

**\*\*\*\*\*THIS IS THE SPRING 2023 SYLLABUS AND IS SUBJECT TO  
CHANGE FOR SPRING 2024\*\*\*\*\***

**HIST-1180  
US Politics and Society since the 1960s:  
From Civil Rights to Trump's Right**

M/W 12:00PM — 1:20PM  
Leidy Labs 109



Prof. Brent Cebul  
Assistant Professor of History  
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Office Hours:  
M., 2:00-3:30pm at my office or by appointment / Zoom  
Zoom link: <https://upenn.zoom.us/j/4883162522>  
Office: St. Leonard's Court 130.4 (39<sup>th</sup> and Chestnut)

Dominique Wilkerson  
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Office Hours: 10:00-11:30am (College Hall 308F)  
and by appointment / Zoom link:  
<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/8682022059?pwd=empUY2JvRUJLMW92WEtGd3lJenBuQT09>

**Overview:**

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 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 and ultraconservative right from the 1970s through the Tea Party, MAGA movements, and January 6 insurrection; the evolution of liberalism and the Democratic Party into the Clinton and Obama eras; the AIDS crisis and the LGBTQ rights 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.

### **Course Policies**

Your attendance in our class meetings is essential, and all assigned readings must be completed by class time on the day they are listed on the schedule of assignments below. I will give one no questions asked *unexcused* absence after which each subsequent *unexcused* absence will result in a four-point deduction from your overall attendance and participation grade.

*Excused* absences include those for which (1) you have contacted me in advance and received approval and are (2) for appropriate and documented purposes – i.e., religious holidays, essential and unmovable job or internship interviews, illness (confirmed via course Path@Penn absence notification), etc. For all things attendance, please be sure to cc Dominique Wilkerson, who will keep track of these matters.

I also recognize that students are very busy and am willing to accommodate reasonable requests for extensions on major assignments. By reasonable, I mean: requests that are timely (i.e., not the night before an assignment is due); requested thoughtfully (i.e., framed around succeeding in our class rather than work piling up in other classes); and organized (i.e., students take the initiative to propose a timeline for completion). Please do not abuse this accommodation.

### **Communicating**

I am available during my office hours and by appointment. Email is the best way to get in touch. **Please do not contact me via Canvas messenger.** I do not check Canvas regularly except to collect assignments. I will make my best effort to respond to your emails in a timely fashion (i.e., within a couple of hours), but I may not reply as promptly to emails received after 5:00pm and especially on weekends. If your note is urgent, please indicate that in the subject line!

I encourage all students to come to office hours early in the semester to introduce yourself, talk about your interests, and just generally get to know each other a bit.

### **Canvas & Other Readings**

If this is your first American history class in a while or if you would just like a refresher on the broad developments in 20<sup>th</sup> C. U.S. history, I recommend reading the short, encyclopedic entries via *The American Yawp*, a free, online U.S. History Textbook written by scholars. It can be found here: <http://www.americanyawp.com/>

There is only one required book to purchase, the Jacobs and Zelizer primary source reader noted below. All other readings – articles, excerpts from books, and a host of primary sources – are posted on our Canvas course website. On the syllabus, primary source readings are marked with a double bracket (<<), and these will often form the basis of our discussions (n.b., the Jacobs and Zelizer volume is mainly a primary source reader, though it includes some short contextual essays that will also be assigned at different points in the semester). Secondary sources, e.g., chapters, articles, and books written by historians about the past, are indicated with a double asterisk (\*\*). ***I strongly encourage students to do the readings in the order they are listed.***

While I do not expect students to print out all of the readings, I strongly recommend that you do so. You can do so creatively: i.e., by putting two pages of text on one page and then printing double-sided, a 28-page article can be printed on just 7 pages. **Regardless, I expect you to have quick access to readings in class and in a format large enough to make them useful** (i.e., on a laptop or tablet but not your cell phone). The readings are the basis of our discussions and failure to have them at hand (and have read them!) will undermine your ability to meaningfully participate in discussion.

### **Accommodations**

The university and I are committed to equal access to education and if you have a compelling reason or a confirmed need, please let me know. If you have a disability or

need special testing, note taking or other accommodations, please consult the Office of Student Disabilities Services, and we will ensure that you secure the proper support and accommodation. Their website is: <https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/>

### **A Note on Our Class Environment**

I urge and invite diversity of opinion and strive to cultivate an environment in class and outside of class in which students feel encouraged to freely express themselves. Higher education is meant to foster sustained, critical engagement with a broad range of material and perspectives but also, and most especially, to stimulate critical self-assessment and intellectual and personal growth. Civility, respect, tolerance, patience, and good humor are thus cornerstones of a thriving academic community and are essential to fostering meaningful personal and intellectual growth. These values are especially important since we will wade some of the most contentious political issues of the last half century, many of which continue to define and divide the American body politic. This class is an opportunity to practice and model the best civil discourse that our broader national political conversation all too often lacks.

### **A Note on Language, both Historical and Contemporary**

In this class we will read, view, and discuss historical material that sometimes uses terms we no longer employ. Certain terms, most often slurs, are rarely or never appropriate to use in our own writing and presentations (n\*\*\*\*r, for instance). More complex are terms such as “colored” or “Negro” which did not always have negative connotations, and which were historically employed by African Americans themselves in positive and affirming ways. Because these terms are no longer in common use or may have taken on derogatory valences, they are not appropriate to use in our own prose. But these sorts of terms are acceptable when used *in quotations* or when citing proper nouns that employ them (e.g., the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP, or the United Negro Business League). If you have questions or concerns about any of this ahead of a paper or presentation, please reach out to discuss. In short, the key distinction to keep in mind is whether you are using the term in your own voice and your own writing or argumentation (do not!) or whether you are quoting or citing the historical usage of such terms (ok!).

### **A Note on Academic Honesty and Integrity**

Students’ work must be completed in line with Penn’s Code of Academic Integrity, here: <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>.

The library has pulled together a useful guide to avoiding plagiarism, here:  
<https://guides.library.upenn.edu/copyright/plagiarism>

I am always happy to discuss these matters. Violations – cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating others’ dishonesty, etc. – will result in significant penalties and perhaps referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

### **Assessments:**

<b>Two Short (4-6pg.) Primary Source Analysis Papers</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Midterm Exam (W. Feb., 22)</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Attendance and Class Participation</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Final Exam <i>OR</i> Independent Research Paper (10-12pgs)</b>	<b>35%</b>

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### **Short Primary Source Analysis Papers**

Short Papers (20 percent of final grade, total, 10 percent each); due Friday, February 10 and Friday, April 7 by 11:59pm via email (5 double spaced pages, not including a required bibliography and notes)

These short paper assignments will ask you to do a close reading of an assigned primary source in light of lectures, other primary sources, and secondary readings. Your analysis will draw upon a primary source chosen from those assigned in class and which are available on Canvas. I will provide more details and a rubric early in the semester, but these are opportunities to develop your own arguments about topics of interest to you.

### **Midterm Exam** (20 percent of final grade)

The midterm will be a fairly standard history exam: key term IDs to gauge comprehension of key lecture themes; short answer questions on key topics; and a synthetic essay that will ask you to analyze and explain a significant historical development drawing upon primary and secondary readings.

### **Final Paper OR Final Exam**

Following spring break, students will choose a track for their culminating assessment. Students can either choose to write a final paper on an original topic or sit for a final exam.

Final Paper (35 percent of final grade); 10-12 pages, due **Friday, May 5, 11:59PM**

This longer, *optional* assignment will require you to find at least 2-3 significant primary documents on a theme or issue in modern American political history, broadly defined, between the 1960s and 2022. Your analysis of these documents will situate them in broader historical context, drawing upon at least 2-3 secondary sources. Truly excellent analysis will link your documents to broader themes, historical developments, and historiographical debates we will engage this semester and *make an original argument about historical change over time*. Students will have a great deal of latitude in determining their topics, but those topics must be approved by Prof. Cebul

Final Exam (35 percent of final grade, date TBA)

The final exam will be a traditional history exam comprised of key term identifications, short answer questions, and a longer synthetic essay that will ask you to explore a key theme of the semester and develop an original argument drawing upon our readings.

### **BOOK TO PURCHASE**

Meg Jacobs & Julian Zelizer, eds., *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989*

\*\*I have placed this book on reserve at VanPelt as well as several others from which we will read more than one chapter.

### **SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**Wed., Jan. 11**      **Course Introduction:** Framing Recent History in Terms of . . .  
                                 . Conservative Backlash? Crisis of Liberalism? Fracture? Globalization?  
                                 Populism? Neoliberalism?

**Mon., Jan. 16**      **NO CLASS** (MLK, JR., day observed)

**UNIT ONE: AGE OF FRACTURE?**

**Wed., Jan. 18**

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

**\*\*Jefferson Cowie, *The Great Exception*, Intro and Ch. 3**

<<Franklin D. Roosevelt, State of the Union Message to Congress, January 11, 1944 (aka, the Second Bill of Rights address)

<< “How Top Executives Live,” *Fortune*, 1955

<<Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center* (selections)

**Mon., Jan. 23**

**Suburbanization and the Re-centering of American Politics**

**\*\*Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, Chs. 1 and 2**

**\*\*Suzanne Metter, *The Submerged State*, Intro and Ch. 1**

<<View: “[Crisis in Levittown](#)” (1957)

**Wed., Jan. 25**

**Liberalism’s Discontents: Civil Rights, Feminisms, and Cracks in the Vital Center’s “Consensus”**

**\*\*Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, Ch. 1**

<<Lyndon B. Johnson, Remarks at the University of Michigan, May 22, 1964

<<Students for a Democratic Society, “The Port Huron Statement”

<<Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

<<Paul Potter, “Name the System”

<<Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (selections)

<<The Black Panther Party, “What we Want, What we Believe”

**Mon., Jan. 30**

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

<<Bring all assigned primary sources to class

**Wed., Feb. 1**

**Vietnam**

\*\*Christian Appy, *American Reckoning*, Intro and Ch. 7

\*\*Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home*, Chs. 1 and 2

<<Bill Clinton, “Letter to Colonel Holmes”

<<James Fallows, “What did you do in the class war, Daddy?”

<<View: [CBS News report from Vietnam](#), March 1970

In class: view selections from *The Fog of War* (2003)

**Mon., Feb. 6**

**The Postwar Right Comes in from the Cold (War): Buckley, Birchers, and Nixon’s Precarious Synthesis**

\*\*Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, Chs. 3 and 4

<<“Why the South Must Prevail,” *National Review*, 1957

<< Richard Nixon, Republican National Convention Speech, 1968

<< Richard M. Nixon, “Labor Day Radio Address,” 1972

**Wed., Feb. 8**

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

\*\*Marjorie Spruill, “Gender and America’s Right Turn”

<< Betty Friedan, National Organization of Women, Statement of Purpose

<< Margaret Cerullo, “Hidden History: An Illegal Abortion”

<< Phyllis Schlafly, “What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?”

<< Paul Weyrich, “Building the Moral Majority”

**Friday, Feb 10: First Short Primary Source Analysis Paper Due by midnight via Canvas**



**Mon., Feb. 13      The Radical 1970s: Black Power, Gay Liberation, Intersectionality, and Labor Action**

**\*\*Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door*, Intro and Chs. 2 and 3**

**<<Robin Morgan and New York Radical Women, "No More Miss America"**

**<<Combahee River Collective Statement, 1977**

**<< Johnnie Tillmon, "Welfare is a Women's Issue"**

**Wed., Feb. 15      The 1970s' Crises: Jimmy Carter, the Sunbelt, and the Suburbs**

**Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies*, 102-120, 131-141, and 193-217**

**Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door*, Ch. 7**

**<< Paula Cizmar, "Steelyard Blues" *Mother Jones*, 1978**

**<<Grace Weinstein, "Can you Afford . . . Anything?" *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1978**

**<< Nan Robertson, "One Man's Road to a Vote for Reagan," *New York Times*, October 15, 1980**

**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: Business Mobilization and the Bipartisan Politics of Law & Order and Welfare Reform in the 1970s**

**\*\* Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, "Welfare Crises, Penal Solutions, and the Origins of the 'Welfare Queen,'" *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 4 (5), 756-771**

**\*\*Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, Chs. 5 and 7**

<<<< “The Underclass,” *Time*, August 29, 1977

<<<< Jacobs & Zelizer, *Conservatives in Power*, pp. 77-82, 86-91  
(Reagan, “California and the Problem of Government Growth,” 1967  
“Speech to America,” 1976; Speech at Neshoba County Fair, 1980; first  
inaugural, 1981)

**Wed., Mar. 1**

**A Reagan Revolution?**

**\*\*Daniel Rodgers, “Losing the Words of the Cold War,” *Age of Fracture***

**\*\*Jennifer Mittelstadt, “Supporting the Military in Reagan’s America”**

<<<< Lewis Powell, “Confidential Memorandum: Attack on American  
Free Enterprise System”

<<<< Southern Baptist Convention, “Resolution on Abortion” (1984)

**SPRING BREAK**

**Mon., Mar. 13**

**Reaganomics & The Rise of Antigovernment Nationalism(s)**

**\*\*Kim Phillips-Fein, “Reaganomics: The Rebirth of the Free Market”**

**\*\*Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home*, Ch. 5**

**\*\*Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, Ch. 4**

<<<< Jacobs & Zelizer, *Conservatives in Power*, pp. 99- 104 (RR,  
“Address to Nation on the Economy,” “Air Traffic Controllers’ Strike,”  
Michel, “Letter to Republicans in Congress,” and Greider, “The Education  
of David Stockman”)

<<<< Jacobs & Zelizer, *Conservatives in Power*, all documents on pp.  
105-125 and 135-140

<<<< George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (1981), selections

**Wed., Mar. 15**

**Politics and Cultures of “Free” Markets**

View: *Wall Street* (1987)

**\*\*Robin D.G. Kelley, “Looking to Get Paid,” in *Yo’ mama’s  
disfunktional! Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America***

\*\*Joshua Clarke Davis, *From Head Shops to Whole Foods*, “The Business of Getting High”

<<Peter Baida, “Confessions of a Reluctant Yuppie”

<< Peter Overby, “White Picket Welfare,” *Common Cause*, Fall 1993

**Mon., Mar. 20      The AIDS Crises**

\*\*Jennifer Brier, “What Should the Federal Government Do with the Crisis of AIDS?” in *Infectious Ideas*

\*\*Christopher Capozzola, “A Very American Epidemic: Memory Politics and Identity Politics in the AIDS Memory Quilt,” *Radical History Review*, 2002

<<<<ACT UP documents (On Canvas and Online)

- [“Civil Disobedience”](#) (1-13 but skim the rest)
- [“I Want to Live by Any Means Necessary”](#)
- [“Political Funerals”](#)

<<<<William F. Buckley, Jr., “Crucial Steps in Combating the Aids Epidemic; Identify All the Carriers,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1986

View in class: *When AIDS Was Funny* (2016)

**Wed., Mar. 22      “Just Say No:” The War on Drugs and the Rise of the Carceral State**

View: *Central Park Five* (2016)

\*\* Heather Ann Thompson, “Why Mass Incarceration Matters,” *Journal of American History* (2010)

\*\*David Farber, *Crack: Rock Cocaine, Street Capitalism, and the Decade of Greed*, Intro, Ch. 2 and Ch. 5

**BY FRIDAY, MARCH 24:** Those choosing to write an independent final research paper *instead* of taking a final exam must submit a 2-3 paragraph proposal **via email to Prof. Cebul by 11:59PM**. The proposal should include at least one paragraph on the topic, which lays out the major historical question, development, and themes. You should also include a sense of the primary sources you would like to use and / or find. The choice of writing this paper is contingent upon Prof. Cebul’s approval of your topic.

### **UNIT THREE: NEOLIBERALISM, GLOBALIZATION, AND THE LONG SHADOW OF 9/11**

#### **M. 3/27                      Neoliberalism, the End of the Cold War, the End of History?**

**\*\*Melvyn Leffler, “Ronald Reagan and the Cold War”**

**\*\* Frase, “In Defense of Soviet Waiters,” *Jacobin*, February 6, 2013**

**<<Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?”**

**VIEW: *Down and Out in America* (1986) via PVN**

#### **W. 3/29                      Hard Choices: New Democrats and a New Economy**

**\*\*Bryant Simon, *The Hamlet Fire*, Introduction and ch 3**

**\*\*Lily Geismer, “Agents of Change: Microenterprise, Welfare Reform, the Clintons, and Liberal Forms of Neoliberalism,” *Journal of American History* (2020)**

**<<William Galston and Elaine Kamarck, “The Politics of Evasion: Democrats and the Presidency,” *Progressive Policy Institute* (September 1989)**

**<<Selections from *The Downsizing of America***

#### **M. 4/3                      The (New) New Right: Fox News, the Pro-Life Movements, Rush Limbaugh, and the Gingrich Insurgency**

**\*\*Robert Self, “The Reagan Devolution: Movement Conservatives and the Right’s Days of Rage, 1988-1994”**

**<<Gingrich notebooks and course materials**

**<<Patrick Buchanan, “Culture War Speech: Address to the Republican National Convention” (August 17, 1992)**

#### **W. 4/5                      Culture Wars and Political Warfare: The New Politics of Class and Class in the 1990s**

\*\*Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, Ch. 8

\*\*Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Roaring Nineties*, ch. 1 and pp. 101-114.

<<William J. Clinton, “Statement on Signing the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act” (1999)

<< Tad Friend, “White Hot Trash!” *New York Magazine*, August 22, 1994

<< David Brock, “Confessions of a Right-Wing Hist Man,” *Esquire*, July 1997

**M. 4/10      NO CLASS: Second Primary Source Paper due by class time via Canvas**

**W. 4/12      The Presidential Election of 2000, 9/11, and the Global War on Terror**

View: [“Secrets, Politics, and Torture,” PBS Frontline](#)

\*\*Terry H. Anderson, “9/11: Bush’s Response”

<<Susan Sontag and Amitav Ghosh’s contributions to “Tuesday, and After,” *The New Yorker*, September 24, 2001

**M. 4/17      The Crises ca. 2008: Temporary Labor, Immigration, and Mounting Precarity**

\*\*Malcolm Harris, *Kids These Days*, Introduction and chs. 1-3

\*\*Bryant Simon, *The Hamlet Fire*, Ch. 4, 6 and epilogue

<<Jodi Kantor, “Working Anything But 9 to 5,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2014

**W. 4/19      Hope & Change©: The Obama Administration and Neoliberalism’s Discontents**

\*\*Malcolm Harris, *Kids These Days*, Ch. 4

\*\*Peniel Joseph, “Barack Obama and the Movement for Black Lives”

**M. 4/24      Exam Prep / Paper Workshops**

**W. 4/26      Democracy in the Balance?: The Tea Party, Trump, and Our (Im)Possible Futures**

**\*\*Malcom Harris, *Kids These Days*, Chs. 5 and 6**

**\*\*Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home*, Ch. 9 and Epilogue**

**Optional FINAL PAPER due by Friday, May 5 via email at 11:59PM**

**FINAL EXAM: Monday, May 8, 2023: 9:00am to 11:00am in COHN 402**