

**HIST 2110**  
**UNITED STATES HISTORY**  
**GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Spring 2009**

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**Course Overview**

This is an introductory survey of United States history. It explores how American society has been shaped by its global context. As one historian has recently argued, for the past five hundred years, “all peoples have shared in a global history,” and “the United States is not outside or apart from the common history of humanity.” While putting the American experience into the context of world history and comparative history (the study of similarities and differences between nations), we will also consider the importance of transnational history. This involves the movement of people, money, goods, ideas, technologies, and cultural values across national boundaries. Many issues important to contemporary society – such as the environment and immigration – are obviously transnational, but so, too, are the basic issues of conventional American history, such as economic growth, racism, ethnic and racial identity, gender roles, and ideas of freedom and equality. By thinking about America from global, comparative and transnational perspectives, we learn more about the origins and meaning of today’s diversity in American society and the place of the United States in the world economy and world politics.

**Course Objectives**

Just as American history is not separate from world history, History is not a special or obscure discipline unconnected to others students major in. Instead, it is a way of thinking about life that is relevant to all disciplines, and to citizenship. Students with an interest in business, marketing, and finance, for example, can learn through history important lessons about how economies and international trade change over time. Being “good” at History means being curious about the world and possessing a basic empathy that allows you to relate to people who lived in a world unlike our own. It also means using many of the same critical reading and writing skills that are important in other disciplines.

By the end of this course, students should be able to use primary sources and secondary sources to do the following:

- Produce meaningful interpretations of major historical events
- Compare events in American history with those in other countries
- Identify transnational connections between America and the world that have been historically significant

## **Readings**

The following books are required and may be purchased at Georgia Bookstore (124 Edgewood Ave NE, 404.659.0959) or on a variety of sites on the Internet:

- Carl Guarneri, *America in the World: United States History in Global Context* (McGraw-Hill, 2007)
- Ellen Skinner, *Women and the National Experience: Primary Sources in American History, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Longman, 2003)
- Laura Wexler, *Fire in a Canebrake: The Last Mass Lynching in America* (Scribner, 2003)

We will discuss all of these in class, and you will have various kinds of writing assignments on each book. See the Course Schedule on page 3 for specific reading assignments.

## **Grading**

1. Informal writing	25%
2. Formal Essay	20%
4. Midterm Take-Home Exam	25%
5. Final Take-Home Exam	30%

**Note:** The weighting of the respective components of your grade is subject to change.

### **Informal Writing**

As part of active course participation, you will often do informal writing in class or in preparation for class. Informal writing will not be graded for spelling, punctuation, grammar or correct usage, but for your degree of engagement with the lectures and readings. It measures and stimulates critical thinking about the course materials, often focusing on specific skills (such as comparing America with other places or distinguishing between competing interpretations of the past). Note: While attendance is not recorded, missing class will often mean missing informal writing assignments, and these cannot be made up.

### **Formal Essay**

The formal essay will be assessed primarily for the quality of ideas and clarity of expression, though it must also exhibit correct grammar and usage. It will be a focused, 3-to-5 page essay on the book, *Fire in a Canebrake*. Guidelines and requirements for the paper will be posted on uLearn and discussed in class well before the due date. Papers turned in late but within twenty-four hours of the due date will be accepted with a loss of one letter grade. After twenty-four hours, they will not be accepted.

### **Take-Home Exams**

There will be two take-home exams. Both will be essay exams, and neither will have multiple choice or other “objective” questions. Questions will be given one week before the due date. These will require you to write thoughtfully about the major issues covered in the readings and lectures. Although your spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage will not be graded, these exams must be typed and include a cover sheet with your name. Both exams require students to produce a reasoned interpretation of historical issues, much as the informal writing will. For example, you may be asked to compare events in America with those in other countries, offer an explanation for the causes or meaning of specific historic developments, or analyze connections between events and people in this country and those abroad. The exams, therefore, are thinking-oriented, not tasks of memorization. They measure critical skills as well as content.

Note: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

### **Academic Honesty**

You should review the University's Academic Honesty Policy. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating on assignments and exams are serious violations of academic integrity. They are never justified and will not be tolerated.

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## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

- Readings from *America in the World* are cited below as *AIW*, and those from *Women and the National Experience* are cited as *WNE*.
- You should read the assignments prior to class and be prepared to talk (and possibly write) about them in class.
- This schedule is subject to change. Students are responsible for any amendments to it announced in class or posted on uLearn.

**Jan. 5 and 7**      Introductions and Definitions: History, America, and the World

**Jan. 12**      *AIW*, pp. 12-17

**Jan. 14**      *AIW*, pp. 56-67

**Jan. 19**      **MLK Holiday**

**Jan. 21**      *AIW*, Chapter 2 to p. 95

**Jan. 26**      *WNE*, pp. 14-17

**Jan. 28**      *AIW*, pp. 95-103

**Feb. 2**        *WNE*, pp. 18-30  
**Feb. 4**        *AIW*, pp. 103-12

**Feb. 9**        *AIW*, pp. 115-30  
**Feb. 11**       *AIW*, pp. 131-136

**Feb. 16**       *AIW*, pp. 137-48  
**Feb. 18**       *WNE*, pp. 72-91

**Feb. 23**       **MIDTERM EXAM DUE**  
**Feb. 25**       *AIW*, pp. 148-63

**March 2 and 4    Spring Break**

**March 9**       *WNE*, pp. 92-108  
**March 11**      *AIW*, pp. 166-91

**March 16**      *AIW*, pp. 199-206  
**March 18**      *WNE*, pp. 132-36 and pp. 151-70

**March 23**      *AIW*, pp. 209-31  
**March 25**      *AIW*, pp. 231-38

**March 30**      *AIW*, pp. 239-42  
**April 1**        *WNE*, pp. 206-25

**April 6**        *AIW*, pp. 244-52  
**April 8**        *AIW*, pp. 252-62

**April 13**       *Fire in a Canebreak* (all)  
**April 15**       *AIW*, pp. 263-67 and 271-73

**April 20**       **(Formal Essay Due)**  
**April 22**       *AIW*, pp. 267-71 and 274-81

**April 27**       *WNE*, pp. 226-63

**FINAL EXAM DUE       Monday, May 4 by 5 P.M.** (instructions for submitting the exam will be discussed in advance and available on uLearn)