

HSTA 322: U.S. Since 1940

Montana State University
Fall 2012

Your Guide: Tim LeCain **Office:** Wilson 2-108

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-2:30, or by appointment

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Course D2L Website: <https://ecat.montana.edu/>

Course Lectures and Discussions: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:15-1:30 Wilson 1119

Course Description: The post-WWII period in U.S. history witnessed tremendous changes that often came at a breakneck pace: The Cold War, the Civil Rights movement, television, Vietnam, the Hippies, space travel, Watergate, and the Reagan "Revolution," are only a few of the many fascinating events of this tumultuous era. The purpose of this course is to examine these changes within the social, political, economic, and technological life of the nation, while placing them in a larger global and intellectual context. Some of the major questions we may consider will be:

- *What were the causes of the Cold War? Could it have been avoided?
- *Was the Fifties a decade of stasis or a period of important change?
- *What were the roots of the Civil Rights movement? How did Martin Luther King and black power advocates like Robert Williams and Malcolm X differ in their visions for liberating African Americans?
- *How did the environmental movement differ from the conservation movement that preceded it? Why did it gain prominence in the 1960s?
- *Was feminism mostly an economic movement about equal pay and opportunity, or was it more a social movement challenging American gender stereotypes and limits?
- *Why did the U.S. fail in Vietnam? Was it really a proxy war against communism or was it a war to promote U.S. economic and political power in Asia?
- *How did Vietnam and Watergate change Americans' feelings about government and U.S. foreign policy?
- *Were the Seventies really a decade of narcissism and selfishness when nothing of any great import occurred, or was it a critical turning point that redefined the American nation?
- *What were the strengths and weaknesses of post-WWII liberalism and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program?
- *What accounts for the resurgence of conservatism in the U.S. during the 1970s and the eventual conservative dominance of the Reagan Era?

Course Readings: The following books are all required for the course and are available for purchase in the SUB bookstore. If you prefer to buy your books elsewhere, that's fine, but be sure to match the ISBN number so that the book is an identical edition or the page numbers and content may not match.

- David Kennedy, *The American People In WWII* (978-0195168938)
- Glenn Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'n' Roll Changed America* (978-0195177497)
- Melvyn Leffler, *The Specter of Communism* (978-0809015740)
- Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War* (978-0199753932)

- Sean Wilentz, *Age of Reagan* (978-0060744816)
- Charles Peters, *Lyndon B. Johnson* (978-0805082395)

Videos: We may watch some documentary films. You should take good notes on any documentaries we watch and be aware that the movies are designed as spurs for discussion about course themes as well as sources of information. You will be expected to pay close attention to this visual material and be able to use it in papers, quizzes, and exams.

Course Requirements:

Essays: You will be required to write two, 3-4 double-spaced pages, analytical essays for the course. These are *not* to be research essays and they do not require you to do additional reading; rather, in these essays you will be required to draw explicitly, concretely and thoughtfully on the books, lectures, and films offered in this course. My goal is for you to master the material offered in this course, not to rely on material you are already familiar with or to conduct outside research.

Failure to adequately deal with the course material will result in the essay's automatic rejection. You will be expected to develop a fairly high level of fluency with all the books and other class material so that you will be able to make connections between, be aware of, and effectively use all the course material that is relevant to your essay topic. Given this, it is essential that you keep up with the readings and take good notes in lectures; if you postpone your reading until the essays are due, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for you to gain the necessary fluency in the material. I will hand out further guidelines during the course. Be sure and see me if you are having difficulty coming up with an original topic—preferably well before the essay due date when my advice can be most helpful!

- **All essays must be submitted electronically through the course website on the MSU Desire2Learn site.**
- **Late essays will be marked down by 5 points (out of 100 possible) for each day they are turned in to the D2L class website past the due date.**

I will grade your essays using these criteria:

The A Paper

- Rich content - original ideas, clear thesis with excellent detail and evidence reflecting mastery of all appropriate course material, including readings and lectures
- Reflects serious and sustained engagement with course ideas
- Careful organization and development of ideas
- Stylistic finesse - clear and interesting opening and closing, artful transitions between paragraphs
- Varied sentence structure, precise diction and tone, no unnecessary verbiage
- Mastery of grammar and mechanics, no typos or misspellings

The B Paper lacks some of the above qualities but still has:

- Substantial and accurate course information

- Specific ideas logically ordered, well-developed and unified around a clear organizing thesis
- Interesting and connected opening and closing, generally smooth transitions between paragraphs
- Varied sentence structure, concise diction
- Few grammatical and mechanical errors

The C Paper lacks many of the above qualities and may demonstrate:

- Basic knowledge of at least some course material
- Competent but predictable thesis and information that verges on being merely a “report,” has many vague generalities
- Uses frequent and lengthy direct quotes from material rather than paraphrasing
- Adequate organization but minimal development
- Superficial and perfunctory opening and closing, bumpy transitions between paragraphs
- Monotonous or choppy sentences, imprecise and wordy sentences, redundancies,
- Some mechanical and grammatical errors
- Ideas lacking in originality, imagination, or sustained engagement with material

The D & F Papers is seriously lacking in all of the above and may:

- Reflect little or no knowledge of the course material, makes serious errors of fact and interpretation, fails to make obvious connections to appropriate material from course
- No clear thesis or argument, a “report” rather than an analytical essay
- Only rudimentary treatment and development of subject
- Unclear or ineffective organization
- Weak or absent introductions, conclusions or transitions
- Awkward or ambiguous sentences
- Frequent mechanical or grammatical errors
- An overall impression of superficiality, haste, or lack of understanding

Class Participation: I believe one of the most important parts of a college education is the chance to participate in open intellectual dialogue and to sharpen your thinking and speaking skills; it is one of the key traits that distinguishes a good college education from four barren years simply regurgitating a mass of factoids on exams. Hence, a considerable amount of class time will be devoted to what I hope will be lively and interesting discussions of the ideas and themes raised in the books, lectures, and films.

- **Discussion will count for 15% of your final grade**—an amount that is often enough to make as much as a letter grade difference in your final score. In my grading of your participation, be aware that quality is far more important than quantity; the highest grades will go to those students whose comments reflect a careful and critical reading of the course material. As you read the course books, in addition to learning about the basic historical events and players, ask yourself: What are the author's essential arguments? Does the author provide adequate evidence to support these arguments? What are the author's biases? Do you agree or disagree with the author's analysis? Remember: Neither the readings nor my lectures hold the final word on any issue. One goal of this course is for you to become

more adept at examining the various arguments and drawing your own reasoned conclusions based on the evidence available.

- I realize that some people, for a variety of reasons, simply feel they cannot participate in class discussions, even though they have done all the reading and have a great deal to say. If you are such a person, I still strongly encourage you to try and participate; *now* is the time to begin getting beyond this limitation which will otherwise likely hinder you throughout your life. Failing that, though, please see me at some point early in the course (if you wait until the last month, it will be too late to have much of an effect) to discuss some alternative means so that you will get fair credit for this part of the course. In recognition that listening to others debate is still better than nothing, if you do not participate in discussion but attend class regularly, you will still receive at least “C” (70%) for your participation score.

Quizzes, Midterms, and Final: There will be periodic short quizzes throughout the course, some announced, some surprise. They will usually focus on the readings that you will be scheduled to have done for that day. You may use any notes you have taken on the books during the quizzes, though not the books themselves. There will be no makeup quizzes if you miss one without having *previously* let me know that you were going to be absent. Part of the point of the quizzes is to assess attendance, as you will note below. There are two major exams: a midterm and a comprehensive final. These exams will consist of essay questions and long IDs.

- Please be aware that the time and date of the final exam are determined by the university, and alternate exam times will not be offered. Please make your post-semester travel plans accordingly.

Attendance: Students are required to be present for the entirety of all course meetings. Please do not arrive late or leave early, as this is disruptive to both me and your fellow students. I will not take regular attendance, but will instead sample attendance through your presence or absence for quizzes, discussions, the return of course assignments, and the like. **If you have four or more recorded absences for the semester, you will receive a failing grade for the course. Since course participation constitutes 15% of your grade, a lesser number of unexcused absences may also result in a lower final grade.** However, if you must miss a class for a good reason, you need only alert me via email before the course starts and your absence will be excused.

***Nota bene:* All of the listed course requirements (with the exception of the short quizzes) must be completed to receive course credit. Failing to turn in one of the essays, for example, will result in a failing grade even if your overall numerical average is passing.**

A Few Words on Plagiarism, Cheating, etc.: All students are expected to abide by the university conduct guidelines which I encourage you to read on the web at:

http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/

Always bear in mind that any work submitted for this class—whether it be essays or test responses—must be written in your own words and give appropriate acknowledgement to the source of any views or ideas that are not uniquely your own.

- Collaboration between students in preparing for exams, discussing essay topics, etc., is encouraged. However, be sure that any exam answer or essay that emerges from these collaborations is uniquely your own. Even if written in your own words, an essay or exam response that uses an argument and supporting evidence that is identical or very similar to

another student's work might still be plagiaristic. Remember that avoiding plagiarism is basically about being intellectually honest: so long as you can truthfully say that what you have written reflects your own intellectual efforts and conclusions conveyed in your own words, you are on safe ground. Troubles generally arise when students try to avoid doing their own work by presenting the intellectual efforts of others as if it was their own.

The Course Website: The syllabus, study guides, and all other material distributed to the class will be available for downloading at the course website on the MSU Desire2Learn site. I will post other material there as well and send out periodic announcements. The two essays must be submitted through the D2L Dropbox. Your username and password are the same as those you use for MyPortal. The D2L site is at: <https://ecat.montana.edu/>

Grading:

Please note that all course requirements (with the exception of quizzes) must be completed to receive course credit. Failing to turn in one of the essays, for example, will result in a failing grade even if your overall numerical average is passing. The weight of each course responsibility in determining the final grade is:

Essays = 15 points each (total of 30 points)
Quizzes = 10 points (average of all given)
Participation = 15 points
Midterm = 20 points (average of two midterm grades)
Final = 25 points

All your grades during the course will be done numerically on a 100-point scale with the following letter grade equivalencies:

93-100: A
90-92.9: A-
88-89.9: B+
83-87.9: B
80-82.9: B-
etc.

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Schedule of Readings, Essays, and Exams

(Note that you are expected to have
completed the readings and assignments by the

day they are assigned)

Week One:

Aug. 28: Introduction to the course

Quiz One: By the next course period, make a Xerox of a *relatively* recent photo of yourself (even an old photo from your freshman year is all right so long as it will help me learn to recognize you), such as a snapshot, the photo on your school ID, drivers license etc. Position the photo so that is in the upper left hand corner of the 8.5x11 copy. Try to get a reasonably clear copy. Black out any personal information you don't wish me to see. Be sure that somewhere on the page your name appears clearly, and if you have a nickname or diminutive you prefer to go by in class, please indicate it. Also, include what your current major is, any relevant areas of expertise (say, you have read a great deal about the 1920s or have family histories about these periods), and any particular topics or questions you would like to see addressed in the class. **This assignment will constitute your first quiz grade; if you turn it in on Thursday, you will receive a 100%. Next week will get you 85%, and 70% thereafter. But if you want ANY credit for discussion, you must turn in this copy at some point. Otherwise, I will assume you don't care if you receive that 15% of your grade.**

Aug. 30: Kennedy, Editors Introduction and chapters 1-2

Week Two:

Sept. 4: Kennedy, chapters 3-4

Sept. 6: Kennedy, chapters 5-6

Week Three:

Sept. 11: Kennedy, chapters 7-8

Sept. 13: Kennedy, chapter 9 and epilogue

Week Four:

Sept. 18: Leffler, chapter 1

Sept. 20: Leffler, chapter 2

Week Five:

Sept. 25: Leffler, chapter 3

Sept. 27: Leffler, chapter 4; Lawrence, chapter 1

Week Six:

Oct. 2: Altschuler, chapters 1-2; Lawrence, chapter 2

Oct. 4: ESSAY ONE DUE IN D2L DROPBOX BEFORE MIDNIGHT; Altschuler, chapters 3-4; Lawrence, chapter 3

Week Seven:

Oct. 9: Altschuler, chapters 5-6 and Epilogue

Oct. 11: MIDTERM

Week Eight:

Oct. 16: Peters, chapters 1-3

Oct. 18: Peters, chapters 4-6; Lawrence, chapter 4

Week Nine:

Oct. 23: Peters, chapter 7; Lawrence, chapter 5

Oct. 25: Peters, chapter 8; Lawrence, chapter 6

Week Ten:

Oct. 30: Peters, chapter 9; Lawrence, chapter 7

Nov. 1: Peters, chapter 10; Lawrence, chapter 8

Week Eleven:

Nov. 6: NO CLASS-Election Day; Wilentz, introduction, prologue, and chapter 1

Nov. 8: Wilentz, chapters 2-3

Week Twelve:

Nov. 13: ESSAY TWO DUE IN D2L DROPBOX BEFORE MIDNIGHT; Wilentz, chapters 3-4

Nov. 15: Wilentz, chapters 5-6

Week Thirteen:

Nov. 20: Wilentz, chapters 7-8

Nov. 22: NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break; Wilentz, chapters 9-10

Week Fourteen:

Nov. 27: Wilentz, chapters 11-12

Nov. 29: Wilentz, chapters 13-14 and epilogue

Week Fifteen:

Dec. 4: No reading

Dec. 6: No reading

Your final will be a take home exam consisting of essay questions and long IDs. I will distribute the final on the last day of class and it will be due in the D2L Dropbox no later than Midnight Wednesday, December 12th.