

**US Society and Politics Since the 1960s:
From Civil Rights to Trump's Right**

DRAFT SYLLABUS

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This course explores significant political and social developments that shaped the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in the United States, an era of declining faith in political institutions, ideological and partisan polarization, and accelerating inequality. The course will consider a variety of perspectives, developments, and movements across the political spectrum as well as others that defy easy ideological or partisan categorization. Topics will include the evolution of the post-1960s civil rights movement and the rise of mass incarceration; the rise and transformation of the religious right and the emergence of the populist right from the 1970s through the Tea Party and MAGA movements; the evolution of liberalism and the Democratic Party and its relationship to the left and the fate of labor; the AIDS crisis and the LGBTQ movement; 9/11 and the war on terror; the financialization of the global economy and the causes and effects of the mortgage crisis of 2008; and bipartisan paths toward the emergence of “neoliberalism” and the concept of the “free market” as ways of reordering not just social and political commitments but perhaps even society itself.

ASSESSMENT BREAKDOWN:

Two Short (4-6pg.) Primary Source Analysis Papers	30%
Midterm Exam	15%
Attendance and Class Participation	25%
Final Exam <i>OR</i> Independent Research Paper	30%

READINGS:

While still to be determined, readings for this course will emphasize primary sources augmented by secondary source material intended to complement and expand upon

lectures. Selected readings (i.e., chapters) from secondary sources might be drawn from, for instance:

Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Harvard University Press, 2018)

Lily Geismer, *Left Behind: The Democrats' Failed Attempt to Solve Inequality* (Public Affairs, 2022)

Malcolm Harris, *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials* (Little, Brown and Company, 2017)

Nicole Hemmer, *Partisans: The Conservative Revolutionaries Who Remade American Politics in the 1990s* (Basic Books, 2022)

Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, *Getting Tough: Welfare and Imprisonment in 1970s America* (Princeton University Press, 2017)

Paul M. Renfro, *Stranger Danger: Family Values, Childhood, and the American Carceral State* (Oxford University Press, 2020)

Leah Wright Rigueur, *The Loneliness of the Black Republican* (Princeton University Press, 2015)

Paul Sabin, *Public Citizens: The Attack on Big Government and the Remaking of American Liberalism* (Norton, 2021)

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Haymarket Books, 2016)

Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

PROVISIONAL LECTURE SCHEDULE

Wed., Jan. 11

Course Introduction:

Framing Recent U.S. History in Terms of . . . Conservative Backlash? Crisis of Liberalism? Fracture? Globalization? Populism? Neoliberalism?

Mon., Jan. 16

MLK Day – No Class

**UNIT ONE:
AGE OF FRACTURE?**

Wed., Jan. 18

A New Deal Order? Liberalism at High Tide, ca. 1932-1965

Mon., Jan. 23

Suburbanization and the Re-centering of American Politics

Wed., Jan. 25

Liberalism's Discontents: Civil Rights, Feminisms, and Cracks in the Vital Center's "Consensus"

Mon., Jan. 30

Primary Source Workshop (and first short primary source analysis paper assigned)

Wed., Feb. 1

Vietnam

Mon., Feb. 6

The Postwar Right Comes in from the Cold (War): Buckley, Birchers, and Nixon's Tricky Synthesis

Wed., Feb. 8

Second Wave Feminism(s) and the Rise of the Religious Right

F. Feb 10: First Short Primary Source Analysis Paper Due

Mon., Feb. 13

The Radical 1970s: Black Power, Gay Liberation, Intersectionality, and Labor Action

Wed., Feb. 15

Jimmy Carter and the Crises of the 1970s

Mon., Feb. 20

WS: A Crisis of Confidence & A Confidence Inspiring Midterm Review

Wed., Feb. 22

MIDTERM EXAM

**UNIT TWO:
AGE OF REAGAN?**

Mon., Feb. 27 Getting Tough: The Bipartisan Politics of Law & Order and Welfare Reform

Wed., Mar. 1 Rise of Reagan

SPRING BREAK

Mon., Mar. 13 Reaganomics: Greed is Good!

Wed., Mar. 15 Politics and Cultures of Free Markets

Mon., Mar. 20 The AIDS Crises

Wed., Mar. 22 The End of the Cold War / The End of History?

**UNIT THREE:
NEOLIBERALISM(S) AND THE LONG SHADOW OF 9/11**

Mon., Mar. 27 “Hard Choices”: New Democrats and a New Economy

Wed., Mar. 29 “Just Say No:” The War on Drugs and the Rise of the Carceral State

F. Mar. 31: Second Short Primary Source Analysis Paper Due

Mon., Apr. 3 The (New) New Right: Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, and the Gingrich Insurgency

Wed., Apr. 5 Culture Wars, Political Warfare, and the Clinton Impeachment: The New Politics of Class and Crass in the 1990s

Mon., Apr. 10 Seeds of the Future: The 2000 Presidential Election and 9/11

Wed., Apr. 12 The War on Terror at Home and Abroad

Mon., Apr. 17 The Politics of Occupy Wall Street and the Fight for \$15: Temporary Labor, the Politics of Immigration, and

Mounting Precarity

Wed., Apr. 19

The Age of Obama: Technocracy and Neoliberalism's Discontents

Mon., Apr. 24

Democracy in the Balance: The Tea Party, Trump, and Our (Im)Possible Futures

Wed., Apr. 26

Exam Prep / Paper Workshops

Exams, May 1-9