

**The University of Western Ontario  
Department of History  
History 2311G  
The United States: 1865 to the Present  
Winter 2025**

**Prof. Jeffery Vacante**  
**jvacant2@uwo.ca**  
Office: **Lawson Hall 1221**  
Office Hours: **TBA**

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

**Course Description**

On January 6, 2021, an angry mob descended on the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. For many people watching the events of that day, the storming of the Capitol represented a shocking attempt to interrupt the counting of the electoral votes and to subvert the democratic will of the people. For others, however, the events of that day represented a legitimate expression of dissent and was perfectly in line with what they believed to be America's revolutionary culture. Historians will be analyzing the meaning of the events of that day for years to come. For the moment, these events appear to be part of a larger erosion of trust in American institutions that has been taking place since the 1960s. Over the past six decades, many Americans have grown suspicious of the powers of the state as well as of the members of the elite that they believe to be in charge of that state. Whether it manifested in the form of protests against the Vietnam War, the rejection of Keynesian economic policy, the loss of faith in the intelligence community in the aftermath of the Iraq War in 2003, or the disillusion with the financial system following the financial crisis of 2008, Americans have lately been in an anti-establishment mood and appear to be losing faith in their institutions and their elected leaders. The elections of Barack Obama and Donald Trump expressed, in their own ways, some of these frustrations through the electoral process. The events of January 6 suggest perhaps that these frustrations may be finding expression outside the traditional bounds of the electoral process and civil discourse.

This course will turn to the past in an effort to understand the larger issues and trends that have brought the country to the place it now finds itself. It will consider the promise of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow. It will consider the triumph of capitalism during the Gilded Age as well as the manner in which this ideology of capitalism would triumph over the ideals of the revolutionary generation. It will then look at the Populist and Progressive revolt against the version of capitalism that took hold in post-Reconstruction America, as well as the revival of the idea that the state has a role to play in a democratic society to ensure the common good. It will then look at how the world wars during the first half of the twentieth century would alter the public's expectations of the government's role in peoples' lives, enlarge the powers of the state, and in time produce a backlash in the form of the liberal dissent of the sixties as well as the conservative revolt since the seventies.

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

If you are prepared to read some interesting material on the history of the United States, are willing to distill some of what you're reading into two short essays, and are eager to move beyond the course readings to produce one good research essay, then this course should be a rewarding experience.

In this course students will—in addition to learning the modern history of the United States—sharpen their ability to read and think critically, develop their analytical skills, learn to organize and present their thoughts in the form of academic essays, and practice the art of expressing their ideas in tutorials in such a manner that demonstrates their respect for the opinions of others as well as their own critical engagement with the course readings and the world around them.

**Antirequisite(s):** History 2301E; History 2302F/G.

### **Methods of Evaluation**

First short essay (due Feb. 6)	20%
Research essay (due Mar. 13)	40%
Second short essay (due Mar. 27)	20%
Tutorial Participation	20%

In addition to keeping up with the weekly readings and engaging meaningfully with these readings, students will prepare three essays over the course of the semester. Students will prepare **two short analytical essays**, each of which will be **five pages in length**. The first short essay is due **February 6** and the second is due **March 27**. At least one week before each essay's due date, students will receive the question that is to serve as the basis for their essay. They are to answer that question in essay format. All the material that students will need to write these two short analytical essays will be found in the course readings and slides. No outside research will be expected for these two essays. In addition, students will prepare a **research essay**, which is to be **ten pages in length** and on a topic of their choice. For this essay students will draw on sources beyond the course readings, including primary sources. This research essay is **due March 13**.

All three essays are to be typed, well-written, provide sound analysis, draw upon the appropriate sources, follow proper scholarly conventions (including Chicago Style Footnotes, as well as a bibliography) and include a cover page. You will upload the essays to the course web page on owl, where they will also be subject to turnitin review. Essays submitted after the due dates will be subject to a late penalty of five percent the first day and one percent for every day thereafter (including weekends).

Students will also be assessed on their **participation** during weekly **tutorials**. During these tutorials, students will discuss the assigned readings and will be encouraged to grapple with the larger themes of the course. The textbook readings will serve as the background material that will, it is hoped, provide the necessary base from which to launch into an intense discussion of each week's major themes. Students will be assessed on their attendance throughout the year as well as on the basis of their familiarity with the readings and their ability to discuss the broader themes of the course. It should be noted that the quality of one's remarks are very often more

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

valuable than the quantity of one's interventions in a discussion. A student's ability to consider and respect the ideas and opinions of others will also be recognized. **Please note: tutorials begin the week of January 16.**

**A note on academic integrity:** You may not make use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course. It is expected that students produce work that is written using their own words and that relies on research that they have conducted themselves. Submitting work that is not your own is considered dishonest. It is thus not permitted to copy other peoples' work, copy from published or unpublished texts, or to present artificially generated text (i.e. ChatGPT or other AI content generators) as your own. Nor would it be permitted to submit an essay or a response to an exam question using ChatGPT or any other AI content generator even if you acknowledge that you have done so with proper source attribution.

**Please note:** In this course, your written assignments have a 3-day grace period. This means that you can submit any of these assignments up to 3 days past the posted deadline without penalty. As such, requests for academic consideration without supporting documentation will be denied. No assignments will be accepted after the last day of classes.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Counselling. Please see [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

## Course Materials

The following books have been ordered and will be available at the university bookstore. All other readings will be made available on the course page on owl or on reserve at the Weldon Library. All course readings are intended to serve as the source material for the two short essays assigned this term.

- Richard Hofstadter. *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR*. New York: Vintage, 1955.
- Elizabeth Hinton. *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- David Paul Kuhn. *The Hardhat Riot: Nixon, New York City, and the Dawn of the White Working-Class Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

## Course Schedule and Readings

**Jan. 9:** Introduction

**Jan. 16:** The Civil War and Reconstruction

- David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 255-299.

**Jan. 23:** The Gilded Age

- Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 3-59.
- Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945), 1-51.
- Sven Beckert, "Democracy and its Discontents: Contesting Suffrage Rights in Gilded Age New York," *Past and Present*, 174 (Feb. 2002), 116-157.

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

**Jan. 30:** The Age of Reform

- Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 60-271.
- Morton G. White, "The Revolt Against Formalism in American Social Thought of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 8, no. 2 (April 1947), 131-152.

**Feb. 6:** The Twenties

- Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 272-301.
- Calvin Coolidge, "Speech to the Amherst College Alumni Association," February 4, 1916, and "The Press Under a Free Government," January 17, 1925.

**Feb. 13:** Depression and War

- Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 302-328.
- Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 3-14, 265-271.

**Feb. 20:** Reading Week**Feb. 27:** The Cold War

- Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), ix, 129-143, 267-297.
- Henry R. Luce, "The American Century," *Life Magazine* (Feb. 17, 1941): 61-65.
- George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (July 1947): 566-82
- Dwight Eisenhower, "Farewell Address," January 17, 1961.

**Mar. 6:** The Affluent Society

- J. K. Galbraith, "The Unseemly Economics of Opulence," *Harper's* (January 1952): 58-63.
- William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, (1956), 3-24, 36-66, 143-52.
- David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), 3-25

**Mar. 13:** Liberalism and its Discontents

- Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*, 1-55.
- *The Port Huron Statement* (New York: Students for a Democratic Society, 1962).
- Mario Savio, "Bodies Upon the Gears," speech delivered at Sproul Hall, December 2, 1964.
- Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 11-39, 103-106, 199-206, 237-262.

**Mar. 20:** The End of the New Deal Consensus

- Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*, 1-55.
- David Paul Kuhn, *The Hardhat Riot*, 1-131.
- Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *Harper's* (Nov. 1964), 77-86.

**Mar. 27:** Whither America?

- David Paul Kuhn, *The Hardhat Riot*, 135-296.
- Sam Adler-Bell, "The Other Radical Youth," *The New Republic* (December 2021), 38-45.
- Matthew Walther, "Rise of the Barstool Conservatives," *The Week* (February 1, 2021).
- Sam Tanenhaus, "Jan. 6 Wasn't an Insurrection. It Was Vigilantism. And More is Coming,"

*Washington Post* (December 10, 2021).

• David Brooks, “What Happened to American Conservatism?” *The Atlantic* (January/February 2022), 94-103.

**April. 3:** Conclusion

### **Additional Statements**

Please review the Department of History’s shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.