

**HIS 575:  
Traditional American History Since 1876**

**For TAH Teachers  
Fall 2007**

**CID: 7795 & 7798**

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**Course Description and Objectives**

American history is boring! At least that is what many young adults think. When asked why they feel that way, many say that it is hard to get excited about a subject that is so far removed from their daily lives. For many of these students, learning history is akin to memorizing multiplication tables, different only in that unlike multiplication tables, history data has no practical value and thus can be forgotten without personal detriment just as soon as the final examination has been taken.

Historians, of course, know that history is not boring, static, passive or valueless. On the contrary, they insist that the discipline is interesting, sometimes even entertaining, dynamic, and often controversial. But how can this enthusiasm for history be conveyed to those who lack this love for understanding the American past?

While agreeing that there is not a single answer to this question, the designers of this course are convinced that the quickest way to make history "come alive" is to encourage students to "do history" rather than simply to memorize it. We believe that many find the study of the past boring because they do not approach the past as historians do. Thus, one primary objective of this course is to help students to develop the detective skills of historians that will enable them to answer for themselves from primary source materials one basic question – what was life like back then? This course rests upon the premise that the sooner students develop the ability to construct for themselves a reasonable assessment of the American past based upon primary sources, the sooner they will be "turned on" to historical

knowledge and the sooner they will be able to conceptualize and master the content of American history.

The particular piece of the past to be studied in this course is TRADITIONAL AMERICAN HISTORY SINCE 1876. (A related online course offered next semester will focus on TRADITIONAL AMERICAN TO 1876.) These courses present content that is offered to selected Texas public school History teachers who have been invited to participate in Summer Workshops at SHSU funded by the US Department of Education "TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY" Grant Program. By offering these classes online, students and teachers of American History unable to attend the summer workshops also will have the opportunity to explore ways to uncover, conceptualize, interpret, and communicate the content of traditional American history. Summer Workshop participants also are invited to enroll in the online course, complete the written assignments, and receive graduate credit for this work.

### Required Readings:

NOTE: You may be able to find these texts online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [Barnesandnoble.com](http://Barnesandnoble.com), or in used bookstores that you can search at sites such as [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com) and [bibliofind.com](http://bibliofind.com). Remember when ordering used books that you may want to find a copy that is "fine" or better, which is usually quite easy to do, available at a reasonable price, and nicer than a moldy, highlighted, or otherwise flawed text. I have placed links on the texts below that will allow you to click on the title and order directly from amazon.com's new or used selections, but, again, you're welcome to purchase these through whatever means are most convenient for you.

### Required Readings for everyone:

Bilhartz and Elliott, CURRENTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY, VOLUME 2 (ME Sharpe, 2007)

Gorn, Roberts and Bilhartz, ed. *CONSTRUCTING THE AMERICAN PAST, VOLUME 2* (Longman, 6th edition, 2007).

Olson and Roberts, *MY LAI: A BRIEF HISTORY WITH DOCUMENTS* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998).

Crimm, DE LEON: A TEJANO FAMILY HISTORY (University of Texas Press, 2005)

Olson and Roberts, JOHN WAYNE AMERICAN

### COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

### Class Participation:

Students are expected to complete all assignments for each unit on time and submit these via Blackboard's Discussion Board to the entire class. If you need to include italics, etc. you may post the message within Blackboard's Discussion Board as an attached file, using either MS Word. All book reviews, answers to discussion questions, and your semester project should be sent for posting in Blackboard. All students should run an anti-virus check of all attached messages BEFORE sending them and BEFORE opening them. I encourage each of you to discuss the readings and each other's book reviews, respectfully, via group postings in the Discussion Board.

### Primary Source Analysis and Creative Historical Dilemmas:

You will have a set of questions to answer for each of the assigned Units. To answer these questions, you will need to “construct” a version of the past that is compatible with the primary documents that you have been given. Be sure that your answers make frequent reference to the primary sources. Most answers should be about 500 to 1000 words in length. Post your answers in the Discussion Board within Blackboard.

### Secondary Source Reviews:

In order to help you to develop your assessment and writing skills, during this semester you will review several secondary source books. Use this review as an opportunity to showoff your literary skills. Write it as if you were going to send it to a history journal for publication consideration. The review does not need to be long (500-800 words will do), but it should be insightful. For TIPS on writing book reviews, see Jules Benjamin's, *A Student's Guide to History* "[Writing Book Reviews.](#)"

### Semester Project:

For your final assignment in this class, you will demonstrate what you have learned this semester by creating a syllabus with lesson plans for a course on TRADITIONAL AMERICAN HISTORY SINCE 1876. For details, see below.

### WHEN YOU TURN IN YOUR ASSIGNMENTS, FOLLOW THESE BASIC RULES:

1. The subject of your thread within the Discussion Board should clearly state the class you are in (i.e., History 575), the Unit number, and your name.

VERY IMPORTANT: I would like you to use some direct quotes from your online and text readings to support your answers. For these assignments the use of a parenthetical reference is sufficient, although, as you probably know, the discipline of History generally demands the use of the Chicago Style.

Be sure to read through the final draft at least two times before submitting it. You will have put a lot of work into this by the time you are finished--take pride in your writing and avoid sloppy errors. If you have had difficulty with writing assignments in the past, I suggest that you submit drafts of your paper to the SHSU Writing Center. They offer help with writing styles, making clear arguments, and ensuring that you submit a well-written piece. For more information go to the ["Distance Tutoring"](#) section of the SHSU Writing Center home page.

- Be sure to read the official course policy regarding plagiarism stated at the bottom of this syllabus.
- It always is wise to save and backup all your work, even after you have sent it. If your work is ever lost in cyberspace, you will want to have a backup copy to resubmit.

Grading:

Your grade for this course is based on your answers to the primary source questions, your historical dilemmas, your scholarly book reviews, your participation in the online discussions, and on your semester project.

Returning Grades: I usually require one week to grade and return your assignments. I may return grades more quickly sometimes, but please give me at least one week before you contact me to ask about your grade.

Points Available in this Course:

Assignments	Points available
Primary Source Analysis, Historical Dilemmas and Secondary Source Reviews - Units 1-3	300 points (100 points each unit)
Participation in Online Discussions (Note: if you are in a class of one, this portion of the course is not required and your semester grade will be based on a 400 rather than a 500 point system.)	100 points
Semester Project – Strategies for Teaching the TEKS through Primary Sources, Event Analysis, and/or Issue Analysis	100 points

Grade Scale: To ensure an A grade, you need to receive 90% or more of the possible points. For grades of B, C and D, the minimum number of points needed to ensure a grade are 80%, 70% and 60%, respectively.

Contact Information:

If you ever have any questions about this course and your related assignments, the SHSU History program, etc. please do not hesitate to contact me. The best way to do this is via email at [his\\_tdb@shsu.edu](mailto:his_tdb@shsu.edu) Always include your full name and the name of the course you are taking with me in your message. You can try to reach me at my office, too, at #936-294-1483, but sometimes I work at my home office, etc. so the best method is email.

Grading and Contact Schedule:

You are welcome to contact me at any time, but please realize that I will not always be able to respond to your message during the day of your query. Remember, too, that I take one week to return all graded assignments.

Office Hours: MWF 10 – 11 am and by appointment.

## Course Units and Reading Schedule

This course is broken into three units, plus the final unit that includes the posting and eventual final submission of your semester project. Click each unit number ("Unit 1" for example) to learn more about the readings and assignments for that unit.

Unit Links	Topic	Reading Assignment	Writing Assignment
Unit 1 Aug 22 to Sept 16	Topics in Late Nineteenth Century America	<i>Constructing the American Past, chapters 2-5</i>  <i>Currents in American History, Volume 2 Chapters 7-9</i>  <i>De Leon</i>	Post on Blackboard your responses to the Unit 1 Discussion Questions by Sept 16. Post your comments on the work of your classmates by Sept 23
Unit 2 Sept 16 to Oct 15	Topics in Early Twentieth Century America	<i>Constructing the American Past, chapters 6-10</i>  <i>Currents in American History, Volume 2 Chapters 10-11</i>	Post on Blackboard your responses to the Unit 2 Discussion Questions by Oct 13. Post your comments on the work of your

		<i>Bathsheba's Breast</i>	classmates by Oct 20.
Unit 3 Oct 13 to Nov 15	Topics in Late Twentieth Century America	<i>Constructing the American Past, Chapters 11-15</i>  <i>Currents in American History Chapter 11-14</i>  Olson and Roberts, <i>My Lai</i>  <i>John Wayne American</i>	Post on Blackboard your responses to the Unit 3 Discussion Questions by Nov 4. Post your comments on the work of your classmates by Nov 11.
Unit 4 Nov 4 to Dec 6	Strategies for Teaching American History Since 1876	Independent Readings	Post on Blackboard your Semester Project by Dec 7.

## COURSE POLICIES

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on the exam, paper, or project; failure in the course; and/or expulsion from the university. The *SHSU Student Guidelines* academic honesty policy states:

*The university expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. 5.31The university and its official representatives, acting in accordance with Subsection 5.32, may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. See <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide.html>*

I suggest that you read Jules Benjamin's (*A Student's Guide to History*) [discussion of plagiarism](#) as well.

### ADA Accommodations

Any student who may require an accommodation under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the instructor on this matter as soon as possible to ensure a positive learning environment.

Copyright Statement

The lecture materials presented in this course are copyrighted. Reproduction of class notes for commercial purposes without the express permission of the copyright holder is prohibited.

**UNIT 1 ASSIGNMENTS - POST ON BLACKBOARD**

I. Primary Source Analysis

Question 1: What were the causes and the consequences of the Strike of 1877?

Question 2: What were the causes and consequences of the tragedy at Wounded Knee?

Question 3: Compare Riis's depictions of each immigrant group with the voice of one within that group.

II. Using Historical Dilemmas:

Question 4: The year is 1900 and you live in America. You can be a fictional character or a real person who was alive at that time. Write a 600 – 1000 word creative essay in which you tell me who you are, in what part of America you live, when and why you or your descendants came to America, and what you think, good or bad, about the colony in which you live. **GROUND YOUR ANSWERS ON YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE "FACTS" CONTAINED IN THE PRIMARY SOURCES IN CAP, CHAPTERS 1-3.**

Question 5: The year is 1900 and it is an election year. You can be a fictional character or a real person who was alive at that time. Write a 600 – 1000 word creative essay in which you tell me who you are, in what part of America you live, what issues most concern you, and who do you support in the upcoming election. **YOUR ANSWERS ON YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE "FACTS" CONTAINED IN THE PRIMARY SOURCES IN CAP, CHAPTERS 1-3.**

III. Evaluating Secondary Sources:

Book Review: Write a review of Crimm, *De Leon: A Tejano Family History*.

**UNIT 2 ASSIGNMENTS - - POST ON BLACKBOARD**

Primary Source Analysis:

Question 1: Recount the main arguments for and against (a) the Meat Inspection Act and (b) the birth control movement.

Question 2: According to the posters, why did the US fight World War I?

Question 3: What issues and tensions were highlighted by the Scopes trial?

Question 4: According to these accounts, in what specific ways did the Great Depression affect people in their daily lives.

## II. Historical Dilemmas:

Question 5: The year is 1919 and Americans are debating whether to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. You can be a fictional character or a real person who was alive at that time. Write a 600 – 1000 word creative essay in which you tell me who you are, in what part of America you live, your opinion regarding the Treaty of Versailles.

Question 6: The year is 1936 and Americans are facing a presidential election. You can be a fictional character or a real person who was alive at that time. Write a 600 – 1000 word creative essay in which you tell me who you are, in what part of America you live, and who you support (and why) in the upcoming presidential election.

## III. Secondary Source Analysis

Book Review: Write a 500 - 700 word review of Olson's *Bathsheba's Breast*.

# UNIT 3 ASSIGNMENTS - - POST ON BLACKBOARD

## I. Primary Source Analysis

Question 1: What forces shaped the Cold War? Was the Soviet threat real or imaginary?

Question 2: What were the goals of the Freedom Summer of 1964? To what degree were these goals realized?

Question 3: What Americans, if any, should have been found guilty of war crimes for their actions at My Lai?

## II. Historical Dilemmas

Question 3: The year is 1980 and Americans are engaged in a presidential election. You can be a fictional character or a real person who was alive at that time. Write a 600 – 1000 word creative essay in which you tell me who you are, in what part of America you live, and who you support (and why) in the upcoming presidential election.

## III. Evaluating Secondary Sources

Write a review of Olson and Robert's *John Wayne American*.

# SEMESTER PROJECT ASSIGNMENT - - POST ON BLACKBOARD

For your final assignment in this class, you will demonstrate what you have learned this semester by creating lesson plans for a course on TRADITIONAL AMERICAN



HISTORY SINCE 1876. The course should be based around the material that is presented in *Currents in American History, Volume 2*.

For each of the chapters, create a two-week Unit lesson plan that describes the unit objectives, teaching methods, and student assignments. The lesson plans should provide sufficient detail that would enable a substitute teacher to be able to replace you as the teacher of the course.

In addition to assigning readings from *Currents*, you also should assign for each unit some primary source readings. Also include an annotated bibliography of secondary sources that would assist teachers in preparing for this course of instruction.

Finally, create and answer a final exam over the material that you plan to cover in this course in traditional American history.

If you teach in the public schools of Texas, the lesson plans should cover the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Be sure to identify the age level (middle school, high school, undergraduate, graduate) of your prospective audience.

This course was designed and is maintained by Dr. Terry D. Bilhartz.

Late update: Summer 2007