HIST 2600 Problems in U.S. History
Fall 2004
Dr. Taniguchi

Contact information: Office hours in C-118-G: T-Th 2:30-3:30 (except for Graduate Committee meetings, one Thursday afternoon per month), and W 10:30-12, 3:45-5:15
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Goal of Course: To explore movements of events and ideas through U.S. history by studying historians’ ideas and developing our own.

Required texts (available at Kiva bookstore):

PART I: WHY DO WE DO THIS?
Why are we studying this history (aside from the grade…)?
HIST 2600 a general education course. That means we will meet the following university objectives:
1. Acquire subject knowledge: amass pertinent facts (for CONTEXT – a term we will explore in the first class).
2. Practice information retrieval and evaluation methods: get library books, read Brinkley and Rampolla, put information to its appropriate use.
3. Practice inquiry skills and critical thinking: analyze the historical interpretations of others and develop our own.
4. Develop communication skills: in this class, use both written (essays, exams) and oral skills (panel discussions).
5. Develop global or multi-ethnic perspectives: the history of the United States is intricately entwined with global issues and its multi-ethnicity repeatedly emerges in our historical study.

One major benefit is to learn to assess when historians – and people who quote them -- are messing with your mind. This skill is called CRITICAL THINKING. It’s useful everywhere.

PART II: HOW DO WE DO THIS?
We approach history on three levels.
1. The factual level: a series of CHRONOLOGICAL events, ideas, and people. These facts form the context and support for interpretation.
2. The level of periodization: facts grouped together under a specific label or ERA, such as “The Colonial Era,” “The Roaring Twenties” or “The Great Depression.” Grouping facts in this way makes them more manageable.

3. The historiographical level: this form of analysis takes into consideration that every single historian LIVES in a particular era, and WRITES about another (usually), generating a sense of MOVEMENT of ideas through time. History, after all, is NOT truth, but interpretation. How do you suppose “The Roaring Twenties” looked to a historian from the era of the Great Depression? To someone in the 1960s? How do the 1960s look to you, living in the 21st century?

PART III: WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?
In this course, we will explore movements in history and their interpretation. In order to do that, you have to be prepared with some knowledge of both chronological events and of the historian’s PERSPECTIVE.

You have to look up the chronological facts for yourself. That’s why you have been assigned Alan Brinkley’s American History: A Survey, 11th ed., Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003 (combined edition), a textbook which gives a very thorough description of facts from several points of view (including social/cultural history, environmental history, and global history).

The rest of your work involves library books. Historians invariably tell you what PERSPECTIVE they have. This revelation is found in the “Introduction” to their books (the part most students never read). Using your textbook, Alan Brinkley’s American History: A Survey, we will be concentrating on the boxes labeled “Where Historians Disagree” (WHD). As you prepare your panel discussions (see syllabus), you will have to go to the library, check out the books written by the historians who are mentioned in the boxes, and READ THEIR INTRODUCTIONS. Use the facts given in the appropriate chapters by Brinkley to provide the context and additional evidence for your panel discussion.

Students NOT on a panel on the days designated must instead submit a typewritten “Position Paper” (stating YOUR position on the question) of UP TO one page, double-spaced, answering the question on the syllabus for that day. These will be collected as you come in the door, checked off (worth up to 3 points each), and will be returned to you.

You can use these position papers, if you wish, as a basis for an Interpretive Essay of UP TO FOUR pages submitted on GRADING DAYS (see syllabus). For more information, see handout, “Panels, Position Papers, and Interpretive Essays.”

EXAMS are cumulative (cover the whole course) and are in two parts: an essay question and short answer section. Essay questions will be distributed ONE WEEK in advance, given to each student IN EXCHANGE FOR A LARGE, BLANK BLUEBOOK, which you may purchase at Kiva bookstore. There will be three essay questions for the midterm,
four for the final. On the day of the exam, ONE number will be drawn from a hat (assuming anyone wears one). Everyone in the class will write the answer to that same question. In addition, each of the class periods, whether lecture or panel, will also be the basis for a CLASS LIST of important historical terms. These will be the basis of the short answer section. Again, students will have a choice of terms, but must answer a total of five by (1.) defining the term and (2.) explaining briefly its importance to U.S. history. The essay will be worth 75 points; the short answer terms, five points each for a total of 25 points. Each exam is therefore worth a total of 100 points.

Grading scale:
Points for this class are awarded on the following basis:
Position papers & introductory work, 3 points each 30
Panel discussions (2 @ 50 points ) 100
Interpretive essays (2 @ 50 points) 100
Midterm exam 100
Major Project (includes Prospectus and Discussion) 150
Final exam 100

TOTAL 580

Your grade is based on an average of points earned divided by points possible:
90 to 100 per cent  = A
80 to 89.9 “ “ = B
70 to 79.9 “ “ = C
55 to 69.9 “ “ = D
54.9 per cent and below = F

There is no rounding up. In order to earn an “A,” for example, you must have an average of 90 per cent.

All Withdrawals and CR/NC slips MUST BE SIGNED by the date indicated on your “Schedule of Classes.” History majors or those with a History concentration must take this class for a grade.

PART IV: WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?
COMES TO CLASS. That’s basic, but worth stating.

HAND IN WORK ON TIME. NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED. Papers are due in class. Not in my box. Not under my office door. Not by 5 PM. No e-mailed papers accepted. You may hand in work early, however.

DO YOUR OWN WORK. Give credit where credit is due, using Chicago style (the ONLY style explained in your text by Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History, 4th ed. Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004.) Rampolla explains WHEN to cite (see Chapter 6 “Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It”) and HOW to cite (using Chicago style, which is what historians do. See Chapter 7, “Quoting and Documenting Sources.”) ANY STUDENT CAUGHT IN AN ACT OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL BOTH FAIL THE COURSE AND BE SUBJECT TO FULL ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE. (In other words, your infraction will be reported to the University.)
PART V: DOES THIS COURSE HAVE ANY RELEVANCE TO TODAY?
Yes. After spending the entire semester studying problems in U.S. history from other
historians’ points of view, each student will prepare for and help conduct a roundtable
discussion on CURRENT problems in U.S. history on Dec. 7. See handout “Major
Project Portfolio” for more details.

Syllabus: (tentative; may be changed at the discretion of the professor)
The class topics are listed here. The reading proceeds chronologically in Brinkley and is
self-explanatory. Specific assignment instructions will be distributed in class. Regular
attendance is expected.

Sept. 2: Introduction to course. Assignment: Putting history in context – a sense of
movement. First Panel Discussions assigned.

Sept. 7, 9: Basic chronology and geography. Assignments: Map work; the Columbian
exchange.
Hereafter, the professor will lecture on Tuesday. Students will present panel discussions
on Thursday (until the Midterm).

Sept. 14-16: The Colonial Period – lecture on 9/14
9/16 Panel Discussion #1: Which was a more powerful motivator in early America,
economics or philosophy? WHDs: “The Origins of Slavery” (71-72) and “The American
Revolution” (128-129)

Sept. 21-23: Period: The Early Republic – lecture on 9/21
9/23 Panel Discussion #2: How well did “Jacksonian Democracy” reflect ideas behind
the Constitution? WHDs: “The Background of the Constitution” (164-165) and “The
‘Age of Jackson’” (238-239)

9/30 Panel Discussion #3: What was slavery really like? Did it cause the Civil War?
WHDs: “The Character of Slavery” (309) and “The Causes of the Civil War” (376-377)

Oct. 5-7: Two periods: Reconstruction and the Gilded Age – lecture on 10/5
10/7 Panel Discussion #4: Did the effects of Reconstruction guarantee racial segregation?
WHDs: “Reconstruction” (424-425) and “The Origins of Segregation” (434-435)

Oct. 7: GRADING DAY. Hand in Interpretive Essay.

WEEK OFF – October 12, 14: Study for midterm; prepare “Prospectus” for Major
Project. (See handout on “Major Project Portfolio.”)

Oct. 19: Major Project Prospectus due. MIDTERM EXAM. ATTENDANCE IS
REQUIRED. NO MAKE-UPS ALLOWED.

Hereafter, students will present panels on TUESDAYS; the professor will lecture on Thursdays to transition from one period to the next.


Nov. 9: 11/9 Panel Discussion #6: Did the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor help prepare America to drop the atomic bomb? WHDs: “The Question of Pearl Harbor” (744-745) and “The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb” (772-773)

NOVEMBER 11 IS A HOLIDAY – VETERANS’ DAY

Nov. 16-18: 11/16 Panel Discussion #7: Did post-war fear of Communism have a more profound effect on U.S. foreign policy (the Cold War) or on U.S. domestic policy (McCarthyism)? WHDs: “Origins of the Cold War” (780-781) and “McCarthyism” (794-795)

Nov. 23: GRADING DAY. Hand in Interpretive Essay. 11/23 Panel Discussion #8: Which had a more lasting effect on Americans’ views on politics, the Vietnam conflict or Watergate? WHDs: “The Vietnam Commitment” (846-847) and “Watergate” (888-889)

NOVEMBER 25 IS A HOLIDAY – HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!

Nov. 30-Dec. 2: 11/30 Panel Discussion #9: How important are studies of differences in gender, race, and class to U.S. history? WHD: “Women’s History” (941) and any (or all) of the rest of the WHDs in the book.

Dec. 7: Major project presentations (round-table discussion): What are current major problems in America? What are their historical roots? Hand in Major Project Portfolio (see handout). (DISCUSSION IS WORTH 30 POINTS. BE THERE.)

Dec. 9: Review for final.

THE FINAL EXAM WILL BE GIVEN DURING EXAM WEEK. ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED. NO MAKE-UPS ALLOWED.