

## **History 120.3-- History of the United States Thru Reconstruction**

Fall 2007-- Tuesday/Thursday, 12:35-1:50, HHS 310

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 10:30-12:00 & By Appointment

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### **Course Goals:**

I have two main goals in terms of our subject matter. The first is to present American History as a series of competing narratives that shape the teller's understanding of the present as much as the past. One of our main books will present a narrative through a traditional, more conservative lens. Another will present its story through a revisionist, more leftist lens developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Adding to the stories of these books, I will present in lectures my narrative that attempts to move beyond older "left vs. right" debates and tries instead to bring forward new themes dealing with the world we find ourselves in now-- the first decade of the 21st century. These particular themes are the second main goal with the subject matter: to show how American history can be presented within a global context, as part of a World History, in which far different debates appear than in the politically-fueled battles of the Baby Boom generation. For example, all of the sudden, Latin America and Canada become crucial to the "American" story! In telling this story of American History embedded within a much larger narrative, I will try to work neutrally while showing that such an attempt, even if always necessary, can never be totally successful. In the end, I hope to show that understanding the different stories told by different peoples and groups while at the same time trying to stick to fair standards of discussion can make knowing American History one of the most useful ways to take part in the contemporary conversation of ideas. Indeed, it can be useful right here, right now, to you, as a way of thinking, a way of conversing.

In addition to the goals with the course material, I teach all my classes with two even bigger ideals in mind. First, a college education should strive to create self-learners who read, write, talk, and listen well. The life of the mind should open wide-- far beyond specific subject matter-- with any class, and curiosity is far more important than memorized facts. Second, I especially hold to a liberal arts vision of a college education where one becomes free with learning because one can question and dissent. All thoughts, all systems, are able to be challenged, and improved through that challenge, when graceful and reasonable dissent is encouraged. Thus, if this class successful, you can challenge it too-- hopefully gently in the way that encourages mutual response-- to improve it, and me, and you. The last book I have assigned, Frederick Douglass' autobiography, relates to the course material, but more importantly shows this power of education, the strength we can all draw when we learn and when we seek to improve things through graceful dissent.

### **Open Source Teaching:**

I'm going to be blogging this class, as well as one other I am teaching, over at [www.mojoprofessor.com](http://www.mojoprofessor.com). I will post my lecture notes, thoughts on the class and the material, announcements, and generally anything else that will make this class more "transparent." I believe strongly that openness is a guarantor of honesty and good faith and can help create new conversations and explorations. Everyone is welcome to comment, even anonymously, even strongly disagreeing. I will only delete anything that is abusive, spammish, or somehow interferes with the creation of a useful community.

## **Grading:**

I believe grades are necessary because my experience with systems without them shows that nobody will actually do any work without a system of evaluation! However, grades seem to me only the minimal tool necessary to make sure people actually do indeed put in the work which they are paying (alot) to do. This class then will require three 10-12 page papers, due after each of the three units of study. The point of the papers will be to synthesize the information from the lectures and the books and to make it your own. The questions guiding each paper will thus be quite simple:

- 1) What is the story of Colonial America?
- 2) What is the story of Revolutionary America?
- 3) What is the story of the Market Revolution?

If anyone has new, interesting, or challenging theses in response to these questions that expand far beyond the class material, then come see me and we can even work these papers towards presenting new arguments rather than synthesizing the information from class.

With all papers, I will grade according to both content and style, but I will be interested above all in people showing they have grappled with the material. You don't want to have paid for a class and then not read the books or listened to the lectures, do you? :)

## **Required Books:**

Paul Johnson, [A History of the American People](#)  
Howard Zinn, [A People's History of the United States, 1492-present](#)  
Frederick Douglass, [A Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass](#)

## **Calendar:**

N.B. This calendar is subject to radical revisions with regards to the subject matter on specific days because I am massively restructuring the course and still experimenting with what to drop and what to add to make the whole course work towards the course goals described above.

### **Unit I: A New World of Peoples**

Readings: Zinn, 1-58; Johnson, 1-117

### **August:**

Tu 28th-- Who am I? Why are you here? Is this really necessary?

Th 30th-- The Axis of World History, Part 1: From separate stories to one story of continual contact

### **September**

Tu 4th-- The Axis of World History, Part 2: The World in 1450 and 1550

Th 6th-- Spanish America and a World Economy

Tu 11th-- Spaniards & Indians: New Elites and Mixed Peoples

Th 13th-- Englishmen & Indians: Colonial Apartheid

Tu 18th-- Frenchmen & Indians: The Lost Possibilities

Th 20th-- Trans-Atlantic Slavery: The Tragedy of the World Economy

Mon 24th-- Last Day to Drop Class

Tu 25th-- European Hegemony: From Charter Societies to Mature Societies

Th 27th-- Case Studies

## **October**

Tu 2nd-- Continental War of Indians & Europeans

### **Unit II-- A New World of Ideas**

Readings: Zinn, 59-102; Johnson, 121-279

Th 4th-- The Radical New Idea: Republicanism

Tu 9th-- **1st Paper Due**/The American Revolution and New Nation

Th 11th-- Republicanism on Indians and Africans & Western Hegemony in the Long 19th Century

Tu 16th-- Even More Radical: Tupac's Revolt and the Haitian Revolution

Th 18th-- Mexico's Revolution: Defeat of the Radicals

Tu 23rd-- South America & Central America: Stalemate & Caudillos

Th 25th-- The Non-Revolutions of the Americas

Tu 30th-- Slavery Under Attack: No Coercive Labor in a World Economy?

## **November**

Th 1st-- Legacies of Republicanism: The American Constitution and Political Stability

### **Unit III: A New World with New Ways of Living**

Readings: Zinn, 102-251; Johnson, 283-507; Douglass, ALL

Tu 6th-- The Market Revolution

Th 8th-- **2nd Paper Due**/The Radical Break

Tu 13th-- The Radical Break, Part 2

Th 15th-- Politics and Culture of the Market Revolution in the U.S.

Fri 16th-- Last Day for Course Withdrawal

Tu 20th-- Thanksgiving, no class

Th 22nd-- Thanksgiving, no class

Tu 27th-- Continuing

Th 29th-- Modernization & Latin America

## **December**

Tu 4th-- Continuing

Th 6th-- The Market Revolution & Civil War

Tu 11th-- Reconstruction: The Limits of the Market Revolution

Th 13th-- Last Class!

Tu 18th-- **Final Paper Due** by 1:15pm