

HIST 218

UNITED STATES HISTORY SINCE 1945: THE SEARCH FOR EQUALITY

SPRING 2025 SEMESTER

AUGUSTANA UNIVERSITY

Dr. Will Wright, Instructor

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Office Location: Madsen Center, Room 236

Course Location: Madsen Center, Room 102

Office Hours: MWF, 2-4 p.m., or by appointment

Course Day/Time: MWF, 9-9:50 a.m.



Civil Rights demonstrators in Alabama carry flags and march against voting restrictions on March 21, 1965. Two weeks earlier, police attacked marchers with horses, clubs, and tear gas at Edmund Pettus Bridge to prevent them from reaching the state capital in Montgomery. The resistance to violent intimidation was later known as Bloody Sunday. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee organized the march from Selma to Montgomery to bring national awareness to a federal Voting Rights Bill in Congress. Photo copyright Matt Herron.

Course Description

The central political, legal, and moral issue for the United States after 1945 was equality: of class and race; gender and sexuality; and many related issues. This post-war "search for equality" poses important and challenging questions: What is equality? How is equality determined? Is legal equality sufficient, or are laws fairly toothless compared to opportunities for jobs, housing, health care, social respect, cultural authority,

and individual autonomy? Do we seek an "equality of opportunity" or an "equality of outcomes"? This course will explore these and related questions as they have shaped American history over the last 85 years.

This course covers the period of U.S. history from the end of World War II until the present. Because the class examines contemporary history, it is more strongly a history of the present than other history classes. The course's emphasis is to understand the US today by delving into the history of post-World War II America.

Learning Outcomes

Students who diligently complete this course in good faith will be able to:

- Articulate an understanding of the impact of U.S. history and cultures on self and others.*
- Interpret key ideas that have defined American life.*
- Assess how people interact within U.S. social, economic and/or political systems.*
- Depict societies through multiple perspectives and historical consciousness.†
- Organize historical information into categories of analysis, including politics, economics, social organization (race, gender, class, ethnicity), culture, religion, and environments, to characterize distinct influences in society.†
- Advance an original argument using historical information.†
- Analyze primary and secondary sources to assess their strengths and limitations.†

* SOPHIA general outcome for a U.S. Experience course

† History Department student learning outcome

Required Reading

Articles and Book Chapters (Available for download on Canvas)

There will be articles, book excerpts, and web pages assigned on Canvas according to the week in which they are due. See the class schedule below for specific details.

It is imperative that you come to each class session having read the assigned materials beforehand as they will introduce approaches and issues in United States history. I strongly recommend printing hard copies off to take notes on or bringing your laptop/tablet with comments in the .pdf file.

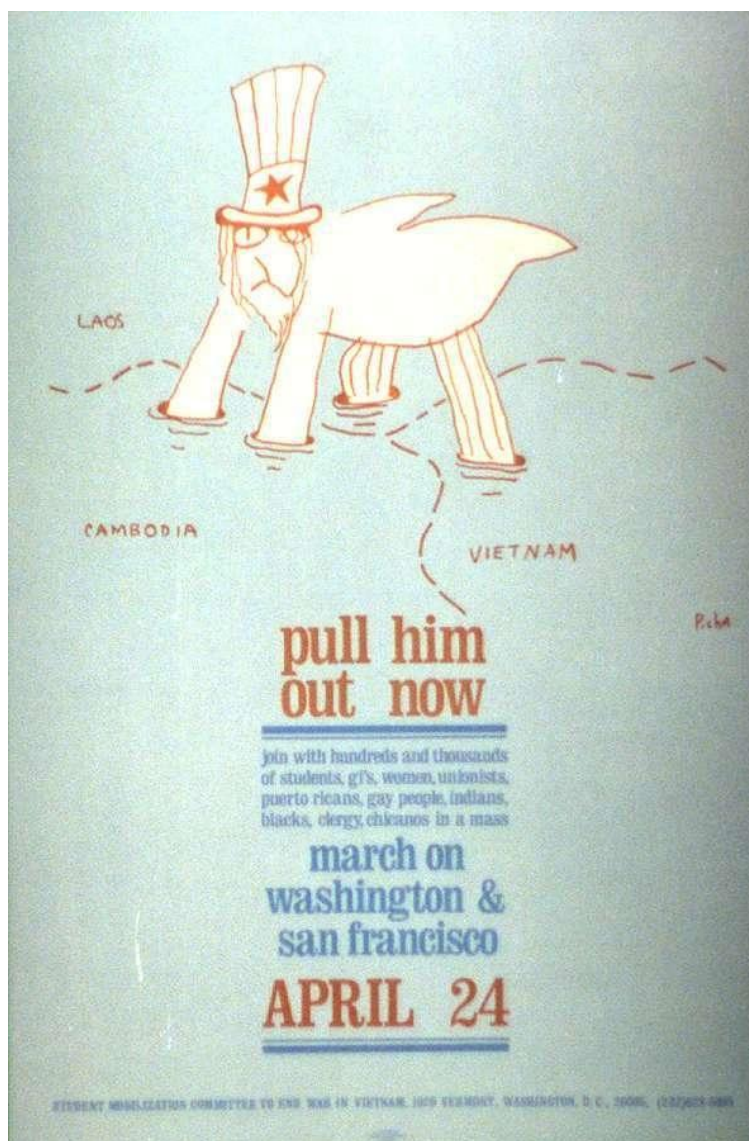
Grading Components (Weighted by Category)

Blog Posts (12 @ 5% each)	60%
Video "Lightning Talk" and Discussion Leader	10%
Oral History Paper	20%
Attendance	10%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	60-66
B-	80-82	F	0-59
C+	77-79		

This 1970 political poster "Pull him out now," from the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, shows Uncle Sam in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to represent the President Nixon's military expansion of the Vietnam War. The poster encouraged other social movements, including the civil rights, labor, Chicano, and feminist to join the anti-war movement.



Grades will be maintained and updated on Canvas. If you have questions or concerns about grades, please contact me via email or talk to me in-person during office hours, before or after class.

Assignments

Blog Posts

To engage with the readings, you are required to submit a blog post on my personal Wordpress website (www.will-wright.blog) once a week. Each post should be a short response (500 words) broken into two parts: (a) two paragraphs answering the prompt question(s) posed, and (b) one paragraph offering your own thoughts on the historical problem. **Each post will be due on Sunday by 10 p.m.** of the week they are assigned and will be reviewed—with grades and feedback posted to Canvas. You must also **leave one comment (100 words) on a classmate's post due on Tuesday by 10 p.m.** of the week they are assigned. Comment chains are permitted.

Video “Lightning Talk” Presentation and Leader Discussion

Every Friday, we will be discussing a major video/film that is representative of the era. You should prepare a Pecha Kucha “lightning talk” presentation (20 slides, automatically timed to advance every 15 seconds, for 5 minutes total) that summarizes the key take-aways from the visual production and how they relate to course themes and content. After the presentation, you will also have 8-12 questions prepared to lead your peers in a conversation about post-1945 cultural, social, and economic changes. I will provide a handout on how to “read” a video rather than passively watch.

Oral History Paper

Because this course on recent American history covers times that many people have lived through, your final project is to interview an elder (grandparent, great aunt or uncle, family friend) about a past experience or event and to compare their memory to the historical record. Their oral history will provide a personal, first-hand account that reinforces and/or challenges broad patterns of historical development. Before interviewing your relative or family friend, see this document for tips: Judith Moyer, “Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History,” at: http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html Read Section II: Guidelines and Suggestions. I will provide a handout with more detailed instructions.

Attendance

The late UCLA men’s basketball coach John Wooden, who won 10 NCAA titles, once said that “ninety percent of success is just showing up.” I will be taking attendance for every class and it will be worth an entire letter grade for the course. If you are gone for extenuating circumstances (extracurricular activities, religious observation, family emergency, illness, etc.), please contact me in advance so that we make alternative arrangements for staying up with the instruction.

University Policies

Follow the [URL link](#) for access to information about the topics below:

- *Accessibility and Accommodations*
- *Canvas*
- *Class Session Recordings*
- *Title IX*
- *Illness Prevention and Protection*
- *Honor Code*
- *Student Wellbeing/Mental Health*
- *Additional Student Resources*

Course Policies

Cell Phones, Laptops and Other Portable Technology

Please ensure that your cell phone is on silent or turned off during class. Texting during class is not acceptable. If you need to take an important phone call, please step out of the classroom. You may use a laptop or tablet to take notes, but please avoid using the devices for other activities (checking email, online

shopping, etc.). Your compliance will help to maintain a positive environment for teaching and learning in our class period.

Late Work

All late assignments are still eligible for partial credit (95% after 1 day late, 90% after 2 days late, etc.); please turn them in. In many cases, I am happy to give deadline extensions if you communicate with me about how much more time you need and why.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Writing is an important form of learning and thinking: it is an extension of one's identity, a way to remember important information, and a way to develop analytical skills applicable to all academic areas. Therefore, it is essential that students' written work represents their own independent thinking. At the same time, there are ethical ways of using AI technology to aid in the composition process, and students may use AI technology at their instructor's discretion.

If students use AI (including but not limited to ChatGPT, Bard, Quillbot, or translators) at any point in the writing process, they must include a reflection at the beginning or end of the paper describing in detail how they used AI. Writing done for credit in a W-component or FYS course may not include any verbatim language from any source, including AI or a translator, without proper attribution via quotation marks and an in-text citation.

Registrar

For information on the academic calendar, add/drop/withdraw dates, midterm, and graduation, visit <https://www.augie.edu/academics/registrar>

Writing Center

The tutors at the Augustana Writing Center can help students with any stage of the writing process: planning, brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing. The Writing Center is located in the Fryxell Humanities Building (HUM 220). To learn more or make an appointment, visit www.augie.edu/writing or email writing@augie.edu. While the university, future graduate programs, and prospective employers expect students to be fluent in Standard Written Academic English, Augustana also deeply appreciates students' own unique voices drawing from their individual backgrounds; the Writing Center will respect and affirm the voice the students choose to write in.

Help Desk

Please contact helpdesk@augie.edu or 605.274.5331 for assistance with technology issues.

Remote assistance to your computer for software related issues is available from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday-Thursday and until 5 p.m. on Friday. Staff members will also be checking email and voicemail regularly outside of those hours.

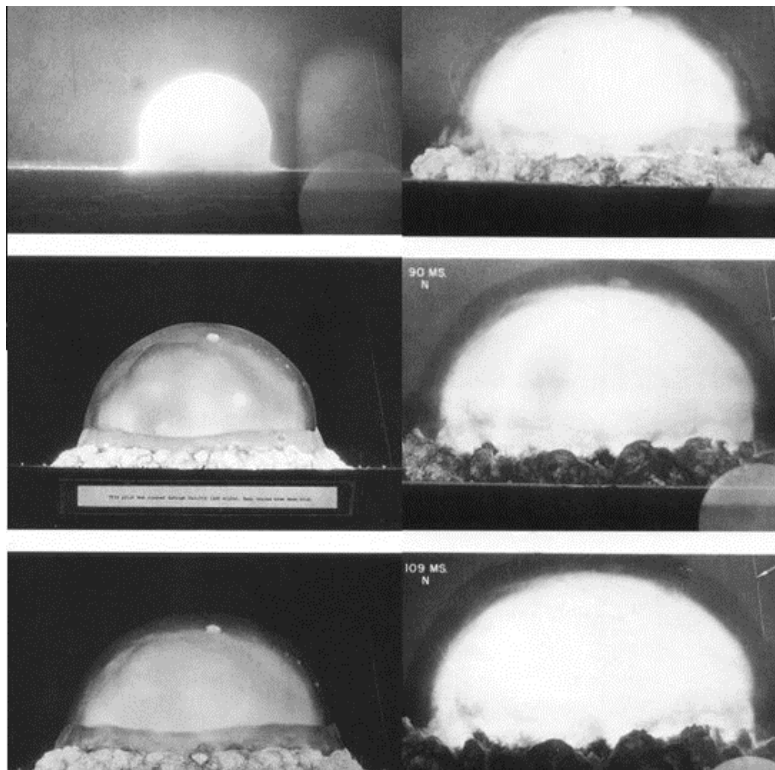
Course Modification Policy (inclement weather, illness, etc.)

If significant inclement weather, professor illness, or any special circumstance arises that may require an adjustment to the course schedule (i.e. an alternative assignment, switching to synchronous Zoom, canceling

the class, etc.), every attempt will be made to communicate such changes to students by the night before the scheduled class. Communication to students will come via an email to your AU email address. If you have reason to believe the class may not be able to be offered as scheduled, please keep an eye on these inboxes.

Student Learning Experiences Questionnaires (LEQs)

To help provide the instructor feedback on the course's environment and performance, both in terms of instructor and student, two anonymous surveys will be employed to gather information regarding the student experience. Both surveys will be accessible through the course's Canvas page, the first occurring around midterm and the second at the end of the semester (results of the final survey will be released after final grades are submitted by the faculty member).



The image to the left is a photographic series, in milliseconds, of the Trinity nuclear bomb test in Alamogordo desert, New Mexico, 16 July 1945. After detonation, American physicist and Manhattan Project director J. Robert Oppenheimer was heard quoting Hindu scripture the Bhagavad Gita, "Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds." The Manhattan Project, backed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, became the template for what was later termed the military-industrial complex.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Please note that the topics, readings, and deadlines below are subject to revision.

UNIT 1- COLD WAR AMERICA: 1945-1960S

Week One: Introduction

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Class Introductions, Course Approach, Blog Account and Video Sign-Ups

Readings

- None

Week Two: Cold War Origins

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Lecture: Two Superpowers

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Article Discussion: Nuclear Arms and Cultures of Secrecy

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Video Discussion: *Atomic Tests in Nevada: The Story of AEC's Continental Proving Ground*, 1955 film by the Atomic Energy Commission, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QL_YzlhqpbY

Readings

- Robert Dean, "Cultures of Secrecy in Postwar America," *Diplomatic History* 35 (September 2011).
- Sarah Alisbeth Fox, "Home on the Range," in *Downwind: A People's History of the Nuclear West* (Bison Books, 2014).

Week Three: Cold War Politics

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Lecture: Second Red Scare

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Article Discussion: Homophobia and The Second Red Scare

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Video Discussion: *Freedom and You*, 1962 film made by Warner Studios for the Department of Defense at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1xgQ5Fqxn4>

Readings

- Andrea Friedman, "The Smearing of Joe McCarthy: The Lavender Scare, Gossip, and Cold War Politics," *American Quarterly* 57 (December 2005), 1105-1129.

Week Four: Cold War Economy

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Lecture: Defense Spending, Military Keynesianism, and the Age of Affluence

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Article Discussion: The Military-Industrial Complex

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Film Discussion: *Dr. Strangelove; Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, 1964 film,
<https://archive.org/details/dr-strangelove-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-the-bomb>

Readings

- Gretchen Heefner, "Missiles and Memory: Dismantling South Dakota's Cold War," *Western Historical Quarterly* 38 (Summer 2007), 181-203.

UNIT 2- COLD WAR ORDER CHALLENGED, 1955-1970S

Week Five: Civil Rights Movement

MONDAY, MARCH 3

Lecture: The Forgotten Movement: Poor People's Campaign and Economic Justice

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5

Article Discussion: Challenging the Racist North?

FRIDAY, MARCH 7

Film Discussion: "Episode 2: Fighting Back, 1957-1962" and "Episode 3: Ain't Scared of Your Jails," *Eyes on the Prize*, 1991 documentary, rent from YouTube for \$1.99 per episode,
https://www.youtube.com/show/SCcBWz4m2qw-7_6u2XFAQ_Yg?sbp=GhoKGFVDbjNMSDZuSDVJeVRNX3ljOGk2aUZFQQ%253D%253D

Readings

- Jeanne Theoharis, "The Long Movement Outside of the South," in *A More Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

Week Six: Spring Break (NO CLASS)

MONDAY, MARCH 10 – FRIDAY, MARCH 14

Week Seven: Vietnam War

MONDAY, MARCH 17

Lecture: Colonial War, Civil War, Cold War

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

Article Discussion: A Poor Man's Fight?

FRIDAY, MARCH 21

Video Discussion: "Interview with My Lai Veterans" 1970, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vp-6WFSXO4o> and "A Day in Vietnam," US Marine Corps Documentary in Color 1967, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwP5PHEqxZk>

Readings

- Christian Appy, "A Working Class War" and Gerard J. DeGroot, "A Grunt's Life," in *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, 4th edition, edited by Robert McMahon (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).

Week Eight: Youth and the Anti-War Movement

MONDAY, MARCH 24

Lecture: Draft Numbers and University Campuses

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

Article Discussion: Hawks versus Doves as Class War?

FRIDAY, MARCH 28

Video Discussion: *The War at Home*, 1979 documentary, <https://tubitv.com/movies/571208/the-war-at-home>

Readings

- Penny Lewis, "Hardhats Versus Elite Doves," in *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

Week Nine: Deindustrialization

MONDAY, MARCH 31

Lecture: From Industrial Belt to Rust Belt

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

Article Discussion: Gendered Jobs and Economic Precarity

FRIDAY, APRIL 4

Film Discussion: *Heart of Steel*, 1983 film, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUUAZkcgrNw>

Readings

- Gabriel Winant, "Enduring Disaster: The Recycling of the Working Class," in *The Next Shift: The Fall of Industry and the Rise of Health Care in Rust Belt America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

Week Ten: Oral History

MONDAY, APRIL 7

Computer Lab: Finalize Interviewee and Develop Questions

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

Computer Lab: Research Historical Record; **Due: Interviewee Short Biography and Questions**

FRIDAY, APRIL 11

NO CLASS (Use time to conduct interviews) Due: Annotated Bibliography of 3 Sources

Readings

- Judith Moyer, "Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History," at: http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html Read Section II: Guidelines and Suggestions.

UNIT 3- AGE OF FRACTURE, 1970S TO THE PRESENT

Week Eleven: Rise of Conservatism, Part I

MONDAY, APRIL 14

Lecture: Political Realignment and the "New Right"

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16

Article and Video Discussion: Feminism and the Evangelical Right; Phyllis Schlafly debates Betty Friedan on Equal Rights Amendment, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WncN6PWEMGo> **Historical Memory Draft Due for Peer Review**

FRIDAY, APRIL 18

No Class: Good Friday

Readings

- Daniel K. Williams, "Jerry Falwell's Sunbelt Politics: The Regional Origins of the Moral Majority," *Journal of Policy History* 22 (2010): 125-147.

Week Twelve: Rise of Conservatism, Part II

MONDAY, APRIL 21

No Class: Easter Monday

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23

Lecture: Reagan and Clinton: Rightward Shift of Republican and Democratic Parties

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

Article and Video Discussion: Public Lands Battles and the New Right; *The Public Trust*, 2020 documentary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGjnIG7puzY>

Readings

- James Morton Turner, "'The Spector of Environmentalism': Wilderness, Environmental Politics, and the Evolution of the New Right," *Journal of American History* 96 (June 2009): 123-148.

Week Thirteen: From Cold War to the “War on Terror”

MONDAY, APRIL 28

Lecture: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East

TUESDAY, APRIL 30

Article Discussion: “Keep Shopping” and the Crisis of Consumerism

TUESDAY, MAY 2

Video Discussion: “Losing Iraq,” Frontline PBS 2014 documentary, <https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-losing-iraq/>

Readings

- Andrew J. Bacevich, “War without Exits” and “The Crisis of Profligacy” in *The Limits of Power* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 1-66.

Week Fourteen: Climate Change and the Politics of Oil

MONDAY, MAY 5

Lecture: Climate Science and Policy since 1945

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

Article Discussion: Final Days for Free-Market Fundamentalism?

FRIDAY, MAY 9

Video Discussion: *Merchants of Doubt* (2014), \$3.99 Rent from YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpuTBYIS9m0>) or Amazon Prime (https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/amzn1.dv.gti.caa9f74d-e175-00f5-3355-423edc15f755?autoplay=0&ref=atv_cf_strg_wb)

Readings

- Joshua P. Howe, “Introduction” and “Gospel of the Market” in *Behind the Curve: Science and the Politics of Global Warming* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 3-15, 170-196.

Week Fifteen: Great Recession of 2008

MONDAY, MAY 12

Lecture: The Mortgage Crisis and Shifting Politics

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

Article Discussion: Wall Street Deregulation and the Housing Bubble

FRIDAY, MAY 16

Video Discussion: *The Big Short* (2015), \$3.99 Rent from Google Play (<https://play.google.com/store/movies/details?id=Lmk4LlcseM4.P&pli=1>) or Amazon Prime (https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/amzn1.dv.gti.7aa9f694-a338-0e31-fdb1-93891a7b5c0a?autoplay=0&ref=atv_cf_strg_wb)

Readings

- Jonathan Levy, *Ages of American Capitalism: A History of the United States* (New York: Random House, 2022), selection.

Week Sixteen: Finals Week

MONDAY, MAY 19

Final Examination 9-11 a.m.- Oral History Paper Due to Canvas