HIST 416B: CONTEMPORARY AMERICA
THE UNITED STATES AFTER 1945

Spring 2017
TR 5:30–6:45 pm
AB 212

Note: Supplemental information regarding course requirements is posted on the course WebCampus site. Students should read the material on WebCampus as well as this syllabus in the first week of class and check the site at least once a week for new information and announcements that will be added during the semester.

Instructor Information

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Course Description and Core Objectives

The course examines social, political, and economic developments in the United States after 1945 and the interaction between domestic and international events in the “American Century.” In these decades Americans sought to spread their ideals and cultural values across the globe and to prevent rival communist ideologies from taking hold in other nations, with consequences that still reverberate today. Since this was also an era when advances in communications technology made it possible to instantly project news and images around the world, we will study much of this history through the lens of popular culture, including films, magazines, advertising, music, television, sports, fashion, and internet-based social media. Through analysis of cultural sources in their various historical contexts, students will learn how popular culture serves as a site of struggle and contestation where Americans have debated what kind of nation they think the United States should be and its role in the world. In particular, the course focuses on how underrepresented groups such as women, nonwhite Americans, working-class people, and immigrants were portrayed in late twentieth-century popular culture and how members of these groups used mass media and other cultural forums to further their struggles for political, social, and economic inclusion.

This course satisfies Core Objectives 10 and 11 of the Silver Core Curriculum:

CO10. Diversity and Equity: Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity through courses that focus on topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, physical ability, language, and/or social class with an emphasis on the analysis of equity. Students will apply and evaluate approaches or modes of inquiry used to analyze diversity and equity and the social barriers to these goals.

CO11. Global Contexts: Students will apply and evaluate modes of academic inquiry, creative expression, or results of research to problems in historical and contemporary global contexts.
Students will articulate connections among local, national, and international contexts and evaluate the ways that historical and contemporary global influences affect their current situations.

In addition, HIST 416B helps students to develop the skills described in Core Objective 1 (Effective Composition and Communication) and Core Objective 3 (Critical Analysis and Use of Information). These objectives are reinforced throughout the curriculum in other courses students take to fulfill core and major requirements. Through the assigned readings, essays, class discussions, group activities, and written assignments, students will practice critical thinking and communication skills that can be applied in other academic and professional contexts. In their research and written work, students will adhere to ethical principles that govern scholarly inquiry, including the accurate representation of evidence, proper citation of sources, and respectful interactions with colleagues.

Skills-Based Curriculum

The history program at UNR helps students to develop proficiency in broadly applicable skills while mastering specific subject areas. In addition to learning about post–1945 United States history, students will have opportunities to practice and improve the following skills in this course:

- critical thinking (through reading and analyzing written documents and cultural sources)
- historical research (through finding information about historical topics in short assignments and longer essays)
- written communication (through writing short assignments and longer essays)
- primary source analysis (through reading and asking questions about historical documents and cultural artifacts created during the time period we are studying)
- secondary source analysis (through reading and asking questions about books and articles written by scholars about the time period we are studying)
- cultural text analysis (through thinking about the significance of cultural texts such as magazine articles, novels, music, films, and television programs and placing them in historical context)
- oral expression (through small group and whole class discussions and student presentations)
- using the internet (through research assignments and guidance on how to evaluate internet sources)

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Correlation to Core Objectives (COs)

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:
1. critically examine American foreign policy after 1945 and its impact on domestic and global developments that shaped the contemporary United States (CO3, CO11)
2. analyze and synthesize primary, secondary, and cultural sources (CO3)
3. find and use historical scholarship and sources to answer a research question (CO3)
4. present ideas in a clear and persuasive manner both orally and in writing, in accordance with the ethical principles governing scholarly inquiry (CO1, CO3)
5. analyze struggles for equality and inclusion of marginalized groups in the United States after 1945 (CO3, CO10)

You may notice that the abbreviation SLO followed by a series of numbers appears on some course materials. This simply means that the lecture, discussion, assignment, or other activity offers opportunities for students to practice skills related to the learning outcomes listed above (e.g., “SLO 1, 4” means the activity builds your knowledge of American foreign policy and its impact (SLO 1) and requires you to present ideas orally or in writing (SLO 4)).
Required Reading

*Asterisks indicate primary sources (descriptions of historical events created by people who were living at the time they occurred). All other assigned readings are secondary sources (interpretations of the past by historians and other scholars).

Books to be purchased:

Additional readings posted on course WebCampus site (Readings folder):

Films:
*Dr. Strangellove, directed by Stanley Kubrick (1964) (95 min)
View by Tuesday, February 5
*Crash, directed by Paul Haggis (2005) (112 in)
View by Thursday, April 18

The films are on reserve in the Multimedia Center on Floor 1 of the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center and can be viewed in the library any time it is open. Students may also obtain copies of the movies from local video stores or through services such as Netflix. Please plan ahead to schedule your movie viewing—if you leave it until the night before class to try to obtain the films, they might not be available.

Assessment for HIST 416B (undergraduate students)

Students will receive grades according to how well they complete the following tasks:

- Participation in discussions and other class activities: 20 percent
- Quizzes (top four scores): Weeks 2, 4, 7, 10, 12: 20 percent
- Assignments (top four scores): Weeks 3, 6, 9, 11, 13: 20 percent
- Essay 1 (5–7 pages): Due Thursday, March 14: 15 percent
- Essay 2 (5–7 pages): Due Tuesday, May 7: 15 percent
- Forum contribution and analysis (2 pages): Due Monday, May 13: 10 percent

Class participation (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5)
Regular attendance and a willingness to contribute to class discussions are essential in this class. If you are not present, you cannot participate, so excessive absences will lower your final grade. See “Participating in Discussions” in the Course Mentor folder on WebCampus for more information about how discussions will be graded and how to participate effectively.

Quizzes and assignments (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
The quizzes and assignments are designed to encourage you to keep up with the reading and help you to prepare for class discussions and activities each week. In addition, the assignments provide opportunities to practice skills related to studying history. Developing these skills through short papers will help you to do well on the longer research and writing assignments required later in the course.

Guidelines and questions to consider as you work through the readings will be posted on WebCampus before the start of each week. You should familiarize yourself with these before you begin the reading assignments. You should also download or print out the assignments in the weeks when these are due so that you know what to focus on as you are reading.

Although the quizzes and assignments will not be cumulative (i.e., they will only cover material assigned during the week when the quiz is given or the assignment is due), you may sometimes be asked to think back to things we looked at earlier in the semester and draw comparisons or make other connections to the current week’s material. This is another reason why regular attendance and paying close attention to lectures and discussions are essential.
Essay 1: The “American Century” (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
Students will write a 5–7 page essay analyzing the role of the United States in shaping global economic and political developments after 1945 and how these in turn affected domestic policy in the late twentieth century. In particular, students will focus on debates over the meaning of the “American Century” as reflected in the cultural artifacts examined in the first part of the course, including popular magazines, films, novels, music, and television programs. Detailed guidelines for this assignment are posted in the Writing Assignments folder on WebCampus.

Essay 2: Race, class, and gender struggles (SLOs 2, 3, 4, 5)
Students will write a 5–7 page essay on struggles for race, class, or gender equality in the United States after 1945, using information from their own research as well as the lectures, assigned readings, and cultural artifacts examined in the second part of the course. Detailed guidelines for writing the essay are posted in the Writing Assignments folder on WebCampus.

Forum contribution and analysis (SLOs 2, 3, 4, 5)
The forum on American families in popular culture held in the final class period will be based on student contributions and analyses of cultural artifacts. Students will find and write a 2-page analysis of an artifact to share with the class. Detailed guidelines for this assignment are posted in the Writing Assignments folder on WebCampus.

Assessment for HIST 616B (graduate students)

| Participation in discussions and other class activities | 30 percent |
| Teaching segment | 20 percent |
| Historiographical or research essay (25–30 pages) | 50 percent |

Graduate students will meet with the instructor in the first week of class to discuss ideas and options for their essays and how they might contribute to class activities and discussions. We will also have additional meetings throughout the semester to check students’ progress on their projects. Students will also prepare a mini-lecture, discussion, or other teaching activity on a topic of their choice in consultation with the instructor.

Grading Criteria

Grading criteria for written work are set out below. Students should also read and follow the guidelines set out in “Advice for Writing Assignments and Essays” and “Common Problems in Student Essays” in the Course Mentor folder on WebCampus to ensure they meet the highest standard possible in their written work.

F (less than 60%)
F is for work that is not acceptable. It demonstrates that the student has no idea what the course material is about, suggesting a lack of interest or effort and possibly some absences from class. Students who do the reading and come to class regularly rarely receive an F. If you think you have been trying hard and you get an F on an assignment, I encourage you to come to me for help.

D– (60–62%), D (63–66%), D+ (67–69%)
D is given for work that is inadequate. It omits important points, contains more than a few inaccuracies, and is badly organized. It suggests that the student has not been paying much attention to the course or is having problems understanding the material. As in the case of an F grade, if you think you have been
trying hard and receive a D grade for a writing assignment, come and see me for help. I will do everything I can to assist students who want to work to improve their grades.

C– (70–72%), C (73–76%), C+ (77–79%)
C is given for work that is average. The student shows familiarity with the material and is mostly accurate, but the paper lacks detail or effective organization. The C essay might make general points but fail to support them with specific evidence, or it might be merely a collection of facts, with no coherent theme or thesis. You can pass the course with this kind of work, but you should aim higher.

B– (80–82%), B (83–86%), B+ (87–89%)
B denotes work that is above average in quality. It demonstrates that the student knows and understands the material covered in class, and that s/he is capable of synthesizing it into a competent essay. It is accurate, detailed, and well organized, with an introduction, a thesis, and a conclusion.

A– (90–94%), A (95–100%)
A is for work of exceptional quality. This grade is for essays that present a clear thesis supported by persuasive evidence and analysis, logically organized, and free from typing or grammatical errors. The A essay does more than just competently summarize material from the readings or lectures. It shows the student has thought things through on a deeper level and offers his or her own perspective on the topics under consideration.

Deadlines and Policies Regarding Missed Work

Writing assignments and essays are due in class on the dates indicated in the Weekly Schedule below. Late assignments and papers will be penalized (3 points deducted from your grade for the late work) unless you have contacted me before or on the due date to arrange an extension. There are ways to make up for points lost for late work or absences and to earn extra credit points to improve your grade—see “Policies Regarding Missed Work” in the Course Mentor folder on WebCampus for more information.

Academic Dishonesty

I expect all students to do their own work in this course unless I have specifically assigned a group activity or project. Copying someone else’s work, or allowing your own work to be copied, is dishonest and unfair to other students who are striving to complete assignments and essays on their own.

The university’s Academic Standards policy states:

    Academic dishonesty is against university as well as the system community standards. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

    Plagiarism: defined as submitting the language, ideas, thoughts or work of another as one’s own; or assisting in the act of plagiarism by allowing one’s work to be used in this fashion.

    Cheating: defined as (1) obtaining or providing unauthorized information during an examination through verbal, visual or unauthorized use of books, notes, text and other materials; (2) obtaining or providing information concerning all or part of an examination prior to that examination; (3) taking an examination for another student, or arranging for another person to take an exam in one’s place; (4) altering or changing test answers after submittal for grading, grades after grades have been awarded, or other academic records once these are official. . . .
Sanctions for violations of university academic standards may include the following:

(1) filing a final grade of “F”; (2) reducing the student’s final course grade one or two full grade points; (3) awarding a failing mark on the test or paper in question; (4) requiring the student to retake the test or resubmit the paper.

Copying someone else’s entire paper or article is a clear example of academic dishonesty, but note that plagiarism can take other, less obvious forms as well. “Language, ideas, thoughts or work of another” includes any material used in your assignments and essays that was written or produced by others. Using brief phrases or sentences from books, articles, internet sites, documents, or other sources without letting your reader know where they came from is a form of plagiarism. You must properly acknowledge your use of other people’s words by placing them in quotation marks and citing all sources used in your paper. Even if you paraphrase someone else’s ideas and do not quote them directly, you must still indicate where those ideas came from. Citations should also be given for little-known facts and statistics.

Any student found violating academic standards in this course will receive a zero for the assignment in question. A second offense will result in an F in the course. In addition, all cases of academic dishonesty are reported to the Office of Student Conduct and become part of the student’s academic record. Potential employers as well as the directors of graduate and professional programs to which students may apply can request copies of these records, in which case the academic dishonesty charge will be disclosed.

**Academic Success Services**

Your student fees cover use of the Tutoring Center, the University Writing Center, and the Math Center. Students are encouraged to take advantage of these services as needed.

Tutoring Center: ph. 784-6801 or visit www.unr.edu/tutoring
University Writing Center: ph. 784-6030 or visit www.unr.edu/writing_center
Math Center: ph. 784-4433 or visit www.unr.edu/mathcenter

**Students with Disabilities**

The University of Nevada, Reno is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. If you have a documented disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact the instructor or the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

**Audio and Video Recording**

Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.
Submissions to *The Montag*

*The Montag* is a student-edited undergraduate research journal that publishes essays, art, creative writing, and other work by students taking courses in the College of Liberal Arts. Submissions to *The Montag* are accepted any time and may be e-mailed to themontag@unr.edu.

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**
SLOs: 1, 2, 4, 5
January 22 Introduction
January 24 Historical overview
  Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, ix–29
**Part One:** The United States in the World

**Week 2**
SLOs: 1, 2, 4
January 29 The American Century: Building the postwar world
  Luce, “The American Century,” 61–65
  Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 30–85
January 31 The Cold War and anticommunism
  Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 86–179
  **Week 2 quiz**

*Final date to add a class without instructor’s permission or drop a class with full refund is Monday, January 28.*

**Week 3**
SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4
February 5 Atomic anxieties
  Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 180–225
  Film: *Dr. Strangelove*, directed by Stanley Kubrick (1964) (95 min)
February 7 Vietnam: The televised war
  **Week 3 assignment due**

*Final date to add a class (with instructor’s permission) is Monday, February 4.*

**Week 4**
SLOs: 1, 2, 4
February 12 Debating the American Century
  Heller, *Catch-22*, 246–261
  Whitfield, “Still the Best Catch There Is,” 175–200
February 14 Globalizing American popular culture
  Scott, “From NASL to MLS,” 832–853
  **Week 4 quiz**
Part Two: Constructing and Critiquing the Affluent Society

Week 5
SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
February 19 Postwar prosperity and the rise of the white middle class
“Up from the Potato Fields,” 67–72
Brinkley, “The Illusion of Unity,” 61–73

February 21 Historical research resources at UNR
Note: Class will meet in MIKC 114 on this date. Pat Ragains, UNR library liaison for the History Department, will give a presentation and advice for finding historical sources related to topics examined in the course.

Week 6
SLOs: 2, 3, 4, 5
February 26 The company way: Corporate values and conformity
Whyte, “Groupthink,” 114–117, 142, 146
Mead, How to Succeed in Business, 83–110

February 28 Mad men, advertising, and consumerism
Shaw, Shopping, 23–45
Week 6 assignment due

Week 7
SLOs: 1, 2, 4, 5
March 5 American noir: The Twilight Zone and the dark side of postwar society
March 7 Decade of protest: The Sixties
Wright, Comic Book Nation, 226–253
Week 7 quiz

Week 8
SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
March 12 Decade of crisis: The Seventies
Cowie, Stayin’ Alive, 167–210
March 14 The two Americas of Reagan and Roseanne
Ehrenreich, “The Wretched of the Hearth,” 28–31
Essay 1 due

Spring break (March 16–24)—No classes

Note: The final date to drop a class and receive a W grade is Friday, March 22. If you decide to withdraw from HIST 416B/616B, you must officially drop the class to avoid receiving an F grade at the end of the semester. Instructors cannot assign W grades—this can only be done by Admissions and Records. If you did not complete the course and your name still appears on the class list at the end of the semester, I will be forced to give you an F.

Week 9
SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4
March 26 Corporations and popular culture
Wright, Comic Book Nation, 254–293
March 28  Participatory culture in the age of the internet  
Cohen, “Thanks for Not Sharing,” 1–7  
Week 9 assignment due  

Part Three:  Popular Culture and the (Really Slow) Death of White Supremacy  

Week 10  
SLOs: 1, 2, 4, 5  
April 2  Americans all: Promoting racial unity during World War II  
Tuck, “You Can Sing and Punch,” 103–125  
April 4  Struggles for racial equality after the war  
Week 10 quiz  

Week 11  
SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5  
April 9  The civil rights movement in popular culture  
Raiford and Romano, “Introduction,” xi–xxiv  
Morgan, “The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten,” 137–166  
April 11  Sesame Street vs. Archie Bunker: The post–1960s diversity debate  
Takaki, Debating Diversity, 244–247  
Week 11 assignment  

Week 12  
SLOs: 1, 2, 4, 5  
April 16  Urban decay and hip hop’s response  
Rose, “Hidden Politics,” 396–405  
April 18  Globalization, immigration, and multiculturalism  
Film: Crash, directed by Paul Haggis (2005) (112 min)  
Week 12 quiz  

Part Four:  Men, Women, and Families  

Week 13  
SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5  
April 23  Father knows best: Gender roles in the 1950s and 1960s  
Coontz, A Strange Stirring, xv–57  
April 25  Sex and the single girl (and boy): Resisting the pressure to marry  
Coontz, A Strange Stirring, 59–80  
Week 13 assignment  

Week 14  
SLOs: 2, 4, 5  
April 30  The feminist revolution  
Coontz, A Strange Stirring, 81–138  
May 2
Containing feminism: From *Mary Tyler Moore* to *Fatal Attraction*
Schlafly, “What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?,” 257–264

**Week 15**

SLOs: 2, 3, 4, 5

May 7
Gay rights and challenges to gender conformity
Canaday, “Building a Straight State,” 935–957

*Essay 2 due (HIST 416B)*

May 13
Forum: American families in postwar popular culture

*Note:* This class takes place in the final exam period, **Monday, May 13, 5:00–7:00 pm**

Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 139–186

*Forum contribution and analysis due (HIST 416B)*

*Historiographical/research essay due (HIST 616B)*