History 376: The United States since 1945

Dr. Andrew Johns, Brigham Young University, Fall 2010

Lecture: Monday, Wednesday, & Friday, 8:00-8:50am, 348 MARB
Office Hours: Monday, 9:00-11:00am, 2161 JFSB
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Course Overview

This course will explore the development of the United States since the end of World War II. We will focus on a number of themes, including the role of the United States in the broader world, the evolution of the American political system, the key presidential elections of the past six decades, the influence of television, and the major constitutional issues raised in the last half of the 20th century. We will also consider the extent to which U.S. political, diplomatic, economic, and cultural preponderance has influenced the rest of the world, both positively and negatively, during this period, and what role the United States might play as the 21st century continues to unfold.

As we explore U.S. history since 1945, we will be dealing with wars and controversial political, social, and cultural issues. We will read, listen to, watch, and discuss material that could potentially be shocking or even offensive (morally or politically) to some of you. There will be violent and jarring images, raw emotion, and adult language or themes in the films, video clips, sound bites, and course readings. This is an elective course, not a requirement. IF YOU HAVE A STRONG PERSONAL OBJECTION TO WATCHING OR READING THESE THINGS, YOU SHOULD OPT TO TAKE ANOTHER COURSE. By remaining enrolled in History 376 this semester, you implicitly give your consent to the material we cover; do not come to me (or have your parents, friends, or relatives complain to the university) later in the semester and object.

The films, television programs, and readings required for this course have not been selected for your entertainment, but rather for your education. They aim to expand understanding beyond your own experience. Parts may be startling or challenge your assumptions and/or beliefs, but at the same time descriptive of the human condition and the events and themes central to the course. Some feel that if a film, television show, music, or book does not leave them refreshed, uplifted, and joyous, it has no value. Like monks cloistered in a monastery, they prefer to sever all contact with the “world.” In an academic environment, this attitude is misplaced. Consider this: Hannibal Lechter and Jeffrey Dahmer were imprisoned for cutting up corpses (and eating them), but dissecting human remains is an integral part of anatomy courses. The difference, of course, is the intent and purpose of the experience.

Expectations, Responsibilities, & Course Policies

Student Responsibilities: The lectures in this course will be designed to highlight specific issues and complement the material in the assigned readings. Thus, it is in your best interest to attend each lecture and take notes (please be aware that, as a policy, I do not circulate my PowerPoint slides). Please be on time and do not leave lecture early without notifying me in advance and refrain from reading newspapers or being disruptive during class (this includes turning cell phones to off or vibrate). You are expected to do ALL of the reading for the course and participate in class discussions; failure to do so will have a detrimental effect on your grade. You will be accountable on the exams for the assigned material and everything presented in lecture. Ultimately, you will get out of this course what you put into it (a cliché to be sure, but an appropriate one). You may be tempted to ignore this advice, but as Professor Dave Jennings said to the students at Faber College, “that doesn’t relieve you of your responsibility for this material….Listen, I’m not joking. This is my job!”

In addition, this course will not be on Blackboard, so please be sure to check your e-mail regularly for updates or announcements relating to the course. If you do not have an e-mail account, please join the 21st century and obtain one.
(either through the university or one of the many free e-mail services) and update your preferred e-mail account information on Route Y as soon as possible so that I can contact you if necessary.
GRADE APPEALS PROCEDURE: If you have a question about a grade you received, you must wait 24 hours after receiving the paper or exam back before making an appeal. Further, I will not discuss a grade with you until you have submitted a detailed written appeal discussing your specific concerns. I reserve the right to raise or lower the grade upon further review. There is an iron-clad, one-week time limit on any discussion of a grade.

LATE PENALTIES: Failure to submit any of the writing assignments on time will result in a grade penalty. Each 24 hour period after the stated due date will incur a penalty of two letter grades (e.g. B to D), NO EXCEPTIONS. Excuses such as getting engaged, broken-hearted roommates, computer catastrophes, “my plane/bus/train was late,” inclement weather, and the timeless “my dog ate my homework” will not cut it. Curiously, family deaths and other tragic tales of woe and misery occur with unbelievable, X-Filian regularity around due dates. Plan ahead to ensure that these cosmic misfortunes won’t affect you. This is, after all, college and you are an adult; you are responsible for your own success or failure.

HONOR CODE & PLAGIARISM: As a student at Brigham Young University, you have agreed to abide by the university’s honor code. In this course, the most relevant aspects of that commitment relate to academic honesty. A detailed explanation of the university’s policies on plagiarism (additional information below), cheating, and fabrication can be found at www.byu.edu/honorcode/honor_code.htm. I take these issues very seriously and will prosecute ALL violations vigorously according to Brigham Young University policies.

Plagiarism is defined at www.historians.org/governance/pd/curriculum/plagiarism_defining.htm. The short version is that all work for this course must be your own. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to) borrowing a friend’s paper, lifting text from digital sources, using “paper mills,” and reproducing the ideas and phrases of other authors without credit. In addition, you cannot “self-plagiarize;” that is, you cannot use a paper from another course for this course (past, present, or future), and vice versa. All course work must be created exclusively for this course.

ACADEMIC CIVILITY: Feel free to express opinions that are contrary to what I say, what other students say, or what the readings say. Often, it is through debates over interpretation of historical material that clarity (if not consensus) about the past emerges. Remember, however, that this is an academic environment. A whole spectrum of opinions exists on any given subject and it is vital to respect the opinions of others even if you are convinced that their view is totally, completely, and unconditionally wrong. Personal attacks or criticisms based on gender, ethnicity, political or religious beliefs, etc. will not be tolerated.

DISABILITY & DISCRIMINATION: If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this course, contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (1520 WSC), which can evaluate your disability and assist in arranging for reasonable accommodations.

Sexual discrimination or harassment (including student-to-student harassment) is prohibited both by law and by Brigham Young University policy. If you believe you are being subjected to such behavior, bring your concerns to me. Alternatively, you may lodge a complaint with the Equal Employment Office (D-240C ASB) or the Honor Code Office (4440 WSC).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: An overview of the learning objectives for history majors–most of which apply to this course, even for non-history majors–can be found at history.byu.edu/undergrad/learning.htm.
ASSIGMENTS & GRADING

Please be aware that your previous academic preparation (e.g. writing and research skills, historical knowledge) and effort expended will affect your performance in this course; your perception of your effort—by itself—is not enough to justify a distinguished grade. Your grade will be determined on your performance in the following four areas:

1. **PARTICIPATION (20%)**: During the semester, we will take time to discuss the readings and course themes, as well as relevant current events. Participation in class (asking and answering questions, contributing to discussions, etc.), quizzes or unannounced in-class writing assignments on the course material, and attendance at relevant on-campus lectures (at the Kennedy Center and elsewhere, dates and times to be announced throughout the semester; these are also available as podcasts in case you have a schedule conflict) will also factor into this portion of your grade.

2. **MIDTERM EXAM (20%)**: The midterm will cover the first half of the course. You will be able to take the exam at the Testing Center (HGB) any time between Monday, October 25 and Friday, October 29; be sure to consult the Testing Center’s schedule for its operating hours on those days and leave yourself sufficient time (no less than two to three hours) to complete the exam. NO LATE EXAMS WILL BE GIVEN FOR ANY REASON; if you miss the midterm for any reason—including illness, lack of preparation, or faulty memory—your final will be worth 50% of your overall course grade.

3. **RESEARCH PAPER (30%)**: You will receive a separate handout with more details on this assignment, which will require primary source research, familiarity with the relevant secondary literature, and adherence to the style guide (also forthcoming). The paper is due **BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF LECTURE on Monday, November 29** [this is the Monday after the Thanksgiving holiday, so plan accordingly]. Each 24 hour period thereafter will incur a penalty of two letter grades (e.g. B to D), **NO EXCEPTIONS**. Absolutely no papers will be accepted after the end of lecture on Wednesday, December 1. You must submit and pass the essay in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

4. **FINAL EXAM (30%)**: The final exam will be comprehensive but weighted significantly toward the second half of the course. The exam will be given in class on **Wednesday, December 15 from 7:00AM to 11:00AM** (don’t blame me—I didn’t make the schedule). Absolutely no early or late exams will be given to accommodate travel schedules.

REQUIRED READINGS FOR HISTORY 376

Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*
Mark Hamilton Lytle, *Uncivil Wars: The Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon*
N.B. I: There is no official “textbook” for this course. If you find that you would like to consult a general overview of the period, the following is a non-comprehensive list of suitable titles:

Michael Hunt, *The World Transformed*
Norman Rosenberg & Emily Rosenberg, *In Our Times*, 7th ed.
Michael Schaller, et. al., *Present Tense*, 3rd ed.

N.B. II: The required books will be available at the BYU Bookstore. To subvert the monopoly system (and potentially save yourself some money) you might consider buying books from an alternate source such as bookfinder.com, abebooks.com, or amazon.com. If you choose to purchase the books from another vendor, be sure that you get the correct edition of each title.

N.B. III: We will occasionally devote class time to talk about current events and how they relate to the course themes (e.g. 2010 midterm elections). To participate in and understand these discussions, you will need to get into the habit of reading a newspaper regularly—a good habit to acquire in any event. Fortunately, you can pick up a free copy of the *New York Times* at the Kennedy Center each weekday, and most major national newspapers (including the *NYT, Los Angeles Times,* and *Washington Post*) have free on-line editions that you can take advantage of. *The Daily Universe* is NOT considered to be major, or national, or (frequently) a newspaper...broaden your horizons.

**REQUIRED FILMS FOR HISTORY 376**

You will be responsible for watching a number of films for this course (see the dates by which you should see each film on the schedule below). The films will be available to view at the LRC in the library, although you might choose to watch these films in groups...it’s more fun that way. The films will be featured on the midterm and final exams and will be the subject of random unannounced in-class writing assignments.

*Good Night, and Good Luck*  
*Dr. Strangelove...*  
*Malcolm X*  
*All the President’s Men*  
*Reccount*  
*No End in Sight*

N.B. I: If you have strong personal objections to seeing one or more of these films, you must contact me no later than Friday, September 10 to discuss the requirement and, if necessary, arrange an alternate assignment.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYTHING ON THIS SYLLABUS AND ALL OTHER HANDOUTS I DISTRIBUTE, AS WELL AS ALL E-MAIL COMMUNICATION THAT OCCURS DURING THE SEMESTER. IN THE IMMORTAL WORDS OF BRAD HAMILTON, “LEARN IT, KNOW IT, LIVE IT.” IGNORANCE IS NOT A VALID DEFENSE.
EXTREMELY TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENTS

(1 HAVE A TENDENCY TO GET COMPLETELY OFF SCHEDULE BY ABOUT WEEK #2)

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WEEK #1: THE SPECTER OF COMMUNISM

August 30        Introduction to the course and liturgical review of syllabus and handouts
September 1      World War II and the origins of the Cold War
September 3      Globalization of Containment

Reading: Gaddis, ch. 1-2
Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 1-2
Watson, prologue & ch. 1

WEEK #2: "ON EVERY FRONT"

September 6      NO CLASS: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
September 8      McCarthyism & the Cold War at Home
September 10     In-class video: *I Love Lucy*
                        Document, film, & readings discussion

Reading: Gaddis, ch. 3-4
Watson, ch. 2-3

Assignment: See *Good Night, and Good Luck*

WEEK #3: HAPPY DAYS?

September 13     Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s foreign policy
September 15     In-class video: *The Prize*
September 17     NO CLASS: MOVIE DAY #1

Reading: Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 3
Lytle, ch. 1-3
Watson, ch. 4

Assignment: See *Dr. Strangelove*...
WEEK #4: COLD WAR LIBERALISM

September 20  Conformity and its Critics
September 22  Civil Rights & Civil Liberties
September 24  Civil Rights & Civil Liberties II
In-class video: I Spy

Reading: Dudziak, all
          Gaddis, ch. 5-6
          Watson, ch. 5

Assignment: See Malcolm X

WEEK #5: THE NEW FRONTIER

September 27  Camelot
September 29  “Pay any Price, Bear any Burden...”
October 1    Document, film, & readings discussion

RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC E-MAIL DEADLINE

Reading: Gaddis, ch. 7
          Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 4-5
          Lytle, ch. 4-6

WEEK #6: THE GREAT SOCIETY

October 4    The New Left
October 6    Creating the Great Society
October 8    Document, film, & readings discussion

Reading: Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 6-7
          Lytle, ch. 7-9
          Watson, ch. 6

WEEK #7: VIETNAM & THE LIMITS OF AMERICAN POWER

October 11   In class video: “America’s Longest War”
October 13   1968
October 15   Document, film, & readings discussion

Reading: Gaddis, ch. 8
          Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 9
          Lytle, ch. 10-11
WEEK #8: THE END OF LIBERALISM?
October 18 Rise of the New Right
October 20 Document, film, & readings discussion
October 22 Midterm review & catchup

Reading: Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 8
Lytle, ch. 12-14
Watson, ch. 7

WEEK #9: MIDTERM & MENTAL HEALTH
October 25 NO CLASS (TAKE EXAM AT TESTING CENTER)
October 27 NO CLASS (TAKE EXAM AT TESTING CENTER)
October 29 NO CLASS (TAKE EXAM AT TESTING CENTER)

Reading: Review for midterm exam/catch up on reading

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PART II: CRISES, CONSERVATISM, AND NEW CHALLENGES—1969 TO 2008

WEEK #10: THE IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY
November 1 Nixinger Foreign Policy
November 3 2010 midterm election results discussion
Document, film, & readings discussion
November 5 NO CLASS: MOVIE DAY #2

Reading: Gaddis, ch. 9-10
Lytle, ch. 15-16 & epilogue

WEEK #11: “IT SEEMED LIKE NOTHING HAPPENED”
November 8 Watergate and the Crisis of Confidence
In-class video: All in the Family
November 10 Blind Spot: America Begins to Confront Terrorism
November 12 Morality, Reason, & Power

Reading: Watson, ch. 8-9
Wilentz, prologue & ch. 1-2

Assignment: See All the President’s Men
WEEK #12: NADIR

November 15  “Morning in America”: The Reagan Years
November 17  From the “Evil Empire” to Glasnost and Perestroika
November 19  NO CLASS: DR. JOHNS OUT-OF-TOWN (Lecture @ Kroc Center for Peace and Justice, University of San Diego)

Reading: Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 10-11
Wilentz, ch. 3-4

WEEK #13: AMERICA RESURGENT

November 22  NO CLASS: MOVIE DAY #3
November 23  NO CLASS: IT’S TUESDAY, NOT FRIDAY
November 24  NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
November 26  NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Reading: Gaddis, ch. 11
Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 12
Wilentz, ch. 5-10

WEEK #14: THE WALL COMES DOWN... WHAT NOW?

November 29  The Culture Wars: Bush 41 and Clinton
December 1  Islam and anti-Americanism
December 3  Document, film, & readings discussion

Reading: Gaddis, ch. 12
Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 13
Watson, ch. 10
Wilentz, ch. 11-13

Assignment: See Recount and No End in Sight

WEEK #15: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

December 6  9/11, and the Second American Century
December 8  “Yes, We Can!” and the future of the United States

Reading: Griffith & Baker, eds., ch. 14
Watson, epilogue
Wilentz, ch. 14 & epilogue

FINAL EXAM: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15 AT 7:00AM-10:00AM, 348 MARB