The course aims to provide a rough overview of U.S. history since 1877. The focus will be on specific topics rather than on broad coverage of events. We will especially emphasize the changing meaning of democracy and the ways in which ordinary people have endeavored to shape the society and government, successfully or not. Therefore we will often ignore “high politics” in favor of understanding experience “on the ground.”

In addition, we will explore what it is that historians do, how they come to know what they know, and what an intelligent reader should be on the lookout for when reading historical scholarship.

DECORUM

- **Be kind.** There’s no need to upset your poor instructor by reading a newspaper, text messaging, or doing anything else not related to the course during class meetings. Nor is there any reason to be discourteous to your fellow students. Vigorous debate is fine, but personal attacks are not.

  I reserve the right to remove any student who either behaves offensively or is obviously unprepared and unengaged; should that happen, the student will be counted as absent for that day.

- **Don’t cheat.** Any kind of cheating or plagiarism is utterly unacceptable. You are required to know and abide by the UA code of academic integrity (see the link on the course website). Academic dishonesty, apart from generally stinking to high heaven, is an insult to your instructors, your fellow students, and your own abilities.

READINGS

Almost all the readings for this course are in the customized course reader available at the UA bookstore. The readings are roughly between 20 and 30 pages in length, and you usually have one reading per day. These readings are on various topics and drawn from various sources; their aim is to give you in-depth glimpses into American history as well as to encourage you to think about how historians work,
what problems we encounter in historical interpretation. There is no conventional
textbook. If you would like to get a broader view of U.S. history, with greater
coverage than can be provided in class, you are welcome to purchase a textbook
and read around in it. Some good ones include Nash et al., The American People:
Creating a Nation and A Society; Jones et al., Created Equal: A History of the
United States; and Faragher et al., Out of Many: A History of the American
People.

There are a few additional required readings (links posted on the course website).
In addition, I may add some readings during the course; if I do, these will be very
brief (one or two pages).

FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

Each class meeting is split into several parts. We will begin most days by discussing
the readings, which usually tie into the previous day’s theme; then we will pick
up a new theme through lecture and, often, films.

Attendance is crucial in such a condensed and small class. I reserve the right to
deduct up to 10 percent from your final grade for each unexcused absence, and to
require you to provide proper documentation for absences in order for them to be
excused.

You are expected to complete all required readings on time. This is essential:
a big part of the class will be discussing the readings, and given that it is such a
small class, everyone will need to contribute.

In addition, there will be frequent short (1-2 page) response papers, as well as
a final project. See the “assignments” handout for more guidelines on how to
complete these.

Grading

- Attendance and participation = 10 percent
- Response papers (5, lowest grade dropped) = 40 percent
- Quizzes (10) = 15 percent
- Final project = 35 percent, broken down as follows:
  - Description of final project = 5 percent
  - Summaries of selected articles = 5 percent
  - Final paper = 15 percent
  - Presentation = 10 percent
CLASS SCHEDULE

(Note: The page numbers below refer to the page numbers of the course reader. I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule as required.)

May 19 Introduction to class. A Bird’s Eye View of the 19th Century
   Read for tomorrow: Schwalbe, “Differences and Inequalities” (pp. 1–25)

May 20 The Meanings of Reconstruction
   Read for tomorrow: Davidson and Lytle, “The View from the Bottom Rail” (pp. 26–58)

May 21 American Expansion and Imperialism
   Response paper 1 due
   Read for tomorrow: Williams, “United States Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation” (link from course webpage)

May 22 A Gilded Age? Wealth and Poverty in the late 19th century
   Read for tomorrow: Schwantes, “Coxey’s Army: Dramatizing the Malaise of the 1890s” (pp. 59–78)

May 23 Progressive Era—the Motives and Meanings of Reform
   Film (part): One Woman One Vote
   Read for Tuesday: Woloch, “The Founding of Hull House” (pp. 98–112)

May 27 New Mass Media, New Mass Propaganda, New Mass Society
   Film (part): Modern Times
   Response paper 2 due
   Description of final project due
   Read for tomorrow: Sandos and Burgess, “Willie Boy in Two Worlds” (pp. 79–97)

May 28 Crises and Opportunities: Popular and Government Action in the Great Depression
   Film: Documentary/Great Depression (60 min)
   Read for tomorrow: Davidson and Lytle, “Dust Bowl Odyssey” (pp. 113–140)

May 29 World War on the Homefront
   Film? The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter
   Read for tomorrow: McEnaney, “Nightmares on Elm Street: Demobilizing in Chicago, 1945–1953” (link from course website)
   Response paper 3 due

May 30 Cold War on the Homefront
   Film: Dr. Strangelove (93 min)
Jun 2 From “Cold War Consensus” to the 1960s Protests
   Summaries of articles for final paper due
   Read for tomorrow: King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (link from course website)

Jun 3 War, Protest, and Reaction: 1960s to 1980s
   Response paper 4 due
   Read for tomorrow: Davidson and Lytle, “Where Trouble Comes” (pp. 158–189)

Jun 4 Scandals, Politics, the Media, and Democracy
   Read for tomorrow: Domhoff, “The Role of Public Opinion” (pp. 190–214) and Heilbroner, “Advertising as Agitprop” (pp. 215–221)

Jun 5 America at the Turn of the Millennium
   Film: Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room
   Read for tomorrow: Ehrenreich, “Nickel and Dimed” (pp. 222–242)

Jun 6 Visit to the Center for Creative Photography, Lee Friedlander exhibition
   (date still tentative)
   Response paper 5 due

Jun 7 Final presentations
   Final papers due