

HIST 1361:

United States History Since Reconstruction



Spring 2026
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 10:30-11:20am in HAL 119

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Office Hours: Mondays 12:30-2pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers a sweeping survey of United States history following Reconstruction, a period of time critical to the emergence of the nation as a domestic and international power. Together, we will explore the cultural, political, economic, and social pressures that spurred historical change from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 through the presidency of Barack Obama. Recognizing that events that unfolded beyond American borders at times had a profound effect on life in the United States—and, indeed, that American culture, business, and foreign policy influenced world affairs—we will place our story in a global context while retaining a tight focus on the United States. In addition to introducing students to modern United States history, this course will help students develop introductory-level skills in the discipline of history, including inquiry-driven historical analysis, interpretation of primary sources, information literacy in historical research, and persuasive written and oral expression.

ASSIGNED READINGS

We have one required book for this course, *American Horizons U.S. History in a Global Context Since 1865* by Michael Schaller, *et. al.* which is available at the bookstore as well as from online retailers. Any edition of this text is acceptable for the course. All other course readings and the assigned films will be available on Canvas.

COURSE FORMAT

This course consists of a mix of lectures and in-class activities, which will generally take place on Mondays and Wednesdays, as well as seminar-style discussions, which will generally take place on Fridays. I expect you to have completed the assigned reading prior to each class so that you can come to each of our meetings ready to explore the day's topic in depth.

Throughout the course, we will examine a variety of primary documents and multimedia resources, including historical newspaper articles, letters, speeches, films, songs, artifacts, and firsthand accounts,

to immerse ourselves in the debates and developments that shaped the modern nation. Our discussion sections will devote significant time to exploring and evaluating these sources. **You must bring the assigned readings to each discussion meeting.**

The textbook and other secondary readings will supplement, rather than duplicate, the in-class lectures. These readings will supply essential information to help you interpret and understand the primary documents and media resources, and to help you contextualize the material we cover during the lectures. In order for the class to be successful, you should complete all of the assigned readings, attend lecture, and participate actively in our discussions of the material.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is designed to contribute to the Historical Perspective (HP) capacity and the Humanities (HU) approach within the Pathways curriculum. As such, by the end of this course students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- analyze major historical events, contexts, or processes
- use these events, contexts, and processes to better understand the unique characters of cultures, institutions, and ideas.
- discuss the significance of ideas, texts, performances, or cultural artifacts within an appropriate intellectual or historical framework.
- apply the interpretive or analytical methods that characterize at least one of the humanistic disciplines.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation: This course requires active, informed participation in discussion, lecture, and all in-class activities as well as careful engagement with the readings.

Primary Source Close Reads: At the start of each discussion day, I will pass out a close reading assignment that will ask you questions about one or more of the assigned primary sources. You will be able to use a printed copy of the primary source to answer the questions, but you will only have about 5-10 minutes to do so, so be sure to have read and annotated your primary sources carefully ahead of time.

Primary Source Podcast: You will select a primary source or artifact from the Gilded Age or Progressive Era and create a podcast segment (or creative project if you'd prefer) that explains, analyzes, and/or incorporates the source/artifact in some way. I will provide guidelines for this project in class and on Canvas, and will also provide resources for finding a good source to use. This project will be due by class time on **February 23**.

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will consist of short-answer identification questions based on key terms from my lectures (historical figures, places, events, and concepts) and a broad essay question that focuses on the major themes of the class and the course readings. The midterm will be given in class on **March 2**.

Life in the Vietnam Era Mini-Research Paper: I will share a selection of document packets that reflect on aspects of American life during the 1960s and 1970s. You will select the packet that you find most interesting, read through the documents carefully, and then conduct your own research into the ProQuest Historical Newspapers archive to find at least two more related primary sources. You will then write a 3-

5 page analysis of the historical moment that your packet addresses based on the primary sources. This assignment will build on the primary source analyses we will do in class and will prepare you for the final exam, which will feature a primary source analysis as one of its core components. The essays will be due by 11:59pm on **April 8**.

Final Exam: The final exam will give you a chance to demonstrate what you have learned from the assigned readings and films, discussions, and the course lectures. It will also be a chance for you to think synthetically about how the different themes of the course fit together. It will consist of short-answer identification questions based on key terms, a short primary source analysis, a short essay, and a comprehensive essay. You will have a choice of essay questions and identifications. **The final exam will be held on Tuesday, May 12 from 8:30am-11:30am in HAL 119.**

Policies for Written Work

Formatting. All written work must:

- be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font
- have one-inch margins on each side
- include page numbers
- be submitted in .doc (preferred) or .pdf format on Canvas

If an assignment does not meet these formatting guidelines, it will not be read or graded.

Citations. All sources MUST be cited according to [Chicago Notes-Bibliography](#) style guidelines. Citation guidelines are available on Canvas. You can also consult the 17th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, available at Coates Library and through the library catalog.

Late Work

I am very flexible about extensions for the major assignments (the podcast and the mini-research paper). If you think you might need an extension on a major assignment due to your workload, let me know as soon possible; provided you have asked me in advance (at least 24 hours before the due date, unless there are extenuating circumstances), I will be happy to work with you. Major assignments turned in after the deadline and without an extension will be considered late. Late assignments will be penalized 1 grade per day (e.g. A- to B+, B- to C+).

GRADING

The final course grade will be determined as follows:

Podcast Project:	15%	Primary Source Analyses:	5%
Mini-Research Paper:	30%	Midterm Exam:	15%
Participation:	15%	Final Exam:	20%

ACADEMIC HONOR CODE

All students are covered by a policy that prohibits dishonesty in academic work. Under the Honor Code, a faculty member will (or a student may) report an alleged violation to the Academic Honor Council. It is the task of the Council to investigate, adjudicate, and assign a punishment within certain guidelines if a violation has been verified. **Students are required to pledge all written work that is submitted for**

a grade: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this work” and their signature. The pledge may be abbreviated “pledged” with a signature. http://www.trinity.edu/departments/academic_affairs/honor_code/index.htm.

If you have any doubt about whether an action violates the Honor Code, please email me before submitting your assignments. If you are struggling, overwhelmed, or confused please contact me! I am here to help you in the course and guide you through the material. I understand that personal circumstances or unforeseen events can sometimes interfere with your academic work; I will keep any concerns confidential and work with you to ensure your best possible performance in the course.

GENERATIVE AI

All assignments submitted for this course should reflect your own thinking and work. Any use of generative AI, such as but not limited to Chat GPT, will be considered “unauthorized assistance” and a violation of academic integrity and of the Trinity University Honor Code.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Students With Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and will need accommodations in this class, please submit your accommodation letter to me early in the semester so we can discuss how I can best meet your needs. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have not already registered with [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact the office at x8528 or SAS@trinity.edu. You must be registered with SAS before I can provide accommodation.

Attendance and Excused Absences

You are expected to attend all classes and attendance counts toward your participation grade. If you are ill or participating in a university-sponsored event, please email me to let me know so I can excuse your absence. After two unexcused absences, missing additional unexcused days of class will result in a reduced participation grade. If you experience a family emergency or serious injury or illness, please contact the Dean of Students office, which will coordinate accommodations for all of your courses.

Electronic Recordings of Classroom Instruction

Students are expressly prohibited from capturing or copying classroom recordings by any means; violations will be subject to disciplinary action.

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct Reporting

As a University employee who is committed to creating an environment where every member of our community can thrive, I want to let you know that **I am a Mandatory Reporter**. I am required to report any instances of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator when: 1) I witness or receive information in the course and scope of my employment, 2) this information is about the occurrence of an incident that I reasonably believe is Sexual Harassment or Sexual Misconduct, and 3) the incident is committed by or against someone who was a Trinity university student, employee, or contractor at the time of the incident. This reporting responsibility applies regardless of where the incident occurred (on- or off-campus) and regardless of whether the individual(s) are still affiliated with Trinity.

If you share information with me about any incidents that implicate the [Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#), I am required to report this to the Title IX Coordinator to make sure

you have information about support resources and complaint resolution options. My report does not initiate the complaint process, and you are in control over how you choose to engage with our Title IX Coordinator. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, I encourage you to share this information directly with the Title IX Coordinator or one of the individuals who has been designated as a confidential resource on campus. [The reporting form is available here](#) and information about supportive resources is available [here](#).

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY MEETINGS

Week 1: Introduction		
1/14	W	Course Introduction/1877 as a Turning Point
1/16	F	Transcontinental Expansion Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 16
Week 2: Age of Industrialization		
1/19	M	*** NO CLASS: MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY ***
1/21	W	Becoming an Industrial Giant Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 17
1/23	F	Discussion Primary Sources: Andrew Carnegie, “The Gospel of Wealth,” (1889); “‘The Incident’ of the 6 th of July,” <i>Illustrated American</i> (1892); African-American Laundry Women Go On Strike (1881)
Week 3: The Gilded Age		
1/26	M	Industrial and Agricultural Labor Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 18
1/28	W	Urbanization, Immigration, and the Birth of Progressive Reform Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 18
1/30	F	Discussion Primary Sources: Jacob Riis, “How the Other Half Lives,” (1890) photograph gallery Secondary Source: Davidson and Lytle, <i>After the Fact</i> , Ch. 9, “The Mirror with a Memory”
Week 4: American Empire		
2/2	M	Building an American Empire Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 19
2/4	W	Roosevelt, Taft, and American Diplomacy Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 19

2/6	F	Discussion Primary sources: Andrew Carnegie, "Distant Possessions," (1898); McKinley Preaches His Imperial Gospel (1899); Excerpts of letters from African American Soldiers in the Philippines (1899-1900); Albert J. Beveridge, "March of the Flag," (1903)
Week 5: An Age of Progressive Reform		
2/9	M	Reforming Cities and States Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 20
2/11	W	Building a National Reform Movement Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 20
2/13	F	Discussion Primary Sources: Excerpt from Upton Sinclair, <i>The Jungle</i> , Chapter 14 (1906) Secondary Source: Davidson and Lytle, <i>After the Fact</i> , Ch. 10, "USDA Government Inspected"
Week 6: America and the Great War		
2/16	M	The U.S. Path to War, 1914-1917 Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 21
2/18	W	America at War Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 21
2/20	F	Discussion Primary Sources: Debate Team Packets (just read the documents assigned to your team)
Week 7: Prosperity and Despair		
2/23	M	The Roaring and Divided Twenties Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 22 *** PODCAST PROJECT DUE – Upload to Canvas by class time! ***
2/25	W	The Great Depression and the New Deal Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 23 Secondary source: Donald Worster, "The Black Blizzards Roll In," from <i>Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s</i>
2/27	F	Discussion and Midterm Exam Review Primary Sources: Indian Citizenship Act (1924), Marcus Garvey "Look For Me In A Whirlwind Or A Storm," speech/audio recording (1924); Evans, The Klan's Fight for Americanism (1926), Great Depression Photo Essay (just look through the images)
Week 8: The World at War		
3/2	M	***MIDTERM EXAM – IN CLASS***
3/4	W	Entering World War II Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 24 Primary Sources: Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat 19: On the War with Japan (December 9, 1941)"

3/6	F	<p>World War II</p> <p>Reading: <i>American Horizons</i>, Ch. 24</p> <p>Primary Sources: Aleut Women's Petition (1942), Memorandum Regarding Enlistment of Navaho Indians (1942)</p> <p>Secondary Source: Davidson and Lytle, <i>After the Fact</i>, Ch. 13, "The Decision to Drop the Bomb"</p>
*** SPRING BREAK 3/7 – 3/15***		
NO CLASS		
Week 9: The Postwar Order		
3/16	M	<p>The Cold War Begins</p> <p>Reading: <i>American Horizons</i>, Ch. 25</p> <p>Film: <i>The Atomic Café</i></p>
3/18	W	<p>The Cold War at Home</p> <p>Reading: <i>American Horizons</i>, Ch. 26</p>
3/20	F	<p>Discussion</p> <p>Primary Sources: Joseph McCarthy, Speech at Wheeling, West Virginia (1950); Margaret Chase Smith, "Declaration of Conscience," (1950)</p>
Week 10: The Civil Rights Movement		
3/23	M	<p>The Civil Rights Movement (part 1)</p> <p>Reading: <i>American Horizons</i>, Ch. 26</p>
3/25	W	<p>The Civil Rights Movement (part 2)</p> <p>Reading: <i>American Horizons</i>, Ch. 27</p>
3/27	F	<p>Discussion</p> <p>Documentary: <i>Eyes on the Prize</i>, Part 1: Awakenings and Part 2: Fighting Back</p> <p>Primary Sources: Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," (1963); Black Panther Party Platform (1966), The Young Lords Define Their Platform, (1970)</p>
Week 11: The Cold War At Home		
3/30	M	<p>The Tumultuous 1960s</p> <p>Reading: <i>American Horizons</i>, Ch. 27</p> <p>Primary source: Scholar Maria de los Angeles Tones Recalls Her Experiences with Operation Pedro Pan (1961)</p>
4/1	W	<p>Quagmire: Vietnam</p> <p>Reading: <i>American Horizons</i>, Ch. 28</p>
4/3	F	<p>*** NO CLASS: UNIVERSITY RECESS ***</p>

Week 12: The Vietnam Era		
4/6	M	The Silent Majority, Vietnamization, and Watergate Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 28
4/8	W	The Era of Limits and Jimmy Carter Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 29 ***RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY 11:59pm – Upload to Canvas! ***
4/10	F	The Reagan Revolution Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 29
Week 13: Conservative Ascendancy		
4/13	M	Reagan, Bush, and Gorbachev Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 30
4/15	W	Discussion Primary Sources: Ronald Reagan, Announcement for Presidential Candidacy (1979); Walter Mondale, Address at the Democratic National Convention (1984) Secondary Source: Carter “The Rise of Conservatism Since World War II,” <i>OAH Magazine</i> ***
4/17	F	*** NO CLASS ***
Week 14: The End of the Cold War		
4/20	M	A New World Order? Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 30
4/22	W	Discussion Primary Sources: Debate/Simulation Team Packets
4/24	F	9/11 and the Global War on Terror Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 31
Week 15: Into the 21 st Century		
4/27	M	Recession and Recovery Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 31 Primary source: Adolph R. Reed, Jr., “Obama’s Centrism Is No Surprise,” (2009)
4/29	W	New Populisms Reading: <i>American Horizons</i> , Ch. 31 Primary sources: Occupy Wall Street Digital Archive (look through the protest signs) (ca. 2011), “Why I Joined the Tea Party” video (2010), Frank Rich, “The Billionaires Bankrolling the Tea Party,” <i>New York Times</i> (2010).
5/1	F	Concluding Thoughts and Final Exam Review
FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 12 from 8:30am-11:30am in HAL 119		