Modern US History Syllabus

2014-15

Mr Dixon (Rm 201)

Course objective: Students will understand the broad trends that have affected the US from 1870 to 2014. They’ll be able to identify major changes in geography, demographics, economics, art and culture, technology, and society.

In general, you’ll do some readings as homework, then come back and take open-note quizzes based on the previous night’s reading. We’ll then spend our class time explaining and clarifying the concepts from the reading. As the course goes on, we’ll use the textbook less and less, until eventually we’re using other sources for the more modern events (post-1990s).

I’ll examine a significant primary-source document for each unit, and after discussing the source in class I’ll expect students to complete a written assessment about that source.

Our text this year is *America: Pathways to the Present* by Cayton. Unfortunately, it was published in 2003 based on updates from 1998, so it’s not the most current work available.

Generally, I plan to follow the schedule I give you below. Beside each topic are some of the primary sources students can expect to work with.

First Quarter:

Industrial Revolution (E Lazarus’ poem “The New Colossus”)

Westward Expansion (Chief Joseph’s statement “I Will Cry No More Forever”)

The Gilded Age (A Carnegie’s *The Gospel of Wealth*)

Imperialism (J Hay’s letter to T Roosevelt on “A Splendid Little War”)

Progressivism (T Roosevelt’s “New Nationalism” speech)

Second Quarter:

The Great War (W Wilson’s “Peace Without Victory” speech)

The 1920s (L Hughes’ poem “A Dream Deferred”)

Crash and Depression (FD Roosevelt’s first inaugural address)

The New Deal (one of FD Roosevelt’s fireside chats… in case you haven’t figured it out yet, the Roosevelts are going to be very important this year)

The Second World War (FD Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” speech)

Third Quarter:

The Cold War (The Truman Doctrine and G Kennan’s “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”)

Postwar Years at Home: Kennedy and Johnson (JF Kennedy’s inaugural, plus MC Smith’s “Declaration of Conscience”)

Civil Rights (ML King, “I Have a Dream” and *Letters from the Birmingham City Jail*)

Vietnam (the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution)

Fourth Quarter:

The 1970s (R Nixon’s second inaugural)

The Conservative Revolution (*NJ vs TLO*, 1985)

Toward Today (the USA Patriot Act)