History 13184: The United States in the World, 1776-present

University of Notre Dame
Spring 2008
T-Th, 9:30-10:45 am
332 DeBartolo Hall

I. Overview

Students will investigate the role that American ideas, institutions and events have played in world history, and the influence of developments outside the United States on the self-understanding of its residents.

II. University Seminar

A University Seminar should:
• foster intense interaction between faculty and students
• incorporate a significant amount of writing: at least 20 pages, with at least one rewrite of a corrected paper
• introduce students to the ways and thinking of a given discipline

III. Specific Goals for This Course:

A. Understand the idea of “global history” in the American context: its strengths and its limitations.

B. Become more adept at writing historical essays. In particular, students, as historians, will focus on how ideas and concepts change over time. The third essay will involve library research outside of class on a global history topic of the student’s own choosing.

C. Become more skilled at presenting the argument of a book or essay to classmates, and then defending or criticizing that argument.

IV. Grading

The first two essays are each worth 15 percent of the final grade. The third essay is worth 30 percent of the final grade. Class participation—meaning class discussion and a handful of short assignments graded on a check system—counts for 40 percent of the final grade. Discussion grades for individual class sessions will be assigned as well.
**Grading Standards* for essays:**

**The D or F paper:**

The D or F paper either has no thesis or else it has one that is strikingly vague, broad, or uninteresting. There is little indication that the writer understands the material being presented. The paragraphs do not hold together; ideas do not develop from sentence to sentence. This paper usually repeats the same thoughts again and again, perhaps in slightly different language but often in the same words. The D or F paper is filled with mechanical faults, errors in grammar, and errors in spelling.

**The C Paper:**

The C paper has a thesis, but it is vague and broad, or else it is uninteresting or obvious. It does not advance an argument that anyone might care to debate. “Henry James wrote some interesting novels.” “Modern cities are interesting places.”

The thesis in the C paper often hangs on some personal opinion. If the writer is a recognized authority, such an expression of personal taste may be noteworthy, but writers gain authority not merely by expressing their tastes but by justifying them. Personal opinion is often the engine that drives an argument, but opinion by itself is never sufficient. It must be defended.

The C paper rarely uses evidence well; sometimes it does not use evidence at all. Even if it has a clear and interesting thesis, a paper with insufficient supporting evidence is a C paper.

The C paper often has mechanical faults, errors in grammar and spelling, but please note: a paper without such flaws may still be a C paper.

**The B Paper:**

The reader of a B paper knows exactly what the author wants to say. It is well organized, it presents a worthwhile and interesting idea, and the idea is supported by sound evidence presented in a neat and orderly way. Some of the sentences may not be elegant, but they are clear, and in them thought follows naturally on thought. The paragraphs may be unwieldy now and then, but they are organized around one main idea. The reader does not have to read a paragraph two or three times to get the thought that the writer is trying to convey.

The B paper is always mechanically correct. The spelling is good, and the punctuation is accurate. Above all, the paper makes sense throughout. It has a thesis that is limited and worth arguing. It does not contain unexpected digressions, and it ends by keeping the promise to argue and inform that the writer makes in the beginning.
The A Paper:

The A paper has all the good qualities of the B paper, but in addition it is lively, well paced, interesting, even exciting. The paper has style. Everything in it seems to fit the thesis exactly. It may have a proofreading error or two, or even a misspelled word, but the reader feels that these errors are the consequence of the normal accidents all good writers encounter. Reading the paper, we can feel a mind at work. We are convinced that the writer cares for his or her ideas, and about the language that carries them. The sure mark of an A paper is that you will find yourself telling someone else about it.

*These grading standards are taken from the Derek Bok center for teaching and learning at Harvard University.

V. Honor Code

I take the honor code seriously and will turn over violators to the appropriate departmental and university committees. I am happy to use turnitin.com to check suspicious papers. It is foolish as well as unethical to violate the honor code for an assignment or examination. If you have questions about how to cite a source in a paper, or any honor-code related question, contact me.

VI. Books, Articles

Books:


**Articles:**

Paul Berman, *A Tale of Two Utopias*, selections


Frederick Douglass, selected speeches


Also two articles on Europe by Tony Judt


Osama Bin Laden interview with Peter Arnett

Robert Westbrook, *Why We Fought*, selections

UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

**VII. Schedule:**

1. Tuesday, January 15: Introduction

2. Thursday, January 17: Colley, 1-134
3. Tuesday, January 22: Colley, 134-conclusion

4. Thursday, January 24: Paine

5. Tuesday, January 29: Paine/Armitage

6. Thursday, January 31: Armitage/Elliott

7. Tuesday, February 5: **Paper Due**

8. Thursday, February 7: Douglas

9. Tuesday, February 12: Lincoln/McGreevy

10. Thursday, February 14: Lincoln/Seward

11. Tuesday, February 19: Lincoln/Foner

12. Thursday, February 21: Benfy

13. Tuesday, February 26: *Portrait of a Lady* (film)

14. Thursday, February 28: James

**Friday, February 29: paper due, 5 pm, O’Shaughnessy 219**

**Spring Break**

17. Tuesday, March 11: **Library Session with Dave Jenkins**

18. Thursday, March 13: Disney Cartoons/Westbrook

19. Tuesday, March 18: UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948); Cmiel

**Easter Break**

20. Tuesday, March 25: Gaddis, Bernstein

22. Thursday, March 27: Gaddis, Judt

23. Tuesday, April 1: *Barcelona* (film)

24. Thursday, April 3: McGreevy

25. Tuesday, April 8: Berman/Port Huron Statement
26. Thursday, April 10: Wright/Qutb

27. Tuesday, April 15: Wright

28. Thursday, April 17: Presentations

29. Tuesday, April 22: Presentations

30. Thursday, April 24: Presentations

31. Tuesday, April 29: Presentations/Class Summary

**Final Paper Due: Wednesday May 7, 12:30 pm**
Benfey:

Why Japan? Devastation of civil war; industrialization

i.e. book of tea; Japanese like Okakura wearing robes

Japan especially alluring because of its isolation; “pure Asian”

How are Japan and US parallel? Imperial in war with Spain and Russia

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**Tuesday, March 18:**

General Topic

**Tuesday, March 25:**

General Topic; 2 Primary Sources; one paragraph statement on importance of subject.

**Tuesday, April 1:**

General Topic; 2 Primary Sources; one page outline of paper.

**Tuesday, April 17:**

Begin classroom presentations. Full draft due 48 hours after presentation. I will return papers quickly.

**Wednesday, May 7:**

Final Paper Due.