

HIST 3379 Section 1 (CRN 80246): Recent America, 1945 to Present

3 Credit Hours - Sam Houston State University – Fall 2017

Instructor: Dr. Wesley Phelps
 Office: Academic Building IV 461
 Office Hours: Mondays/Wednesdays 9-10 AM, 2-4 PM
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 Or by appt
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Class Hours: M/W/F 11:00 - 11:50
 Classroom: Academic Building IV 302

Course Description

This course will explore the politics, social movements, economics, culture, and foreign policy of the United States since 1945. In a sense, this course is about how the U.S. has come to be what it is today. Topics will include the Cold War, the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, the global war on terrorism, public policy debates about the role of the federal government in the modern economy, the evolution of popular culture, the continuing centrality of race in the American experience, and the emergence of a new economy in the 21st century.

Course Objectives

- 1) Gain factual knowledge of the recent history of the United States
- 2) Learn fundamental principles and theories pertaining to the recent history of the U.S.
- 3) Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view
- 4) Develop critical reading and writing skills as well as improve oral communication abilities

Required Texts (available at campus bookstore)

Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (Hill and Wang, 1994)

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Delta, 2004)

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (Mariner Books, 2009)

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Spiegel and Grau, 2015)

Additional reading materials will be made available on Blackboard.

Requirements	Due Date	% of Final Grade
Introduction Paper	Aug 28	5%
Book Critique	Sep 15	10%
Exam 1	Sep 22	15%
Analytical Essay		10%
Option 1	Sep 29	
Option 2	Oct 20	
Exam 2	Oct 27	15%

Coates Reflection Paper	Nov 15	10%
Exam 3	Dec 6	15%
Reading Quizzes	Fridays at 11:00 AM	10%
Reading Response Journal	See Schedule	10%

NOTE: All assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale.

Grading Scale

A = 90 – 100%

D = 60 – 69%

B = 80 – 89%

F = 59% or below

C = 70 – 79%

Assignments

NOTE: ALL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED ON BLACKBOARD

Introduction Paper (Due Aug 28)

Write a short essay (1 page or less) introducing yourself to me. Include a photo at the top of your paper (please keep the photo appropriate). This assignment is designed to allow me to get to know you better, so tell me where you are from, what your interests in life are, what your major is and why are you interested in that subject, what you hope to achieve in life, what concerns or fears you have about this course, and at least one interesting thing about you as a person.

Please insert your photo into a Word document with your essay and save it all together to upload to Blackboard.

Book Critique (Due Sep 15)

You will write a book critique of 750-1000 words (roughly 3-4 pages) of Melvyn Leffler's *The Specter of Communism*. Note: This is not a report or summary. Rather, this is a critique that requires you to engage with the author's argument and assess the persuasiveness of the evidence. See "Guide for Writing a Book Critique" in this syllabus for more detailed guidance.

Exams (Due Sep 22, Oct 27, and Dec 6)

There will be 3 take-home exams administered throughout the semester that you will complete outside of class. For each exam, you will answer a series of essay questions. Use standard margins and 12-point font. All of these exams will be submitted electronically through Blackboard. More detailed information about these exams will be given in class as the exam dates approach.

Analytical Essay (Due Sep 29 or Oct 20)

You will write one analytical essay of approximately 1000 words (4 pages). Choose one of the following options:

Option 1 (Due Sep 29): Analyze Anne Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi* as a unique source for understanding the African American civil rights movement. As a memoir, how is the book valuable for understanding this period in American history? What are its limitations? As part of your analysis, compare the book to at least 2 documents from the Civil Rights Movement Primary Documents folder. What does Moody's book tell us that we don't get from sources focused on the traditional narrative of the movement?

Option 2 (Due Oct 20): Analyze Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* as a unique source for understanding the war in Vietnam. As a work of historical fiction, how is the book valuable for understanding this period in American history? What are its limitations? As part of your analysis, compare the book to the 2 essays on the War in Vietnam in the War in Vietnam Documents folder. What does O'Brien's book tell us about the Vietnam War that we don't get from traditional historical sources?

Coates Reflection Paper (Due Nov 15)

You will write a reflection paper of 750-1000 words (roughly 3-4 pages) in which you reflect on the continuing significance of race in the United States as presented by Ta-Nehisi Coates in *Between the World and Me*. Does race remain central to understanding the American experience? In your reflection, address specific examples presented by Coates in the book. How does this book relate to what we have learned this semester about U.S. history since 1945?

Reading Quizzes (Due every Friday by 11:00 AM)

Every week there will be a 10-question multiple-choice quiz based on the reading material for that week. The quizzes will be administered on Blackboard and you may use any books and/or notes you wish. There will be a total of 14 quizzes. The lowest 4 quiz grades will be dropped from your final grade calculation. The window of availability for these quizzes each week will be from Wednesday at 12:00 PM to Friday at 11:00 AM. You must take each quiz during this window of availability.

Please note that under no circumstances will I reset a quiz for any student. You get to drop 4 quiz grades. If some technical glitch results in your quiz not submitting correctly, then you must count it as one of your 4 dropped quiz grades. If the problem continues beyond one quiz, I will suggest that you try a different computer for subsequent quizzes.

Reading Response Journal (Entries due every discussion day)

This semester you will keep an online Blackboard journal in which you will record your individual responses to the assigned reading material. In your entries, which should be about 250 words each, you will simply respond to the material in a way that demonstrates you have both read and begun to engage with the course readings. You might want to connect specific reading material to the in-class lecture material, begin to draw connections between specific documents, use several documents to begin formulating an argument about that particular period in American history, etc. I will post a few questions for consideration on Blackboard each week that should help get you started on your journal entries. These entries will be submitted in your journal on Blackboard and will be due at 11:00 AM on each discussion day listed in the course schedule.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

This course is discussion-driven, meaning we will be routinely discussing the reading material and your writing assignments. Therefore, class attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to attend class regularly and arrive on time. Students are expected to take notes during class, participate in discussions, and ask questions if something is unclear. You will not do well in this course if you do not come to class regularly.

Electronic Device Policy

Students are permitted to use laptop computers and other devices for the sole purpose of taking class notes and referencing assigned reading materials. Students are NOT permitted to check e-mail, use the Internet, complete other assignments, or use the computer for any other purpose. Also, please

silence your phones before coming to class and refrain from talking or texting during class. If you need to take a call, please step out of the classroom. Please be respectful of the instructor and others in the class by adhering to this policy.

Email Policy

The SHSU email system is the official system for this class. I will use your @shsu.edu address to communicate with you throughout the semester. Please check your email regularly.

Blackboard

Handouts and other reading material will be placed on the Blackboard site for this course. You will also be required to submit all written assignments on Blackboard.

Late Assignment Penalties (does not apply to Reading Quizzes)

All assignments must be submitted by the start of class on the due date indicated on the syllabus (unless a different time is indicated on the course schedule). After class starts, a late penalty of 5% will be assessed on the assignment. After class, a late penalty of 10% will be assessed. An additional late penalty of 10% will be assessed each day that it is late until a 50% penalty is reached.

Assignments will not be accepted for credit one week after the assignment is due. If there is a conflict with sports, extracurricular activities, or other approved absences or issues, it is the student's responsibility to turn in the assignment early or make other arrangements with me BEFORE the due date.

Reading Assignments

Readings are assigned for almost every class meeting and are expected to be completed at the time class begins. Please come to class prepared.

Citations (Applies to Essay Exams, Book Critiques, and the Analytical Paper)

You must cite the source of your information if you quote directly, paraphrase, or use in any way someone else's ideas. If you do not cite your sources, it is considered plagiarism. All students must follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. For an online guide to the Chicago style, see <http://library.shsu.edu> > Research Guides > History, U.S. > Citing Your Sources > Chicago.

Academic Honesty

Section 5.3 of the SHSU Code of Student Conduct and Discipline state: "Academic Honesty: The University expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach and to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. The University may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials."

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

- Cheating on an examination or test, for example by copying from another's paper or by using unauthorized material before or during the test
- Plagiarism, which one represents as one's own the work of another, whether published or not, without acknowledging the precise source

All academic dishonesty cases may first be reviewed by the instructor, who can assign a penalty. Students have the right to appeal. Please see the Student Guidelines handbook for the proper procedures.

Penalty: The penalty for an incident of academic dishonesty is a grade of zero for the work in question. A second incident of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of F for the course.

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

Visitors in the Classroom

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at the SHSU Counseling Center (Lee Drain North Annex, telephone 936-294-1720, TDD 936-294-3786) to apply for accommodations. In the event that accommodations are approved by the SSD, the student is advised to schedule an appointment with the course instructor in order to present his/her accommodation forms and discuss the arrangements for the accommodations.

Grading Rubric (Exams / Analytical Essay / Reflection Paper)

Essay Components	0-13 pts	14-17 pts	18-20 pts	Points Earned
Thesis Statement and Analysis	Missing thesis or very weak argument. No introduction. Inaccuracies.	A thesis statement is present, but the argument may be weak or incomplete.	A thesis statement is made in the introduction and the argument is carried throughout the essay.	
Evidence	Examples are missing. Thesis is not supported. Does not use required number of documents.	Some examples are used as evidence, but may be weak, ineffective, or irrelevant. May not use required number of documents.	Relevant and appropriate examples are used to support the thesis. Number of documents meets requirement.	
Clarity and Organization	No topic sentences. Writing is unclear. Argument is confused.	Some topic sentences are missing. Paragraphs are choppy or too long. Unclear writing. Argument does not flow logically.	Topic sentences identify key points. Paragraphs connect and flow. Argument flows logically from beginning to end.	
Conclusion	No concluding paragraph or conclusions drawn.	Concluding paragraph is included, but the connection between the thesis, argument, and evidence is incomplete.	Thesis is restated with references to the argument and evidence. Everything summarized in concluding paragraph.	
Mechanics	Many errors in grammar and spelling. Sources are not cited.	Occasional errors in grammar and spelling. Minor citation problems.	Correct grammar and spelling throughout. Sources are cited.	
Essay Grade				

Guide for Writing a Book Critique

The first step in preparing to write a book critique is to read actively. Active readers are engaged in a dialogue with the text. They ask questions, make comments, and connect what they are reading to information they already know and texts they have already read. As you read in history, you must accomplish several tasks. Obviously, you need to understand the content, but you must also *evaluate* its usefulness, *analyze* its significance, and *synthesize* all of your reading into one coherent picture of the topic you are studying.

Steps you should follow to make sure you are reading actively in history:

- 1) **Pre-read the text:** Before you even begin to read, you should try to get a sense of the scope of the book and what it might tell you. Note its subtitle, if any; examine the table of contents; check for appendices and lists of maps and/or illustrations. Look at the bibliography and determine how extensive any footnotes or endnotes are.
- 2) **Determine the author's thesis:** Active readers begin by identifying the author's thesis or argument – the conclusion that the author has reached as a result of his or her research and analysis. The quickest way to identify an author's thesis is to read the preface, introduction, and conclusion of a book. It is usually in these sections that an author states his or her main points.
- 3) **Read with the author's thesis in mind:** If you are reading a book about a subject that is new to you, it is tempting to get caught up in the details and try to remember all of the facts. However, because the historian's goal is not simply to *collect* facts but to *organize* and *interpret* them in a way that allows us to better understand the people and societies of the past, it is much more useful to read a book or article with an eye to understanding how an author builds an argument in support of his or her interpretation, or thesis. In order to do this, you should identify the main pieces of evidence the author cites in support of his or her conclusions. Often, the introductory paragraphs of each chapter of a book will indicate the most important elements of an author's argument.
- 4) **Ask questions of the text:** As you read with the author's thesis in mind, you should constantly interrogate the text: What is the author's point here? Why has he or she chosen this example? Do you disagree with any points the author makes, and if so, why?
- 5) **Write as you read:** Active readers are physically active, writing as they read. Writing directly in the margins of the text can help you locate important or confusing passages that you want to return to later. In addition, taking notes in your own words can help you remember what you have read and help you solidify your understanding of the text. Writing as you read will help you clarify your thoughts about what you are reading and provide direction for further reading and research.

Now that you have actively read the book, you are ready to write your critique. Your critique will grow out of your active reading of the text. A book critique is not the same thing as a book report, which simply summarizes the content of a book. Nor does a critique merely report your reaction (for example, "This book was boring" or "I liked this book.") Rather, when writing a critique, you not only report on the content of the text and your response to it but also assess its strengths and weaknesses. So, for example, it is not enough to say, "This book is not very good;"

Guide for Writing Article/Book Critiques (cont.)

you need to explain and/or justify your reaction through an analysis of the text. Did you find the book unconvincing because the author did not supply enough evidence to support his or her assertions? Is the logic faulty? Or did you disagree with the book's underlying assumptions?

Also note that "critical" does not necessarily mean "negative." If a book is well written and presents an original thesis supported by convincing evidence, say so. A good book critique does not have to be negative. It simply needs to be fair and analytical. Also keep in mind that when you are writing your critique, it is unnecessary to preface statements with "I think" or "in my opinion" since readers assume that as a reviewer you are expressing your own opinions.

There is no one correct way to structure a critique, but the following broad guidelines represent one possible approach:

- 1) Summarize the book (usually in a single, brief, concise paragraph at the beginning of your critique) and state the author's main point, or thesis. What is the argument?
- 2) Place the author's thesis in context. Describe the author's viewpoint and purpose for writing. Why is the author's argument significant? Note any aspects of the author's background that are important for understanding the text. Is the author an expert in the field?
- 3) Briefly note the most important evidence the author presents to support his or her thesis.
- 4) Evaluate the author's use of evidence. Is the argument convincing? Has the author provided enough compelling evidence to convince you that the argument is valid?
- 5) Conclude with a final evaluation of the book. You might discuss who would find it useful and why.

It might also be helpful to read a few professional book reviews. All major historical journals (such as the *Journal of American History* and the *Journal of Southern History*) publish reviews. However, I would urge you to avoid book reviews that pertain to the book or article you are reviewing.

Include a full citation of the book at the top of your critique. Use the *Chicago Manual of Style* for your citations.

Grading Rubric (Book Critique)

Critique Components	0-13	14-17	18-20	Points Earned
Identification of Author's Thesis	Author's thesis not identified.	The author's thesis is present, but either not in the introduction of the critique or vaguely identified.	The critique identifies the author's thesis clearly and concisely in the introduction.	
Author's Thesis Put Into Proper Context	No context for author's thesis provided.	Some context for author's thesis is included, but it remains unclear why the argument is significant.	The author's thesis is placed into its proper context with author's viewpoint and reason for writing. Significance of argument is clear.	
Recognition of Author's Most Important Supporting Evidence	No recognition of the author's most important supporting evidence.	Some supporting evidence is recognized, but not the most important for the thesis.	The author's most important supporting evidence is recognized and stated clearly.	
Evaluation of Author's Argument and Evidence	No evaluation of author's argument and evidence.	Evaluation of author's argument and evidence is weak, unconvincing, or incomplete.	Persuasive evaluation of author's argument and evidence.	
Mechanics, Style, and Organization	No topic sentences. Writing is unclear. Many errors in grammar and spelling. Sources are not cited.	Some topic sentences missing. Paragraphs are choppy or too long. Unclear writing. Occasional errors in grammar and spelling. Minor citation problems.	Topic sentences identify key points. Paragraphs connect and flow logically. Correct grammar and spelling throughout. Sources are cited.	
Late Penalty				
Grade				

Schedule

Note: (Bb) indicates the reading is available on Blackboard

WEEK 1: COURSE INTRODUCTION / ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

Aug 23: No Readings

Aug 25: Lecture: Cold War

Begin reading Cold War Documents (Bb) and Leffler, *Specter of Communism*

WEEK 2: ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR / WRITING IN HISTORY

Aug 28: Lecture: Cold War

Introduction Paper Due

Aug 30: Discussion: Cold War Documents (Bb)

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

Sep 1: Lecture: Writing in History

Read Mary Lynn Rampolla, "Writing History Papers" (Bb)

WEEK 3: THE RED SCARE

Sep 4: Labor Day (no class meeting)

Sep 6: Lecture: The Cold War Red Scare

Sep 8: Discussion: Leffler, *Specter of Communism*

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

WEEK 4: AN ERA OF MASS CONSUMPTION

Sep 11: Lecture: The 1950s

Begin reading Mass Consumption Documents (Bb)

Sep 13: Lecture: The 1950s

Sep 15: Discussion: Mass Consumption Documents (Bb)

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

Book Critique Due

WEEK 5: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Sep 18: Lecture: The Civil Rights Movement

Begin reading Civil Rights Movement Documents and Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*

Sep 20: Lecture: The Civil Rights Movement

Sep 22: Lecture: The Civil Rights Movement

Exam 1 Due

WEEK 6: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Sep 25: Lecture: The Civil Rights Movement

Sep 27: Discussion: Civil Rights Movement Documents

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

Sep 29: Discussion: Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

Analytical Essay Option 1 Due

WEEK 7: KENNEDY AND JOHNSON

Oct 2: Lecture: Kennedy and Johnson

Begin reading Kennedy and Johnson Documents

Oct 4: Lecture: Kennedy and Johnson

Oct 6: Discussion: Kennedy and Johnson Documents

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

WEEK 8: NEW RADICALISM OF THE 1960S / FEMINISM

Oct 9: Lecture: The New Left and Second-Wave Feminism

Begin reading New Radicalism of the 1960s Documents

Oct 11: Lecture: The New Left and Second-Wave Feminism

Oct 13: Discussion: New Radicalism of the 1960s Documents

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

WEEK 9: WAR IN VIETNAM

Oct 16: Lecture: Vietnam

Begin reading War in Vietnam Documents and O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

Oct 18: Discussion: War in Vietnam Documents

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

Oct 20: Discussion: O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

Analytical Essay Option 2 Due

WEEK 10: CONSERVATIVE TRIUMPH: NIXON TO REAGAN

Oct 23: Lecture: Rise of Modern Conservatism

Begin reading Conservative Triumph Documents

Oct 25: Lecture: Rise of Modern Conservatism

Oct 27: Discussion: Conservative Triumph Documents

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

Exam 2 Due

WEEK 11: THE 1990S

Oct 30: Lecture: The 1990s

Begin reading 1990s Documents

Nov 1: Lecture: The 1990s

Nov 3: Discussion: 1990s Documents

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

WEEK 12: RACE, ETHNICITY, IMMIGRATION

Nov 6: Lecture: Race, Ethnicity, Immigration

Begin reading Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Documents and Coates, *Between the World and Me*

Nov 8: Lecture: Race, Ethnicity, Immigration

Nov 10: Discussion: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Documents

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

WEEK 13: THE CONTINUING CENTRALITY OF RACE IN AMERICA

Nov 13: Lecture: The Continuing Centrality of Race in America

Nov 15: Discussion: Coates, *Between the World and Me*

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

Coates Reflection Paper Due

Nov 17: Discussion: Coates, *Between the World and Me*

WEEK 14: THE US SINCE 9/11

Nov 20: Lecture: US Since 9/11

Begin reading U.S. since 9/11 Documents

Nov 22: Thanksgiving Break (no class meeting)

Nov 24: Thanksgiving Break (no class meeting)

Note: No quiz this week

WEEK 15: THE US SINCE 9/11

Nov 27: Lecture: US Since 9/11

Nov 29: Lecture: US Since 9/11

Dec 1: Discussion: U.S. since 9/11 Documents

Reading Response Journal Entry Due

FINAL EXAM (EXAM 3): DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017, by 2:00 PM