

## HSTAA 235: AMERICAN HISTORY SINCE 1940

University of Washington – Winter 2017

MW 12:30-2:20 – Raitt Hall 121

<https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1099913>

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Department of History  
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Office hours: MW 2:30-3:30  
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How have the past eight decades of American history shaped life, work, and opportunity in the early twenty-first century? What is the broader context and historical backstory of contemporary political and social movements, business practices, and global flows of people, capital, and ideas? How can we use historical knowledge and the tools of historical analysis to better understand and address present-day challenges? This course explores some key moments and people in the history of the United States from the Great Depression to the post-9/11 era with these questions in mind. Its themes include the evolving role of government, grassroots activism and fights for individual and group rights, partisan political change, technology as a product and shaper of society, changing patterns of production and consumption, migration and immigration, financial systems and global markets, and America's changing role in the world.

### **READINGS**

Readings include books, primary sources, and articles. Primary source documents and articles are on the course e-reserves and available through the Canvas website. Books are in paperback and available for purchase at the Bookstore and on 2-hour reserve at Odegaard Undergraduate Library. (They also should be available new and used on Amazon, but please order in time for class use.)

1. Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*
2. Tom Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*
3. Matt Bai, *All the Truth is Out: The Week Politics Went Tabloid*

### **CLASS COMMUNICATIONS**

The course Canvas website will be the source of all class information and announcements. The best way to contact the professor about an individual issue is by making an appointment during my office hours. I encourage and welcome in-person meetings during office hours so that I can get to know students personally; you do not need to have a problem or issue to make an office-hours appointment. Appointments must be made in advance; you can sign up for a meeting time on a shared Google Drive document [here](#).

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

**CLASS ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION (15% of grade).** This course is an “active lecture” format, during which I often pause during my lectures to engage students in questions, small-group

activities, and quick-writing exercises and quizzes. I expect everyone to take notes during lecture, either on laptop or paper. If you use a laptop, always bring a pad of paper and pen/pencil for written activities, which you will turn in at the end of class. They are ungraded but required, and this portion of the grade will be determined by how many of these you complete.

**DISCUSSION BOARD POSTING (30% of grade).** Each student is expected to post a reader's reflection of at least 150 words to the class discussion board by 5PM every Friday. (Each week of posting counts for 3% of grade, for a total of 30% over the ten weeks of the quarter.) This is more than merely a reading summary, but should be a substantive, thought-provoking comment that considers and cites examples from the reading to make your point. Consider it an opportunity to home in on issues in the reading that you find particularly interesting and provocative. You can post as early and as often as you like during the week, but you must post at least once prior to the deadline in order to receive credit for the week's work.

**FINAL PAPER (25% of grade).** In this paper, you examine closely and give a written analysis of a primary text or document, helping you develop one of the key skills of historical research. You will choose your primary source from a list provided by the professor three weeks before the paper is due, along with a paper prompt that outlines key questions the paper should answer. The paper should be 1750-2250 words in length (7-9 double-spaced pages with 12-point font, 1" margins) and should be uploaded electronically to the Canvas web page by **Wednesday, March 15**, at 5PM. Word document or similarly editable format only; no PDFs, please.

**THREE MINI-EXAMS (10% each; 30% total).** These are short electronic examinations covering lecture content and readings. Midterms will be made available via the Canvas website for 24 hours prior to the time they are due. Mini-exam 1 is due **Thursday, January 26** at 5PM. Mini-exam 2 is due **Thursday, February 16** at 5PM. Mini-exam 3 is due **Thursday, March 9** at 5PM.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1 – The American Century**

Wed Jan 4                      America becomes modern; technology and progress

WATCH (AND POST COMMENT ON DISCUSSION BOARD):

["To New Horizons,"](#) film produced by General Motors for the 1939 New York World's Fair (23 min)

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### **WEEK 2 – The Great Depression and New Deal**

Mon Jan 9                      The Great Depression; Hoover vs Roosevelt; dissident politics

Wed Jan 11                     The New Deal and its legacy; American life in the 1930s

READING:    David Kennedy, "What the New Deal Did"  
                  Huey Long, "Share the Wealth," 1935  
                  Father Charles Coughlin, "Somebody Must Be Blamed," 1937

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**WEEK 3 – How World War II transformed America**

Wed Jan 18                    The march to war; the wartime economy; the experience of wartime

READING:    Richard Kirkendall, “The Boeing Company and the Military-Metropolitan-Industrial Complex”

*Start reading ahead for next week.*

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**WEEK 4 – The early Cold War**

Mon Jan 23                    The atomic bomb; the Marshall Plan; postwar internationalism

Wed Jan 25                    America in the postwar world; McCarthyism; 1950s politics

READING:    Brown, *Plutopia*, pp. 3-74, 97-149

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**WEEK 5 – Eisenhower’s America**

Mon Jan 30                    The Cold War at home; civil defense; family lives

Wed Feb 1                     urban crisis; suburban migration; segregation and integration

READING:    Brown, *Plutopia*, pp. 213-282  
                  Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, pp. 15-88

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**WEEK 6 – The military-industrial complex**

Mon Feb 6                     The government and the computer industry; the Sunbelt as Gunbelt

Wed Feb 8                     The space race; the birth of Silicon Valley

READING:    Margaret O’Mara, “Uncovering the City in the Suburb”  
                  Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, pp. 181-208

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**WEEK 7 – Civil rights and foreign wars**

Mon Feb 13                    The civil rights struggle in the South and the North

Wed Feb 15                    Vietnam and the tumultuous year of 1968

READING:    Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, pp. 209-258  
                  Robert Dallek, “Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam: The Making of a Tragedy”

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**WEEK 8 – The pivotal decade of the 1970s**

Wed Feb 22                    Globalization; oil shocks; Watergate and its aftermath

READING:    Jefferson Cowie, “Nixon’s Class Struggle”

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**WEEK 9 – From Reagan to Clinton**

Mon Feb 27 Political conservatism; the personal computer arrives; 1980s culture  
Wed Mar 1 The Gulf War; the CNN president; scandal and partisanship in the 1990s

READING: Bai, *All the Truth is Out*, pp. xi-117

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**WEEK 10 – The New World Order**

Mon Mar 6 the Internet revolution; globalization; the next Silicon Valley  
Wed Mar 8 9/11 and beyond; the 2008 financial crisis; the present and future of politics

READING: Bai, *All the Truth is Out*, pp. 118-244

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**CLASS POLICIES**

**LATENESS AND ABSENCES:** It is critical that you make a point to attend every class session. I will not require a doctor's note because of incapacitation because of illness, but I ask for written notification of absence prior to the missed class if at all possible. Scheduled absences due to prior university obligations or very significant family events should be discussed with the TA as early in the term as possible. Please keep in mind that, even if an absence is excused, your missing class makes increases the difficulty in earning a high participation grade. For assignments, your grade on an assignment will be reduced by 1% **every five minutes** it is late.

**ELECTRONICS:** Consider lecture as an 110-minute respite from the Internet and all its distractions. If you rely on an electronic device (laptop, tablet) for note-taking, you may use one, but the WiFi must be turned off. Phones should be on silent/do not disturb mode.

**GRADING STANDARDS, PAPER-WRITING GUIDELINES, AND OTHER POLICIES:** I have a number of handouts and links available on my web site at <http://www.margaretomara.com/resources>. Please read and refer to these as needed.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** In all assignments you are expected to adhere to the standards of academic integrity outlined by the University of Washington Student Conduct Code. In an age of internet-based research and writing, the standards for plagiarism and academic dishonesty can become unclear, and I strongly encourage all students to read the attached statements and guidelines that outline acceptable practices and procedures.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the UW Disability Resources for Students Office. If you have a letter from their office indicating that you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to the professor at the start of the quarter.