Massachusetts Institute of Technology

21H.102 Spring 2003

The Emergence of Modern America, 1865 to the Present

This subject studies the changing structure of American politics, economics, and society from the end of the Civil War to the present. We will consider secondary historical accounts and primary documents to examine some of the key issues in the development of modern America: industrialization and urbanization; U.S. emergence as a global power; ideas about rights and equality; and the changing structures of gender, class, and race. This subject also examines the multiple answers that Americans gave to the question of what it means to be an American in the modern age. As a communications-intensive subject, students will be expected to engage intensively with the material through frequent oral and written exercises.

Requirements: The success of this class depends on the active participation of all students. Classroom participation (15%) represents a substantial portion of the grade, and will be evaluated in terms of preparation, participation in large and small group discussion, active listening, collaboration, and overall contributions to the class experience during the term. Needless to say, if you do not attend a class it is impossible for you to contribute to it. All students will take charge of discussion (10%) for a particular class session—labeled on the syllabus with the notation (*PR)—in collaboration with the instructor; preparation includes a short presentation about a primary document of your choosing that relates to the readings for a particular class.

Writing assignments in this subject are frequent. Everyone will write two 5-6pp. essays (20% each), of which one must be revised in conjunction with me and/or the staff of the Writing Center. In addition, each student will write a longer 10-12pp. essay (30%) on a topic of your choosing. Preparatory writing exercises (5%) will help students develop a topic, a bibliography, and an argument in advance of the final paper itself. There is no midterm or final examination in this class.

Writing assignments are due on paper in person at the beginning of the class in which they are due. Extensions will be granted only for good reasons explained well in advance; computer malfunctions are never an acceptable excuse for a late submission. Adherence to standards of academic honesty is required; if you have any questions about how to go about your writing or cite your sources, don’t hesitate to ask.

Books: Copies of all books have also been placed on reserve in the Humanities Library. Additional readings are available through handouts. Readings should be completed by the beginning of the class under which they appear, unless otherwise stated.
**CLASS OUTLINE**

**WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION**

**Class #1: Introduction**

READING: None.

**WEEK TWO: RECONSTRUCTION**

**Class #2: Legacies of War**


**Class #3: The Politics of Reconstruction (*PR 1)**


You may want to look at the chapter on Reconstruction in Pauline Maier, et al., *Inventing America: A History of the United States* (2003), pp. 535-560, if there is anything that you want to examine in further detail, but you are not expected to read that as well.

**WEEK THREE: THE NEW INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY: CENTER AND MARGINS**

**Class #4: The “ Winning” of the West**

WRITING: ROUGH DRAFT of first paper due at the beginning of class. We will spend most of the class working on peer editing.


**Class #5: The New Industrial Society (*PR 2)**


William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (1883), pp. 7-24, 63-87. [electronic reserve]
WEEK FOUR: WORK AND PLAY IN URBAN AMERICA

Class #6: The Modern Labor Movement

WRITING: REVISED DRAFT of first paper due at the beginning of class.


Class #7: The Emergence of Consumer Culture (*PR 3)


WEEK FIVE: AMERICA IN THE WORLD

Class #8: Immigrants Remake America (*PR 4)


Class #9: The Wars of 1898 (*PR 5)


WEEK SIX: PROGRESSIVISM AND ITS LIMITS

Class #10: In Search of Progressivism (*PR6)

WRITING: FIRST DRAFT of second paper due at the beginning of class.


Class #11: Violence in the Postwar South


WEEK SEVEN: WAR AND DEPRESSION

Class #12: War, Revolution, and the Flapper (*PR 7)


Class #13: The Great Depression (*PR 8)

WRITING: REVISED DRAFT of second paper due at the beginning of class.

WEEK EIGHT: WORLD WAR II

Class #14: World War II

VIEWING: The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter (1980).

Class #15: The Legacies of War (*PR 9)

READING: Pauline Maier, et al., Inventing America (2003), pp. 814-844. Everyone will be responsible for a section of this chapter, although you should read any parts of it that you need to help you learn about World War II.

WRITING: REVISED ESSAY for group one due in class.
WEEK NINE: THE COLD WAR

Class #16: The Cold War as a Political Crisis (*PR 10)


Class #17: The Cold War as a Cultural Crisis (*PR 11)


WRITING:  REVISED ESSAY for group two due in class.

WEEK TEN: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Class #18: The Emergence of the Civil Rights Movement


Class #19: What the Civil Rights Movement Did (*PR 12)


WRITING:  REVISED ESSAY for group three due in class.

WEEK ELEVEN: WHY WERE WE IN VIETNAM?

Class #20: Vietnam (*PR 13)


WEEK TWELVE: THE SIXTIES AND BEYOND

Class #21: The Sixties and Its Legacies (*PR 14)


Class #22: The Seventies: From Watergate to Disco (*PR 15)


WEEK THIRTEEN: THE NEW CONSERVATISM

Class #23: The Reagan Revolution (*PR 16)


Class #24: A Changing America (*PR 17)


WEEK FOURTEEN: THE NEXT AMERICAN CENTURY?

Class #25: The American Dream in a Global Age (*PR 18)


Class #26: The American Dream after September 11

WRITING: FINAL PAPER due at the beginning of class.