CH 203: AMERICAN EXPERIENCES AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Semester
Class meeting days and times
Classroom

Instructor:
Office location:
Office hours:
CH Mailbox:
Phone:
E-mail:

The office hours listed above are the times when you can be sure of finding me in my office. If you have a scheduling conflict that prevents you from visiting during office hours, contact me to arrange an alternative time to meet. The best way to contact me is by e-mail or by speaking to me after class.

Course Description and Core Objectives

This course examines the development of the United States from precolonial times to the present, paying particular attention to beliefs and cultural values that have shaped the society over time. Key themes include the interaction among various ethnic groups on the continent; the emergence of national ideals such as liberty, equality, and democracy; constitutional principles and conflicting interpretations of their meaning; and the experiences of groups who were excluded from full participation in American society by racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. Students will read, analyze, contextualize, discuss, and write about an array of primary source documents and cultural artifacts pertaining to these topics. Through the work done in this course, students will develop a solid understanding of the nation’s evolution over time and the forces that shaped the modern United States. They will also develop critical thinking and communication skills that can be applied in other academic and professional contexts.

This Core Humanities course satisfies Core Objectives 5 and 8 of the Silver Core Curriculum:

**CO5. History and Culture:** Students will be able to describe the processes by which past and present societies have been created and perpetuated through their history, ideas, and cultural products. Students will engage both historical and contemporary cultural texts through critical reading, analysis, and interpretation in the context of culture, society, and individual identity.

**CO8. Constitution:** Students will demonstrate familiarity with the origins, history, and essential elements of the Constitutions of the United States and Nevada, as well as the evolution of American institutions and ideals.

In addition, CH 203 helps students to develop the skills described in Core Objectives 1 and 3. These objectives are reinforced throughout the curriculum in other courses students take to fulfill core and major requirements:

**CO1. Effective Composition and Communication:** Students will be able to effectively compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes.

**CO3. Critical Analysis and Use of Information:** Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information.
**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Correlation to Core Objectives (COs)**

Students successfully completing CH 203 will be able to:

1. Express ideas clearly and persuasively, using relevant evidence to support their arguments. (CO1)
2. Analyze primary source texts with attention to content, historical and cultural context, and rhetorical techniques. (CO3, CO5)
3. Trace the sources and development of American intellectual traditions and cultural institutions, with attention to the diversity of experiences and voices that shaped the nation. (CO5, CO8)
4. Identify how significant artistic and cultural movements as well as scientific and technological developments influenced Americans’ changing sense of themselves and their society. (CO5, CO8)
5. Connect the beliefs, values, and actions of past generations of Americans to contemporary conditions in the United States. (CO5, CO8)
6. Identify the historical origins, philosophical foundations, core principles, and evolution of the United States and Nevada Constitutions. (CO5, CO8)

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., “SLOs 1, 3” means the activity requires you to express ideas clearly and persuasively (SLO 1) and trace the sources and development of American intellectual and cultural institutions (SLO 3)).

**Textbooks**

The following texts are required reading in this class:


Students must also purchase a Turning Technologies ResponseCard NXT personal response “clicker,” available from the ASUN bookstore, for use in short quizzes that will be administered in the lecture periods.

**CH 203 Constitutional Documents Collection**

The Constitutional Documents Collection is a collection of primary source documents relating to the origins, history, and evolution of the US and Nevada Constitutions that is available through the Knowledge Center website. Some of the required readings listed in the Lecture Topics and Reading Schedule below will need to be viewed and/or downloaded from this site.

**Films**

In addition to the readings, students are required to view the following two films before the dates when we will discuss them in class (see the Lecture Topics and Reading Schedule below):

- *Modern Times*, directed by Charlie Chaplin (1936) (87 min)  
  View before November 8
- *Salt of the Earth*, directed by Herbert Biberman (1953) (94 min)  
  View before November 17

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.

**Course WebCampus Site**

Some additional required readings are posted on the course WebCampus site in the Readings folder. There are also many other resources on the site that provide essential information for students, including class plans, reading guidelines, grading criteria, and advice for doing well in the course. To access the WebCampus site, go to www.unr.edu/nevada-today and click on the Quicklinks icon in the top left corner, then on “WebCampus” in the dropdown menu. Log in with your UNR NetID and password, and you should see a list of WebCampus sites for the classes that you are enrolled in. Information about obtaining and activating your NetID is at: [https://security.unr.edu/Account/Activate](https://security.unr.edu/Account/Activate).

**Assessment**

Assessment will be based on how well students complete the following tasks:

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
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<td>In-class clicker quizzes OR optional final exam</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
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**Essays**

- Essay 1 (2–3 pages, due Thursday, September 15) 5 percent
- Essay 2 (3–4 pages, due Thursday, October 6) 10 percent
- Essay 3 (5–6 pages, due Thursday, November 3) 15 percent
- Essay 4 (6–7 pages, due Thursday, December 8) 20 percent

**Class participation**

Each class period will combine lectures and discussions or group activities to help students process the information learned from the readings and lectures. Discussions provide an opportunity to ask questions about anything you did not understand, practice your analytical and oral expression skills, and engage in discussion and debate about the various topics we examine during the semester. You will find instructions for how to prepare for discussion and make useful contributions in the Class Plans folder on the course WebCampus site.

**Clicker quizzes or optional final exam**

In every class period there will be a short quiz or other activity designed to assess your understanding of the readings and lectures. Students will submit answers using their clickers. It is therefore very important to complete the assigned readings by the dates they are listed in the schedule and to attend class. Each clicker question will be worth one percentage point of your grade. There will be 35 clicker questions during the semester, but the maximum number of clicker points any student can receive is 30. The extra questions allow students who missed class or forgot their clickers once or twice to make up the lost points. No additional make-up quizzes will be given. If you do the reading and come to class, you should have no problem achieving the maximum number of clicker points. There is also the option of replacing your clicker quiz grade with the final exam if you missed too much class during the semester to do well on the quizzes. (I will use whichever grade is higher.) Read *Using Clickers in CH 203* in the Course Mentor folder on WebCampus for information about what to expect in the clicker quizzes and policies regarding clicker use in the class.

**Essays**

The four essays assigned in the course provide opportunities for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the material and to practice your analytical and writing skills. The process of reviewing, synthesizing, and organizing information from the lectures and readings into a coherent essay helps students to solidify their understanding of the ideas, people, and events examined in the course. The essay questions get more complex and are worth more as a proportion of your grade as the semester progresses. If you don’t do well on your early papers, be sure to discuss your work with me so that you can work on improving your writing skills before the longer papers are due. The essay questions and grading criteria are posted in the Essays folder on WebCampus. Be sure to review the grading criteria before beginning each essay so that you understand how your work will be evaluated.
Essays are due by 5 pm on the dates listed above. Submit essays through the course WebCampus site. Late essays will be accepted for up to one week after the deadline but they will be penalized (3 percentage points deducted from your essay grade) unless you have contacted me before the deadline to request an extension.

If you have any questions or concerns about your essay grades, feel free to talk to me at any time about what you can do to improve the quality of your work. If you wish to dispute a grade, you must write a one-page explanation for why you think you deserve a higher grade, with reference to the grading criteria posted on the WebCampus site, citing specific things you did well in your essay and how it meets the criteria for a higher grade. I will review your essay and appeal and provide a written decision within two weeks.

**Policies regarding missed work**

There is some flexibility built into this course to allow for occasional emergencies that sometimes prevent students from attending class or completing work on time. The extra clicker questions provide an opportunity to make up for points lost due to missed classes, and you are allowed one essay extension during the semester. Students may also complete make-up assignments to recover points lost for absences from class (maximum of two make-up assignments during the semester). If you experience sustained personal difficulties that prevent you from completing significant amounts of course work, please discuss these with me to see whether any accommodations can be made or if it would be better for you to drop the class. Providing written evidence that events beyond your control have been interfering with your studies is helpful in such cases. See **Policies Regarding Missed Work** in the Course Mentor folder on WebCampus for more information about what to do about missed work as well as incentives for students who do not miss any classes.

**Grading scale**

Grades will be awarded based on the following scale. Detailed rubrics and grading criteria for each essay are provided on the course WebCampus site (Essays folder).

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**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 Dr. de Jong or the Disability Resource Center (Pennington Student Achievement Center, Suite 230)) 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. Students may not take photographs of Powerpoint slides during lectures.
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. If you receive a grade of A for an assignment in this class, we encourage you to consider submitting it for publication in *The Montag*. The maximum page limit for submissions is 20 pages, and there is no minimum. To submit a piece of work, e-mail it along with your name and contact information to themontag@unr.edu.

**Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism and cheating are serious forms of academic misconduct and will not be tolerated in this class. The following definitions and courses of action are taken from the Academic Standards section of the university catalog:

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.

“The work of another” in the definition of plagiarism includes any material used in your assignments and essays that was created by others (i.e., books, articles, internet sites, documents, lecture notes or handouts from other courses, etc.). These must be properly acknowledged by providing references either in the text or in a footnote, along with a bibliography giving the complete publication information for all sources used in your essay. Even if you paraphrase someone else’s ideas and do not quote them directly, you still must acknowledge your source. Citations should also be given for little-known facts and statistics. More guidelines for avoiding plagiarism are available on the Core Humanities website at http://www.unr.edu/cla/ch/5-avoiding_plagarism.html.

If you plagiarize or cheat in this class, you will receive an F grade for the course. All incidents of academic dishonesty are reported to the Office of Student Conduct and become part of the student’s academic record.

**Lecture Topics and Reading Schedule**

**Week 1 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)**

(T) August 30  
Introduction

(R) September 1  
European and American encounters

From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:

- Introduction, pp. 1–18
- Bartolomé de las Casas, “The Very Brief Relation” (1552), pp. 20–23
- Canassatego, “Speech at the Treaty of Lancaster” (1744), pp. 28–30

**Week 2 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 5)**

(T) September 6  
The city upon a hill: Puritan settlement of New England
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
- Massachusetts General Court, “Provoking Evils” (1675), pp. 234–239

(R) September 8   Us vs. them: War and ideology in the age of the Puritans (and beyond)
From Andrews, *Classic American Autobiographies*:
- Mary Rowlandson, *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), pp. 1–53 (or you can just hit the highlights: pp. 1–17, 41–53)
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:

*Final date to drop a class with full refund is Thursday, September 8.*

**Week 3 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)**
(T) September 13   The Enlightenment in Europe and America
From Core Humanities Constitutional Collection:
- Thomas Paine, “Common Sense” (1776)

(R) September 15   How revolutionary was the American Revolution?
From Constitutional Documents Collection:
- Abigail Adams and John Adams, “Letters” (1776)
- Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence” (1776)
- Lemuel Haynes, “Liberty Further Extended” (1776)
- James Madison, *The Federalist* No. 10 (1787–1788)
- Constitution of the United States (1787)
- United States Bill of Rights (1789)

**Essay 1 due**

**Week 4 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)**
(T) September 20   Creating a national identity
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
From Andrews, *Classic American Autobiographies*:

(R) September 22   Extending and limiting democracy in the nineteenth century
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
- Maria Stewart, “Why Sit Ye Here and Die?” (1832), pp. 116–119
- Alexis De Tocqueville, “Democracy in America” (1835), pp. 120–126

**Week 5 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)**
(T) September 27   Work and leisure in an industrializing nation
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
- Address of the Workingmen’s Party of Charlestown (1840), pp. 127–130
From Melville, *Bartleby and Benito Cereno*:
- Herman Melville, “Bartleby” (1853), pp. 3–34

(R) September 29   Writing workshop
Bring a draft of Essay 2 for peer critique

**Week 6 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)**
(T) October 4   Women’s place
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
Catharine Beecher, “A Treatise on Domestic Economy” (1841), pp. 240–244
Women’s Rights Convention, “Declaration of Sentiments” (1848), pp. 245–248
Sojourner Truth, “Ar’n’t I a Woman?” (1851), pp. 256–259

(R) October 6 Men’s place
From Casper and Davies, Five Hundred Years:
    Floyd Dell, “Feminism for Men” (1914), pp. 263–265
    Robert Duncan, “The Homosexual in Society” (1944), 271–274

Essay 2 due

Week 7 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)
(T) October 11 Slavery and its opponents
From Casper and Davies, Five Hundred Years:
From Andrews, Classic American Autobiographies:
    Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845), pp. 221–323

(R) October 13 Civil War and the redefinition of freedom
From Constitutional Documents Collection:
    James W. Nye, “Address to the Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Nevada” (1861)
    Abraham Lincoln, “Emancipation Proclamation” (1863), “Gettysburg Address” (1863), and “Second Inaugural Address” (1865)
    Excerpts from the Nevada Constitution (1864)

Week 8 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
(T) October 18 Expanding America
From Casper and Davies, Five Hundred Years:
    John O’Sullivan, “Annexation” (1845), pp. 31–34
    William Smythe, “Conquest of the Arid West” (1900), pp. 367–371

(R) October 20 The other side of the frontier
From Casper and Davies, Five Hundred Years:
    Francisco Bilbao, “La América en Peligro” (1856), 35–38

Week 9 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
(T) October 25 New immigrants and the new economy in the Gilded Age
From Casper and Davies, Five Hundred Years:
    Russell Conwell, “Acres of Diamonds” (1862), pp. 131–133
    Anzia Yezierska, “America and I” (1923), pp. 186–193

(R) October 27 Resisting corporate dominance in the Progressive Era
From Casper and Davies, Five Hundred Years:
    Eugene Debs, “Socialism” (1904), 167–173

Week 10 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
(T) November 1 “New Negroes” and “New Women”
From Casper and Davies, Five Hundred Years:
    Booker T. Washington, “Address at Opening of the Atlanta Exposition” (1895), pp. 149–151
    Countee Cullen, “Incident” (1925), p. 196
(R) November 3 The Roaring Twenties and fundamentalist responses to modernity
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
   Sinclair Lewis, “Babbit” (1922), pp. 182–185

**Essay 3 due**

**Note:** The final date to drop a class and receive a W grade is Wednesday, November 2. If you decide to withdraw from CH 203, you must officially drop the class to avoid receiving an F grade at the end of the semester. Instructors cannot assign W grades—only UNR’s Admissions and Records staff can do that. 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 11 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)**

(T) November 8 The Great Depression and the death of dreams
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
   Tillie Olsen, “I Want You Women Up North to Know” (1934), pp. 197–200
Film: *Modern Times* (1936)

(R) November 10 The New Deal and its opponents in the 1930s
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
   John Steinbeck, “Grapes of Wrath” (1939), pp. 379–384
   Franklin Roosevelt, “State of the Union Message” (1944), pp. 206–208

**Week 12 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)**

(T) November 15 The “Good War”: America and World War II
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
   Henry R. Luce, “The American Century” (1941), pp. 64–68
   Ernie Pyle, “Brave Men” (1944), pp. 385–388
Film: *Salt of the Earth* (1953)

(R) November 17 Containing communism at home and abroad
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
   Gertrude Crampton, “Tootle” (1945), pp. 275–278
Film: *Salt of the Earth* (1953)

**Week 13 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)**

(T) November 22 Suburbia and its discontents
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:

(R) November 24 Thanksgiving—No class

**Week 14 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)**

(T) November 29 Black American lives and struggles in the twentieth century
Lorraine Hansberry, *Raisin in the Sun* (1959) (all)

(R) December 1 The civil rights movement and historical memory
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:
   Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963), pp. 279–283
   Stokely Carmichael, “What We Want” (1966), pp. 296–301
**Week 15 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)**

(T) December 6  
Student activism and the New Left in the 1960s  
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:  
- Nguyễn Ai Quâc (Ho Chi Minh), “Demands of the Annamite People” (1919), pp. 61–63  
- Johnnie Tillmon, “Welfare is a Women’s Issue” (1972), pp. 306–309  
- Students for a Democratic Society, “Port Huron Statement” (1962), pp. 74–78  

(R) December 8  
Culture wars and conservative reactions to “The Sixties”  
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:  
- Young Americans for Freedom, “Sharon Statement” (1960), p. 69–70  
- *Life*, “Shulmans Have a 50-50 Marriage Agreement” (1972), pp. 310–311  
- Phyllis Schlafly, “What’s Wrong with Equal Rights for Women?” (1972), pp. 312–317  
From Constitutional Documents Collection:  

**Essay 4 due**

**Week 16 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)**

(T) December 13  
Post–Cold War conflicts and the global economy at the turn of the century  
From Casper and Davies, *Five Hundred Years*:  
- Benjamin Flanders, “Who Are the Insurgents?” (2008), pp. 95–99  
- Fareed Zakaria, “Deny the Islamic State the Overreaction that It Wants” (2015), 100–103

(R) December 15  
Optional final exam (8:00–10:00 am)