labor Unrest and Grassroots Progressivism [**First Blog Due**]

September 21: **Discussion**

#### *Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapters 18 (pp. 530-534) and Chapter 19
- [Angel] Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden"
- [Angel] Editorial from *San Francisco Call*
- [Angel] Selection from Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*

#### **Week 4: Progressive Crusades at Home and Abroad**

September 24: Progressivism and Politics

September 26: American Involvement in World War I

September 28: **Discussion**

*Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapters 18 (pp. 534-554) and 20
- [Angel] Selection from Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*
- [Angel] “A Doughboy’s Letter from the Front”
- [Angel] Wilson’s Fourteen Points Speech

**Week 5: The 1920s: The First Modern Decade?**

October 1: Boom Times

October 3: The Roaring Twenties

October 5: **No Class [Study for Exam]**

*Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapter 21 (pp. 624-46)
- [Angel] “Flapper Jane”

**Week 6: The Great Depression**

October 8: **Columbus Day [No class]**

October 10: **Exam #1**

October 12: “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”

**Week 7: BHS/The Great Depression and New Deal**

October 15: Introduction to Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS)

October 17: Choose Source for Coney Island Projects (BHS) [**Second Blog Due**]

October 19: Roosevelt and the New Deal [**Third Blog Due**]

**Week 8: BHS/The Great Depression and New Deal (cont.)**

October 22: The Second New Deal

October 24: Work on Coney Island Projects (BHS) [**Fourth Blog Due**]

October 26: **Discussion**

*Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapter 22
- [Angel] “Hard Times and Hoovervilles”
- [Angel] Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “First Inaugural Address”
- [Angel] “Working People’s Letters to New Dealers”

**Week 9: World War II**

October 29: America Enters World War II

October 31: Fighting the Fascists

November 2: **Discussion**

*Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapter 23
- [Angel] Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Four Freedoms Speech”
- [Angel] “Press Release on Use of Atomic Bomb”
- [Angel] Willard Waller, “The Coming War on Women”

### **Week 10: Cold War**

November 5: Beginning of the Cold War [**Coney Island Projects Due**]

November 7: Height of the Cold War

November 9: **Discussion**

*Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapter 24
- [Angel] Joseph McCarthy on Communists in the U.S. Government
- [Angel] North Dakota Civil Defense Agency, *How You Will Survive*

### **Week 11: Middle-Class World of the 1950s**

November 12: **Exam #2**

November 14: “Fair Deal” to “Middle Way”

November 16: Society and Culture of the 1950s

*Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapter 25 (pp. 752-64)

### **Week 12: The Civil Rights Movement**

November 19: Jim Crow Era

November 21-25: **Thanksgiving Break [No Class]**

*Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapter 18 (pp. 555-557)

### **Week 13: The Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam**

November 26: Civil Rights Movement

November 28: Civil Rights Movement (cont.) / **Discussion**

November 30: Vietnam

*Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapters 25 (pp. 765-775), 26, and 27 (pp. 819-827)
- [Angel] Selection from *Rosa Parks: My Story*

### **Week 14: Malaise? Revival?**

December 3: Nixon and Watergate

December 5: The Carter and Reagan Administrations

December 7: The End of the Cold War

*Reading:*

- *Visions of America*, Chapters 28 and 29 (pp. 876-883)

### **Week 15: Turn-of-the-Century America, Take II**

December 10: Recent American History/**Review for Final**

*Reading:*

- American Promise, Chapter 31 (pp. 1141-1157)

### *Grade Breakdown:*

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Blog Posts: 8% (2% each)

SAFA Web Project: 15%  
Responses: 5% (Drop lowest grade)  
Class Participation: 7%  
Final Exam: 25%

### *Grading Scale:*

A	92-100%
A-	90-91%
B+	88-89%
B	82-87%
B-	80-81%
C+	78-79%
C	72-77%
C-	70-71%
D	60-69%
F	Below 60%

### *Classroom Policies*

#### **Reading and Class Participation:**

Class discussion is very important for this course. You are expected to attend every class and to be fully prepared to discuss the assigned reading. Your class participation grade will reflect your attendance, the frequency and **quality** of your contribution to class discussion, and your willingness and ability to listen and respond to the ideas of others. **Please feel free to ask questions during lecture.**

#### **Academic Honesty:**

You are encouraged to collaborate with other members of the course in studying and preparing assignments, but all final work must be your own. Cheating on tests will have severe consequences, as you will receive an automatic "F." Plagiarized work will also not be accepted and is surprisingly easy to discover. To avoid plagiarism:

1. Do not copy word-for-word from the source you are using. Instead, **summarize** the main points or ideas of the material in **your own** words and phrasing, and give credit to the source you have used.
2. If you do need to use someone's exact words, be sure to put quotation marks around the direct quote and cite the source and page number(s).

Talk to me if you have any questions about how to avoid plagiarism.

#### **Attendance:**

St. Francis College's academic policies require regular attendance to all classes, including this one. Four unexcused absences will result in a lower grade for the class. If you are unable to make it to a class for a legitimate reason, please let me know. An excused absence is usually granted for illness, family emergency, and participation in college events. If you will be missing class due to a college event, please tell me ahead of time.

You are expected to be to class on time and remain until the end of the period. I will be taking attendance at the beginning of each class. If you are late, it is your responsibility to talk to me after class in order to make sure that you are not marked absent for the day.

### **Phones and Other Electronic Equipment**

Phones and other pieces of electronic equipment are great at keeping us all in touch with each other and the world around us. But they can also be disruptive and interfere with class. I want to hear you participating in class discussion and asking questions, not hear your phone going off in the middle of lecture! Phones, iPods, etc., must be silenced or turned off once class begins. Also, laptops should be used for taking class notes, not surfing the web or updating your Facebook status.

### **Late Work:**

All assignments are due the day they are assigned. You are welcome to either e-mail me your work or turn it in during class. Unexcused late work will result in a lower grade for the assignment. No unexcused late assignments will be accepted after the last day of class.