

HIST 203

Twentieth Century American History

Spring 2019 | University of Oregon | 123 GSH
Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00-3:20



Civil Rights Activists on the march for voting rights, from Selma to Montgomery, March 23, 1965.

Instructor: Steven Beda
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Office: 307 McKenzie Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:30
and by appointment

Graduate Employees:

Nichelle Frank

Annie Reiva

Sam McClelland

Olivia Wing

Course Description

This class explores the history of America in the twentieth century. We will begin with the history of immigration, then examine histories of the labor movement, civil rights movements, women's movements, and conservative movement.

As this description suggests, this class is mostly concerned with social movements, or the ways that people in the twentieth century have organized to challenge and change social, political, and economic systems. While we'll certainly talk about prominent politicians, wars, and economic circumstances, we'll always return to the ways that individuals experienced, understood, and contested those changes. To put it another way, this class is a history of twentieth century America from the bottom up.

This class is also concerned with the ways that the past informs the present. Do you wonder why immigration policy is so hotly debated in contemporary politics? Then you should understand the history of immigration restriction in the Progressive Era. Do you think Hillary Clinton's choice of a white suit during the second presidential debate was simply a fashion choice? Then you really need to learn about the suffrage movement of the early twentieth century. Are you interested in Black Lives Matter and modern efforts to address police overreach in black neighborhoods? Then you should know about the Black Panthers and their attempts to combat police brutality in the 1960s and 1970s. Are you curious about Donald Trump's unlikely rise to the presidency? Well, Trump's rise doesn't seem so "unlikely" when you know about Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign in 1964.

In other words, this course is interested in uncovering the connections between the past and the present. Throughout the quarter, our goal will be to think historically about America's contemporary problems and consider the ways that understanding history may help us address those problems.

Learning Objectives

Students who take this course can expect:

- A better understanding of twentieth century American history; specifically, a better understanding of immigration, labor, civil rights, women's rights, and conservative politics;
- A better understanding of how social and economic policies have and continue to shape racial, gender, and economic inequality;
- A better understanding of how political and social movements challenge and sometimes reinforce (both wittingly and unwittingly) racial, gender, and economic inequality;
- To engage in critical discussions about America's present-day problems and think about how history helps us better understand and address those problems;
- To hone their reading and interpretive skills through classroom discussions and careful readings of primary and secondary sources;
- To hone their writing skills through a research paper and two take-home exams.



American folk singer Woodie Guthrie, c. 1930s.

Course Format

This class meets three times a week. Mondays and Wednesdays will be largely devoted to lectures. Lectures are organized **thematically**. Every few weeks we will explore a different theme in twentieth century American history. This approach allows us to more carefully explore a specific topic in America's past and better understand the ways that history informs the present.

You will meet with your Graduate Employee in sections on either Thursdays or Fridays. Discussion sections are perhaps the most important part of this course. The best learning takes place in interactive environments, when students can ask questions and develop ideas alongside classmates. While lectures are interactive and I will regularly pose questions and ask for your thoughts, the size of our lecture means that not everyone will get a chance to participate regularly. I therefore strongly encourage you to take section seriously and come to all section meetings prepared to participate. The majority of your time in sections will be spent discussing readings or assignments. Please have the assignment listed in the schedule below completed before you come to your section. Individual Graduate Employees will each have their own policies regarding attendance and evaluating participation.



Oakland children on their way to school. Behind them, graffiti expresses support for the Black Panther Party, c. 1970.

Assignments

The major writing assignment for this class is a **six to eight** page research essay. Students may choose one of two options for their paper:

Option 1: Family History

Interview a member of your family (or a family friend) about their past experiences and then, using information from lectures and a minimum of two books, write an essay that situates your interviewee's experiences in a larger historical context. You will ultimately want to focus on a specific aspect of your family member's (or family friend's) story. Did your family member (or family friend) grow up in an immigrant neighborhood? Did your interviewee experience the Depression, World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War? Was your interviewee active in the Civil Rights movement, the Anti-War Movement, the Women's Movement, the Conservative Movement, or the Environmental Movement? (Or did your interviewee oppose any of those movements?) What type of career did your interviewee have? Did he or she work in industry, or an office, or in government? The goal of this assignment is to understand how social, political, and economic changes have shaped your family's history, and hence your history.

Option 2: Social Movement Memoir

Choose a memoir written by an activist who participated in one of the twentieth century's major social movements (from a list provided), and then, using information from lectures and a minimum of two books, write an essay that situates that memoir in a larger historical context. Questions you may want to address are: who belonged to this social movement? What problems was this social movement attempting to address? How did they go about attempting to address those problems? Were they successful? What challenges did they face? The goal of this assignment is to understand how people organize to solve problems and the challenges they face when they do so.

More specific assignment details, guidelines, and suggestions to help you get started will be made available on the course website. A research proposal (basically a one- to two-paragraph statement that states which project you've chosen, the major questions you will ask in the course of your research, and how you plan on answering those questions) is due via the course website by **12:00 p.m. (noon) on Friday, April 12th**. The final draft of your research paper is due by **12:00 p.m. (noon) on Friday, May 17th**.

You must also complete a take-home midterm and a (non-cumulative) take-home final. Both the midterm and final will be a combination of short-answer questions and a longer essay that will ask you to synthesize material presented in class and test your comprehension of lectures and readings. The take-home midterm is due on the course website by **12:00 p.m. (noon) on Friday, May 3rd** and the take-home final is due on the course website by **2:45 p.m. on Monday, June 10th**. Questions for both the midterm and final will be distributed approximately one week before the due dates.

Finally, participation is a major part of your grade. Your final participation grade will be based on your performance in discussion sections. And, in order to do well in discussion sections, you must complete all section assignments. See the class schedule below for a complete listing of section assignments.

You must complete every assignment to receive a passing grade in the class.



A California dust storm. Photograph by Dorothea Lange, 1942.



"Veterans of a Farm Hill Struggle," Linocut. By Richard V. Correll, 1981. Correll was a prominent Seattle-area artist, Communist Party member, and labor and civil rights activist. His woodcuts and linocuts celebrated workers and working-class activism.

Grading

Grades on each assignment, as well as your final grade for the course, will be given in points. Here is the point-value of each assignment as well as a breakdown of how each assignment will be used in calculating your final grade:

Participation	200 points (20%)
Take-Home Midterm	200 points (20%)
Take-Home Final	200 points (20%)
Research Paper Proposal	50 points (5%)
Final Research Paper	350 points (35%)

The following table will be used to translate your point score into your final letter grade:

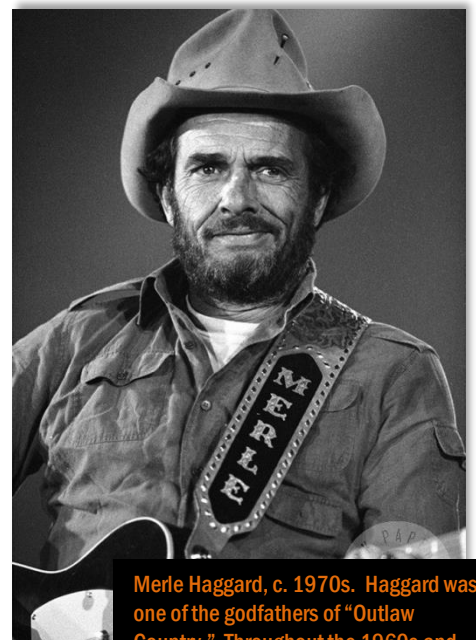
A+	100-99%
A	98-94
A-	93-90
B+	89-87
B	86-84
B-	83-80
C+	79-77
C	76-74
C-	73-70
D+	69-67
D	66-64
D-	63-61
F	60-0

Grading Guidelines

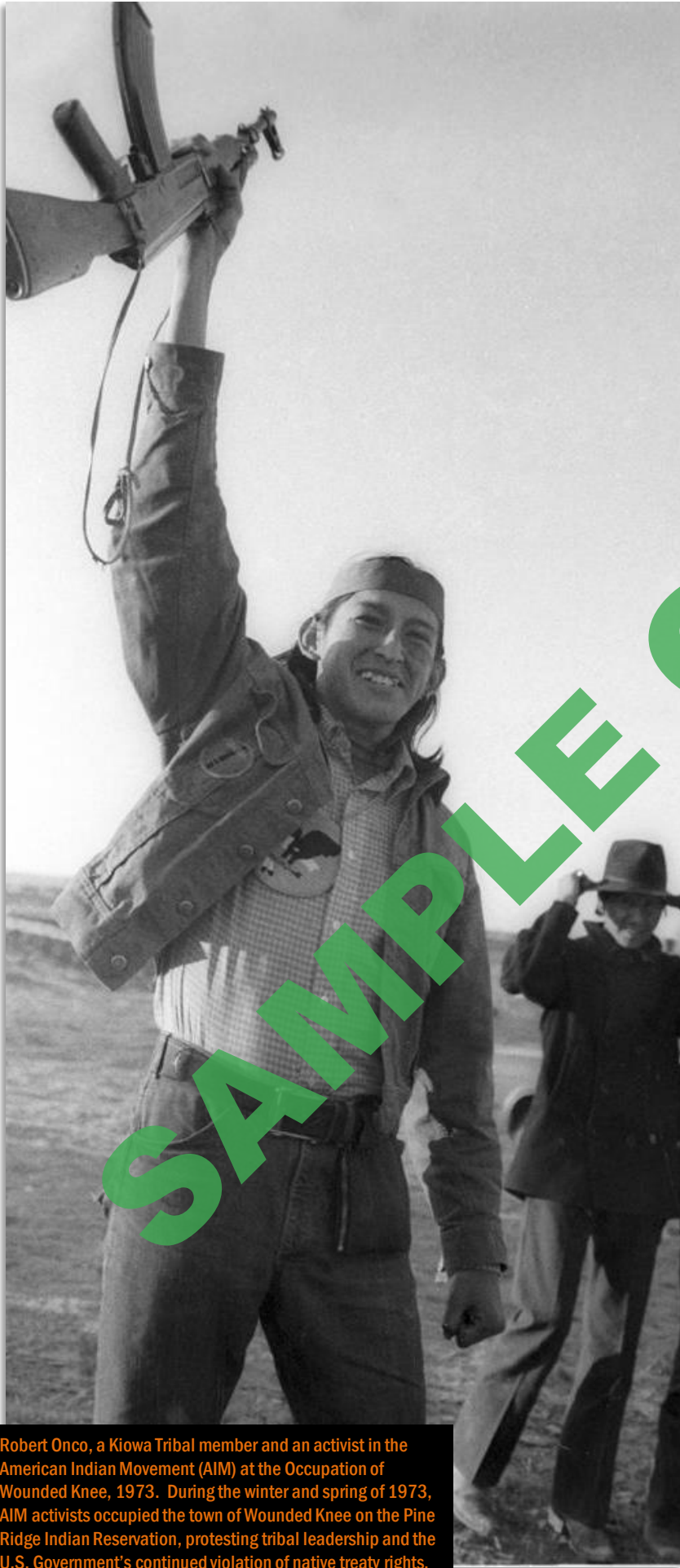
Your GEs and I will follow the guidelines established by the History Department in evaluating your work:

- A+: Work of unusual distinction;
- A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument;
- B: Work that satisfies the main criteria of the assignment, and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality;
- C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well;
- D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material and/or is executed with little regard for college standards;
- F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or is regarded for the assigned question.

For more information on the History Department's grading guidelines, please see: <http://history.oregon.edu/undergraduate/>



Merle Haggard, c. 1970s. Haggard was one of the godfathers of "Outlaw Country." Throughout the 1960s and 1970s his music captured the feelings and frustrations of the white working-class.



Late Work

Late assignments will automatically be deducted half a letter grade and then penalized an additional half-letter grade for every additional 24 hours they are late. For example, your midterm is due on the course website by noon on Friday, May 3rd. Let's suppose you receive a B+ on the midterm. If you didn't turn in your midterm until 12:30 p.m. on the 4th, then you'd receive a B on the assignment. If you didn't submit the midterm until Saturday, after 12:00 p.m., then you'd receive a B-. If you didn't get it in until Sunday after 12:00 p.m., you'd receive a C+. And so on.

Academic Dishonesty

Any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and students suspected of academic misconduct may face disciplinary action, as outlined in the Students' Code of Conduct:

<https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx>

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with University policies regarding plagiarism and what constitutes academic misconduct:

<http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html>

Please come see me or your Graduate Employee if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic misconduct or if you are unsure how to properly cite a source.

Course Website

This course uses the Canvas system and you can access the course website via your Canvas front page. The course website contains this syllabus, assignment guidelines, section assignments, the questions for the take-home midterm and final (when posted), and lecture slides. Please submit all written work online, via the course website. Your Graduate Employees and I will comment on and grade your written work directly in the Canvas system.

Robert Onco, a Kiowa Tribal member and an activist in the American Indian Movement (AIM) at the Occupation of Wounded Knee, 1973. During the winter and spring of 1973, AIM activists occupied the town of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, protesting tribal leadership and the U.S. Government's continued violation of native treaty rights.

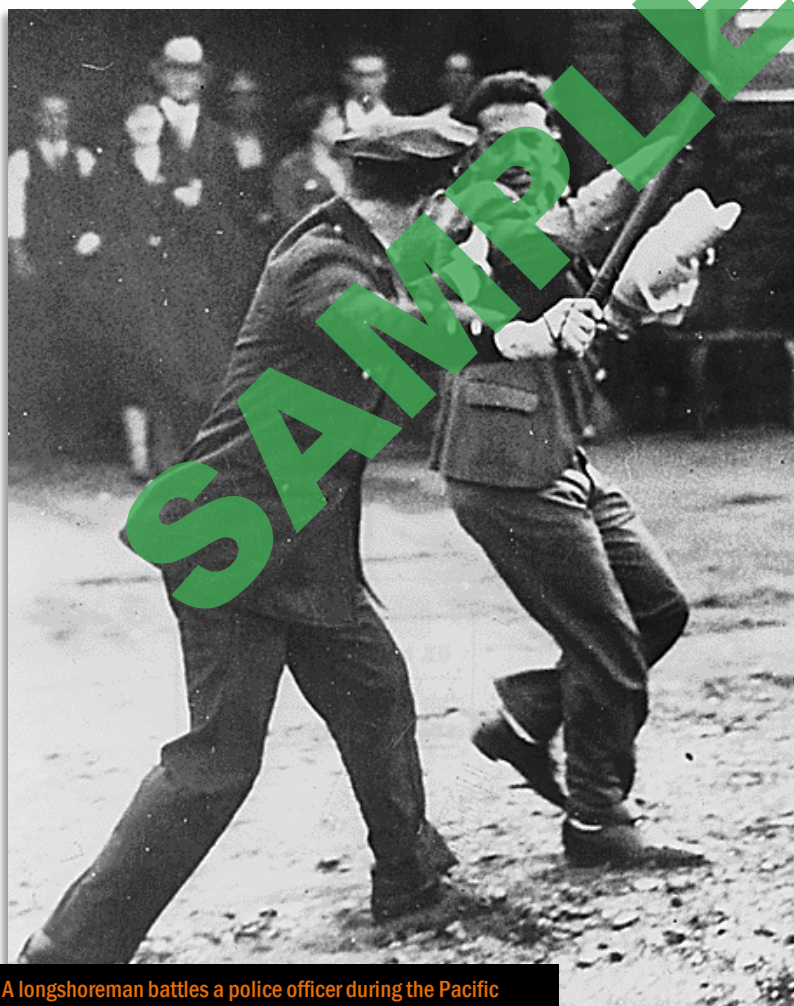
Required Texts

You are not required to purchase any books for this course. All readings, audio files, and video clips will be available on the course website.

While you certainly may choose to purchase the books you'll need to complete your research assignment, you certainly don't have to. All the recommend readings suggested in the research assignment guidelines are available at UO's libraries.



Norman Rockwell's "Rosie the Riveter," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 1943



A longshoreman battles a police officer during the Pacific Coast Longshore Strike, San Francisco, 1934.

Instructor Contact

I am here to help you. I encourage you to come see me during my scheduled office hours (Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:30), or if you can't make those, let me know and I'm happy to find another time to meet. You can come see me to talk about any of the material covered in class, a reading you didn't quite understand, or if there's some aspect of history you'd like to know more about. I'm also more than happy to read early drafts of your paper and make suggestions for improvements. Or, you can just stop by just to chat. Email is the best way to get ahold of me. I will respond to all student emails within 24 hours.

PART I

"I Lift My Lamp Beside the Golden Door"

Immigration in America, from the Progressive Era to the Present



Domingo Ulloa, *Braceros*, oil on canvas, 1960. Ulloa's paintings captured the experiences of Mexican guest workers, also known as Braceros, who came to the United States between 1942 and 1964. Most Braceros worked in the agriculture industry.

WEEK 1

April 1: The "Problem of Assimilation:" Third Wave Immigrants in America

April 3: Whiteness of a Different Color: Immigration and the Threat of "Race Suicide"

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race, or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), pp. xix-xxv; 3-36;

Adam Serwer, "White Nationalism's Deep American Roots: A long-overdue excavation of the book that Hitler called his 'bible,' and the man who wrote it," *The Atlantic*, April 2019.

WEEK 2

April 8: The War on Alcohol: Prohibition, Immigrants, and the Origins of the War on Drugs

April 10: Closing the Golden Door: Nativism, the KKK, and Immigration Restriction in the 1920s

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: "Who Was Shut Out?: Immigration Quotas, 1925-1927," History Matters website;

"Shut the Door": A Senator Speaks for Immigration Restriction," History Matters website;

Savannah Cox, "Trump's Refugee Ban Isn't as Un-American as You Think," *New Republic*, January 30, 2017;

RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE ON COURSE WEBSITE BY 12:00 p.m. (NOON), FRIDAY, APRIL 12th

WEEK 3

April 15: Claiming Whiteness: How Third Wave Immigrants Became White

April 17: *Los Braceros*: Guest Worker Programs, Immigrant "Illegality," and the Politics of Deportation

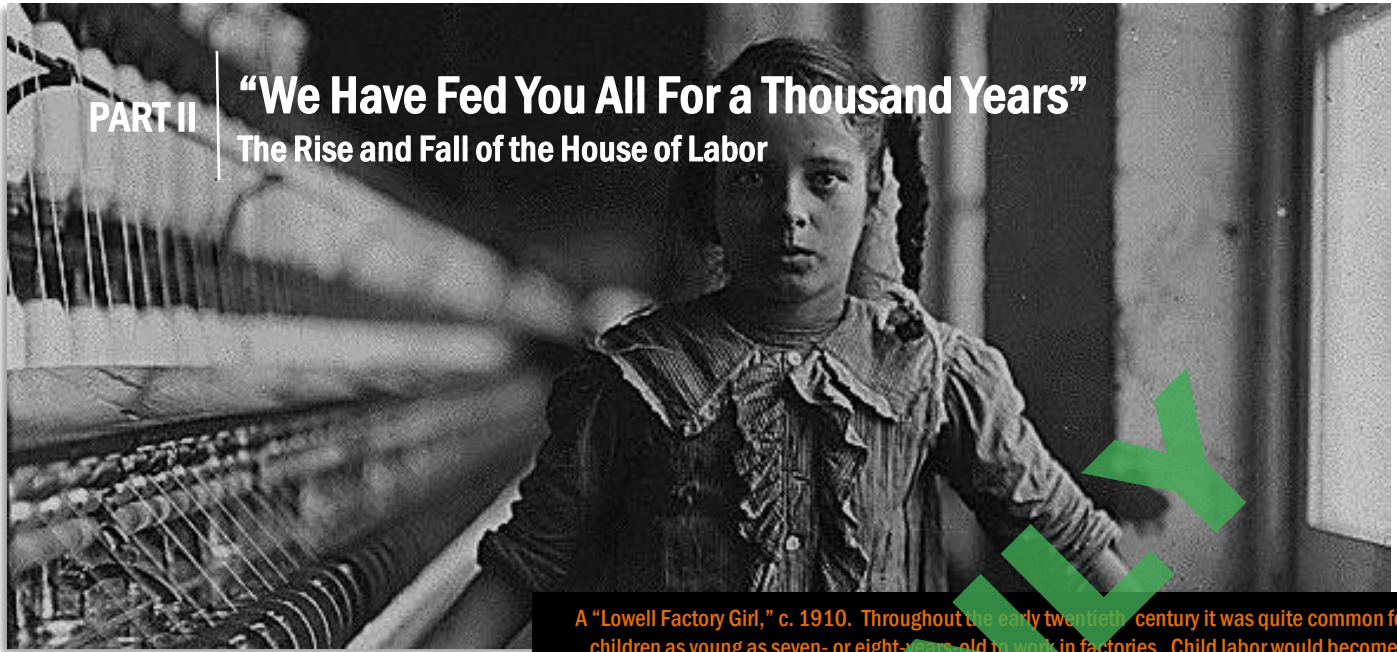
SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Census and immigration documents, available on course website.

PART II

“We Have Fed You All For a Thousand Years”

The Rise and Fall of the House of Labor



A “Lowell Factory Girl,” c. 1910. Throughout the early twentieth century it was quite common for children as young as seven- or eight-years old to work in factories. Child labor would become a major area of reform in the Progressive Era.

WEEK 4

- April 22: “The Working-Class and Employing Class Have Nothing in Common:” Radical Working-Class Politics
April 24: Slavery By Another Name: Sharecropping and the Black Working-Class

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

LISTEN: Belabored Podcast #78: The Union and the University

WEEK 5

- April 29: Making a New Deal: Politics, Labor, and Race in the 1930s
May 1: What the Original New Deal Can Teach Us About the “Green New Deal”

SECTION ASSIGNMENT

LISTEN: Oral Histories of Flint Sit-Down Strikers, Walter P. Reuther Library Website.

READ: Noam Scheiber, “Eyeing the Trump Voter, ‘Fight for \$15’ Widens Its Focus,” *New York Times*, November 29, 2016.

TAKE-HOME MIDTERMS DUE ON CLASS WEBSITE BY 12:00 p.m. (NOON), FRIDAY, MAY 3rd

WEEK 6

- May 6: Redlined: Race and New Deal Housing Policy
May 8: Making the Sun Belt: Operation Dixie, the Taft-Hartley Act, and the Failures of Civil Rights Unionism

SECTION ASSIGNMENT

READ: Emily Badger, “How Redlining’s Racist Effects Lasted for Decades,” *New York Times*, August 24, 2017;

Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014

PART III

“The Fierce Urgency of Now” America’s Civil Rights Movements



Memphis sanitation workers on strike, March 1968. In April, Dr. Martin Luther King travelled to Memphis to lend his support to the strike. It would be his last campaign. King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4th.

WEEK 7

May 13: Beyond “I Have a Dream:” The Radicalism of Martin Luther King

May 15: “We Shall Overcome:” The Music of Civil Rights

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Martin Luther King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” April 16, 1963; “Where Do We Go From Here?,” August 16, 1967; “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” April 3, 1968;

Jamil Smith, “Martin Luther King Doesn’t Belong to You,” *New Republic*, January 18, 2016.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON COURSE WEBSITE BY 12:00 p.m. (NOON), FRIDAY, MAY 17th

WEEK 8

May 20: “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised:” Black Power and the Black Panthers

May 22: The American Indian Movement and the Chicano Movement

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

WATCH: Oral Histories of Seattle Black Panther Party members, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project.

READ: The Black Panthers, “The Ten Point Platform and Program,” 1966;

The Movement for Black Lives, “Platform.”

WEEK 9

May 27: Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: A Brief History, from the Lowell “Factory Girls” to #MeToo

May 29: The First Gay Pride Parade Was a Riot: The LGBTQ Movement, Before and After Stonewall

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

LISTEN: “How Did Feminists React to the Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal?,” *Slow Burn Podcast*, season 2, episode 7.

PART IV

“We Don’t Smoke Marijuana Down on Main Street”
The Conservative Ascendancy



President Richard M. Nixon at a campaign stop during his second run for the White House, 1972

WEEK 10

June 3: “Segregation Now, Segregation Forever,” George Wallace, Barry Goldwater and the Origins of the New Right

June 5: “This Family Will NOT Be Bused:” Civil Rights and the White Working-Class

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Pete Hamill, “The Revolt of the White Lower Middle Class,” *New York Magazine*, April 14, 1969.

TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE ON COURSE WEBSITE BY 2:45 p.m., MONDAY, JUNE 10th