



The American Experience Since 1877

HIS 135 – Wesleyan College

Syllabus

Summer 2024, July 1 - August 2

Professor Contact Information

Professor: TBA

Office Hours: by appointment

Contact Information: TBA

Text/ISBN: *The American Promise*, James L. Roark, et. al., Volume II: From 1865, Concise Edition (8th Edition; 2019). ISBN: 9781319208967 [hereafter“AP”]

The textbook contains sections of primary sources, which you will need to read carefully. Primary sources are materials that provide us with an individual’s personal perspective of history. These are first-hand accounts that contain crucial information about the past to help historians achieve a developed understanding of historical events and ideas. Secondary sources are historians’ interpretations of the past and thus exemplified by the overall narrative presented in the textbook.

Policies and Procedures

Course Goals

This class traces the story of United States history from the post-Civil War era to the recent past. It probes political, diplomatic, economic, social, and cultural developments of the past century and a half. During this time American life was transformed from primarily agricultural to industrial to technological. In its investigation of the industrial and post-industrial eras, the course gives special attention to the assertion of American economic and military power abroad and the roles of immigrants, minority races, and women in the social transformations of the times.

Credit Hours

3

Student Learning Outcomes

This course helps students develop an understanding of and appreciation for the historical US experience since 1877. By successfully completing this course students will demonstrate that they can:

1. differentiate between primary and secondary historical sources.
2. analyze both primary and secondary sources critically.
3. develop and support an argument, orally and in writing, based on available evidence.



4. identify the strengths and weaknesses of written sources to document the experiences and worldviews of different socioeconomic groups.
5. identify characteristics of American civilization since the era of Reconstruction
6. evaluate the influence of other civilizations on American civilization since 1877.

Participation and Grading

Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance in the following categories:

Assignments	Percentage
Paper Assignment	20%
Midterm Exam 1	25%
Midterm Exam 2	25%
Final Exam	30%
Total	100%

Grading Scale:

The grading scale in the class will be as follows:

A=90-100%
B=80-89%
C=70-79%
D=60-69%
F=59% And Below

Writing Assignment: (20%): You will write one 1000-word essay based on the assigned readings. Your essay should answer the assigned question(s) and then provide specific examples from the reading to support your answer. Your essay must be typed in 12-point font and double-spaced with one-inch margins. Evaluation will be based on your understanding of the material and your ability to draw on specific examples from the reading to defend your answer.

Midterm Exams: (50%): The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions. A study guide will be available for review in advance.

Final Exam: (30%): A cumulative final examination will be due on Friday, week 5. Your response will be a clearly argued essay. The format (typed in 12-point font and double-spaced with one-inch margins) should be the same as the Paper Assignment.

Academic Integrity

Wesleyan's College expects student to show integrity in all of their work. Cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, inventing or falsifying information, turning in work for more than one class without authorization, or helping someone else are all violations of the Honor Code and are not tolerated. Any of these forms of cheating will not be tolerated and will be grounds for a grade of zero on the exam or assignment and a grade of F for the course, in addition to any penalties imposed by the Provost.



Potential Changes to Course Schedule

The following week-to-week schedule is a general plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary and will be announced in advance via announcement and/or e-mail. Students should check their course site announcements and emails at least once every twenty-four hours throughout the term to watch for updates regarding this course.

Course Schedule

Week 1

The Historian's Craft

In this lesson, we survey historical methodology and theory. Particular emphasis will be placed on distinguishing between primary and secondary sources as well as how to read both types of documents. We will also learn how historians avoid anachronism and seek to study the past on its own terms. Learning how to ask historical questions and read documents in context are central goals of this lesson.

Reconstruction, 1865-1877

This lesson explores the moment shortly after the American Civil War where it looked like the United States government might recognize equality among all citizens. That did not happen, however, as soon new systems were put in place to ensure white-male hegemony. We will also examine how African Americans used Reconstruction as an opportunity to create their own institutions and concepts of freedom.

- Reading: AP, Chapter 16: Reconstruction, 1863-1877

The Gilded Age, 1877-1900

This lesson examines the many responses to the mechanized production and the growth of industrial capitalism. Rural farmers, workers, and immigrant experiences will be highlighted. We will also look at the effects that U.S. imperialism had on both Americans and those the US sought to control.

- Reading: AP, Chapter 17: The Contested West, 1865-1900
- Reading: AP, Chapter 18: The Gilded Age, 1865-1900

Week 2

The Progressive Era, 1900-1914

In this lesson, we continue to focus on the intensification of industrialization and the growth of the federal government. Rather than simply protect property, however, during the Progressive era, many voices emerged critical of the concept of "limited government." As a result, local, state, and federal governments became more active in promoting the welfare of citizens. powerful inequalities still remained in the nascent welfare-state, however.

- Reading: AP, Chapter 19: The City and Its Workers, 1870-1900
- Reading: AP, Chapter 20: Dissent, Depression, and War, 1890-1900
- Reading: AP, Chapter 21: Progressive Reform, 1890-1916

Week 3

The United States in World War I, 1914-1920



We will explore the causes of World War I as well as the United States reluctant and belated entry into the war. We will pay particular attention to the ways in which the US government worked to create a sense of urgency while making its case for entry in the war.

- Reading: AP, Chapter 22: World War I: The Progressive Crusade, 1914-1920

A New Era?, 1920-1929

We will discuss the years between World War I and the Great Depression. We will examine the conservative backlash against Progressivism but also how many Americans used post-war prosperity to cultivate art and a shared identity.

- Reading: AP, Chapter 23: From New Era to Great Depression, 1920-1932

The Great Depression and the New Deal, 1929-1940

In this lesson, we will examine the causes of the rapid economic growth the United States in the 1920s as well as the major decline known as the Great Depression. While causes of economic booms and busts are important, we will also look at how the economy affected Americans lives and how Americans responded to economic growth and travails.

- Reading: AP, Chapter 23: From New Era to Great Depression, 1920-1932
- Reading: AP, Chapter 24: The New Deal Experiment, 1932-1939

Week 4

The United States in World War II, 1939-1946

This lesson will discuss the various causes of World War II as well as the US's role in the war.

- Reading: AP, Chapter 25: The United States and the Second World War, 1939-1945

The Cold War, 1946-1960

This lesson will examine the development of anti-communism in the years after the War. Particular attention will be paid to how Americans experiences of both the war years and the post-war era differed based on race, class, and gender.

- Reading: AP, Chapter 26: The New World of the Cold War, 1945-1960
- Reading: AP, Chapter 27: Postwar Culture and Politics, 1945-1960

The Long Sixties, 1955-1979

In this lesson, we will survey the growth of American consumer-orientated economy and culture as well as the rise of the Civil Rights Movement and the Counterculture Movement. We will emphasize the many and varied, multiple, and conflicting challenges to American "conservatism."

- Reading: AP, Chapter 28: Rights, Rebellion, and Reaction, 1960-1974

Week 5

- Reading: AP, Chapter 29: Confronting Limits, 1961-1979

The New Right, War, and Economic Crisis 1979-Present

This lessons explores the conservative backlash to the counter-culture movements and to the New Deal. We will focus on the rise of the New Right, the Iraq War, and the economic crisis of 2008-2009. Particular emphasis will be paid to the role that race played in creating conservative identity.



- Reading: AP, Chapter 30: Divisions at Home and Abroad in a Conservative Era, 1980-2000
- Reading: AP, Chapter 31: America in a New Century, since 2000

Civility in the Academic Community

Students, faculty, and staff are expected to treat one another with respect in all interactions. In the classroom, rude, disruptive and/or disrespectful behaviors as determined by a faculty member interfere with other students' rights and with the instructor's ability to teach. Therefore, any student exhibiting unacceptable behaviors during a class will be asked to leave and will be counted absent for that class period. Failure to cooperate with this process will result in disciplinary action that may include withdrawal from the class or dismissal from the College. Violations will be reported to the Provost's Office.

Disabilities Statement

Wesleyan College is committed to equal education, full participation and access to facilities for all students. Any student who requires reasonable academic accommodations, use of auxiliary aids or facility access for a class must first register with Disability Resources by contacting Jill Amos, Director of Disability and Advocacy Services, jamos@wesleyancollege.edu or (478) 757-5219. If reasonable accommodations are established, students should request Accommodation Letters from Disability Resources then schedule an appointment to meet with the professor to determine how the accommodations will be implemented for each class as early in the semester as possible. Accommodations require advance notice to implement and will not be retroactively administered for the semester. Accommodations that decrease the integrity of a course will not be approved.