

**History 398**  
**American Political History in the Twentieth Century**  
**Undergraduate Research Seminar**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Hamilton Hall 517**  
**Mondays, 2 – 4:50 PM**

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Office Hours: Mon. and Thurs. 11 AM to 12 PM and by appointment

**Course Description**

This undergraduate seminar in history will explore the major developments in American public life during the twentieth century. Defining both “politics” and “political history” as broadly as possible, we will examine how citizens, parties, interest groups, and social organizations interacted with their state and defined the path of American domestic and foreign policies during a tumultuous century. Among the themes we’ll explore are social and economic policy, America’s presence on the international stage, legal and constitutional developments, political battles between labor and business, the importance of grassroots social movements, and the tortured trajectories of liberal and conservative political ideologies.

The course has two fundamental and interrelated objectives. First, the course readings will provide a broad overview of the major themes and questions that political historians have asked as they attempt to make sense of the past. Second, having analyzed historians’ methods and arguments, students will take on the role of historian themselves. The major course requirement is for each student to write a polished and sophisticated work of original historical scholarship related to the course theme and based on primary archival sources.

**Assignments and Requirements**

This is a seminar course, which means there will be no lectures. The semester is divided into two parts. In Part I, we will read and discuss important works of twentieth-century political history. The reading load is fairly heavy, and you will be required to submit a writing assignment ahead of each of the five (5) discussion meetings (excluding Week 1). In Part II, workshop seminars on various aspects of your research papers will guide you through each step of the process.

The success of our reading and workshop sessions will depend on every student’s active engagement with the assigned readings. This means taking notes and preparing specific points you would like to raise and discuss. The relatively brief writing assignments are designed to help you engage the readings more closely. Your class participation, writing assignments, and active engagement in the workshops count heavily toward your course grade.

**Please Note: The Honor Code will be vigorously enforced in all aspects of this course.**

## **Required Readings (for Weeks 1 through 6)**

*A Fierce Discontent*, Michael McGerr

*Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, William Leuchtenburg

*Grand Expectations*, James Patterson

*The Age of Reagan*, Sean Wilentz

## **Attendance Policy**

Attendance at scheduled class meetings is mandatory. If you must miss seminar for an excusable reason (generally a personal or medical emergency), you must inform the course instructor *before* class is scheduled to begin (preferably by email) and provide appropriate documentation (doctor's note, etc.) as soon as possible thereafter. Failure to do so will constitute an *unexcused* absence. Each unexcused absence will result in a deduction of **four (4) points** from your final grade. (I.e., a student with an average grade of 85, or B, would receive a 77, or C+, if she or he had two unexcused absences.)

## **Research Paper**

All students in History 398 will submit a 20–25 page final research paper (double-spaced; Times New Roman 12-point font; 1 inch margin on all sides; including footnotes) on **Monday, December 2**. We will discuss proper formatting and style guidelines, including how to cite sources in footnotes. In addition, students should consult K. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (Chicago: 1996), which is available at Davis Library.

**This paper will require extensive research in both primary and secondary sources.** All students will locate and analyze primary documents from archival sources. Except by special permission, I expect all students to make use of archives located on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus. During the first part of the semester, we will discuss how to navigate the archives and how to analyze primary source materials.

In consultation with the course instructor, each student will choose a research topic and submit first a **one-paragraph proposal** (October 13) and then a **2-page research prospectus** (October 20). On **October 21**, students will submit a 1-page analysis of a primary source related to their research project. On **October 28**, students will submit an annotated bibliography and bibliographic essay. In Weeks 10 and 11, students will participate in small-group presentations of their works-in-progress, where they will both present and evaluate their peers; during Weeks 12 and 13, students will participate in rough-draft workshops. (See below for more details.) Timely completion of all written assignments and preliminary deadlines on the research paper is expected.

## Grade Breakdown

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| In-Class Participation:                                  | 15% |
| Writing Assignments for Class (for Discussion Weeks)*:   | 10% |
| 1-Paragraph Proposal (Week 7)                            | 1%  |
| 2-Page Prospectus (Week 8):                              | 4%  |
| Primary Source Analysis (Week 8):                        | 5%  |
| Annotated Bibliography and Bibliographic Essay (Week 9): | 5%  |
| Introduction and Outline (Week 10):                      | 5%  |
| Research Presentation (Weeks 10 and 11)**:               | 10% |
| Rough Draft Workshop (Weeks 12 and 13)**:                | 15% |
| Final Research Paper (Week 14):                          | 30% |

\* Writing assignments for Discussion Weeks are due **by email** by 5 PM the day before class. Late emails will be penalized 5 points every 2 hours they are late. Late submissions of research-related writing assignments will be penalized 5 points for every day they are late.

\*\* Grade reflects both your own work and your active evaluation of others during group work.

## A Note on Grading

All aspects of this course will be graded subjectively on an A through F scale.\* For averaging purposes, I will convert letter grades to numbers according to the following scale:

|       |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |
|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|----|------|
| A+    | 100  | B+    | 88.5 | C+    | 78.5 | D+ | 68.5 |
| A     | 95   | B     | 85   | C     | 75   | D  | 65   |
| A-    | 91.5 | B-    | 81.5 | C-    | 71.5 | D- | 61.5 |
| A-/B+ | 90   | B-/C+ | 80   | C-/D+ | 70   | F  | 50   |

\* Assignments that are not completed will be calculated as a 0. (Don't do this.)

At the end of the semester, I will calculate your final weighted average numerically and then convert it, without rounding, according to the following scale:

|            |    |            |    |            |    |            |    |
|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|
| 93 – 100   | A  | 83 – 86.99 | B  | 73 – 76.99 | C  | 63 – 66.99 | D  |
| 90 – 92.99 | A- | 80 – 82.99 | B- | 70 – 72.99 | C- | 60 – 62.99 | D- |
| 87 – 89.99 | B+ | 77 – 79.99 | C+ | 67 – 69.99 | D+ | <60        | F  |

# COURSE SCHEDULE

## Week 1, August 26: Introduction to Course

**Reading Assignment:** Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870 – 1920*, Preface; Conclusion; William Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, Preface, Chapter 14; James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974*, Preface, Editor’s Introduction, and Prologue; Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan 1974–2008*, Prologue.

**Class Discussion:** What are the major themes of American political history since 1900? What is “Political History” —is it different from “Social” or “Cultural” history? How? What groups or ideas does it privilege?

What is a historical argument? What are primary and secondary source? What is historiography?

## Week 2, September 9: Discussion – The “Progressive” Era

**Reading Assignment 1:** McGerr, (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6) [176 pages total]

**Writing Assignment:**

**Part I:** As you read, think about the way McGerr employs certain political categories, especially the following:

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Victorian</i>      | <i>Socialism</i>    |
| <i>Class Conflict</i> | <i>Radicalism</i>   |
| <i>Segregation</i>    | <i>Middle Class</i> |

For each term, write a **brief paragraph (2 to 3 sentences)** that explains what you think McGerr means by it. How does each term figure into his arguments? What people or ideas does it connote? Give some specific examples from the reading, indicating page numbers in parentheses.

**Part II:** Choose an issue, event, or group of people that McGerr analyzes. In a long paragraph (3/4 of a page), propose a *hypothetical* research project that would analyze that subject in greater detail. What makes it important? What kinds of historical questions can you pose? What types of sources would you want to examine to answer those questions?

## **Week 3, September 16: Discussion – The New Deal**

**Reading Assignment 2:** William Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11) [150 pages total]

**Writing Assignment 2:** Think about the variety of political options that were available to combat the Depression in the 1930s, both under Hoover (chapters 1 and 2) and FDR (the rest). Identify **4 discrete instances** (with page numbers) where Leuchtenburg argues that FDR refrained from taking a more radical path, but rather pursued a middle ground between more extreme possibilities. Write **2 or 3 sentences about each instance** you identify. What were FDR’s options? Why does Leuchtenburg think he made the choice he did?

## **Week 4, September 23: Discussion – Post-war American Politics**

**Reading Assignment 3:** Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapters 2, 6, 7, 9, 12 [156 pages]

### **Writing Assignment 3**

Patterson argues in his preface that, in the postwar years, Americans “developed ever-greater expectations about the capacity of the United States to create a better world abroad and a happier society at home.” But Americans’ “expectations”—the things they hope their government and society will do—varied considerably, often depending on the political disposition of the Americans in question. As you read, identify two instances of what you might call a “conservative expectation” of politics, and two instances of “liberal expectations.” Think carefully about what “conservative” and “liberal” mean in this context. Were they the only political options available? Can you identify people or ideas that are neither conservative nor liberal? How? Write a short paragraph (**2 to 3 sentences**) explaining each example, making specific reference to the reading (include page numbers in parentheses).

## **Week 5, September 30: Discussion – Race and Rights**

**Reading Assignment 4:** Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Ch. 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21 [184 pages total]

**Writing Assignment 4:** Identify three specific aspects of Patterson’s discussion of race and rights in the 1950s and 1960s that you think could be researched more fully. Using the chapters to provide context, write **three (3) mock research-paper prospectuses** (2 paragraphs each). You should choose three events that are spaced out in time—mid-to-late 1950s; early 1960s; mid-to-late 1960s. As with the week on the Progressives, your prospectus should explain what makes that topic historically important. What kinds of historical questions does it raise? What types of sources would you want to examine to answer those questions?

**Primary Source Workshop in Class** [source to be distributed]

## **Week 6, October 7: Discussion – The Age of Reagan?**

**Reading Assignment 5:** Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan 1974–2008* (Chapters 1–7)

**Writing Assignment 5:** According to a review of this book, Wilentz (whose previous historical scholarship concerned the 19<sup>th</sup> century) is generally “perceived more as an erudite spokesman for the Democratic Party than as a judicious analyst of the Republican agenda” and yet, in this book, he “largely abandons partisanship in favor of professionalism.”<sup>1</sup> Do you agree? What happens when a historian writes about issues about which he holds a pronounced political opinion? **In 1 to 2 pages**, evaluate at least **3 specific instances** in the reading where Wilentz leans toward *either* partisanship *or* professionalism (or, if you’re *very* observant, both simultaneously!).

**Class visit to Wilson Library.**

## **Week 7, October 14: Research – Individual Meetings on Paper Topics**

**Research Deadline #1:** Email me a single paragraph proposing and justifying a topic for your research paper by **Sunday night, October 13.**

**15-minute individual meetings in 422 Hamilton between 12:30 PM and 4:30 PM (to be scheduled).** We will use your paragraphs as the basis for discussion. Based on our conversation, you will revise and expand your proposal, explaining in greater detail the significance of your project and what sources you plan to use. Your two-page research prospectus will be due before class next week.

## **Week 8, October 21: Research – Primary Source and Article Workshop**

**Reading:** Luke Wander, “Red Books and Smoking Guns: Using Mao to Rationalize Violence in the American New Left,” *Traces: The UNC-Chapel Hill Journal of History* (2), spring 2013, pp. 132 – 165. [to be distributed]

**Research Deadline #2: 2-page Paper Prospectus**, due by **Sunday night, October 20.**

**Research Deadline #3: Primary Source Analysis—Due in class.**

Locate a primary source related to your topic and, in 2 to 3 paragraphs, critically analyze the source.

**In-Class Presentations/Discussions:** We will break into groups of 4, based on your research topics, for the first half of class. Everyone will describe her or his topic and the primary source she or he analyzed. Other group members will comment on the concept of the research paper and the analysis of the primary source. After the presentations, we will continue to work in small groups to analyze the structure and composition of the article that you read for today.

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Brinkley, “The Long Shadow,” *New York Times Sunday Book Review*, May 18, 2008.

## **Week 9, October 28: Individual Meetings**

### **Research Deadline #4: Annotated Bibliography and Bibliographic Essay Due**

**By 1 PM on Monday, October 28**, you should submit by email two pieces of writing: 1) an annotated list of 5 primary sources—for each source, write a clear paragraph that both explains the source and critically analyzes it in the context of your research question; 2) a 2-to-3 page essay that synthesizes the relevant arguments and contributions of *at least 5* secondary sources and explains how your research project adds to existing scholarship on your topic. Please see Turabian’s *Manual for Writers* in Davis Reference for proper citation forms.

**15-minute individual meetings in 422 Hamilton between 12:30 PM and 4:30 PM (to be scheduled).** We will discuss your sources and the current state of your projects.

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For the next four weeks, we will divide the class into four groups (I – IV) of four students and meet for 1-hour sessions during class time (and one hour before class, to be scheduled). The first two weeks will be dedicated to oral presentations (2 students from each group present in the first week; the other 2 present in the second week). For the second two weeks, the groups will review rough drafts (we review 2 students’ rough drafts the first week; the other 2 the next). All students are expected to actively engage in both the presentations and rough draft reviews, whether or not it is your turn to “go.” We will reconvene as a class for the final submission of the papers on **December 2**, when our group discussion will focus on the challenges, successes, joys, and frustrations of the process of historical writing.

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## **Week 10, November 4: Research – Presentations I**

### **Research Deadline #5: Introduction and Outline** (students 1 and 2)

By 5 PM on **Sunday, November 3**, students 1 and 2 from each group should submit by email a 2-page introduction and detailed (section by section) outline of their paper. Email this assignment to me and I will forward it to your group members. All students should read the introductions and outlines for those members of their groups who will be giving oral presentations and come prepared to offer constructive feedback.

In class, students 1 and 2 from each group will present their research for 30 minutes (15 minutes presentation; 15 minutes group discussion). These presentations should summarize the entire scope of your research. What major question are you addressing? Why is it important? What have other scholars said? What are their strengths and limitations of your sources? Students will be graded on the organization and thoughtfulness of their presentations, the breadth of their research, and the sophistication of their analysis. In addition, grades for these presentations will reflect the contributions, of the three non-presenting students during the “group discussion.

**1 – 2 pm: Group I (students 1 and 2)**

**2 – 3 pm: Group II (students 1 and 2)**

**3 – 4 pm: Group III (students 1 and 2)**

**4 – 5 pm: Group IV (students 1 and 2)**

## **Week 11, November 11: Research – Presentations II**

**Research Deadline #5: Introduction and Outline** (students 3 and 4)

**1– 2 pm: Group I** (students 3 and 4)

**2 – 3 pm: Group II** (students 3 and 4)

**3 – 4 pm: Group III** (students 3 and 4)

**4 – 5 pm: Group IV** (students 3 and 4)

## **Week 12, November 18: Rough Draft Workshop I**

Students 1 and 2 from all groups should email me their rough drafts by **Friday, November 15** at noon. I will send these on to your groups by Friday evening. All group members should read thoroughly and prepare a written critique the two drafts in advance of Monday's meeting. Prepare to comment on the drafts, and to respond to comments about your own draft (if you are submitting it). You should feel free to make comments on a hardcopy or electronic version, which you should then share with the author after the workshop. As with the presentations, grades for these workshops will reflect both the work of the presenting student and the critiques and participation of the non-presenting students during the workshop period.

**1 – 2 pm: Group I** (students 1 and 2)

**2 – 3 pm: Group II** (students 1 and 2)

**3 – 4 pm: Group III** (students 1 and 2)

**4 – 5 pm: Group IV** (students 1 and 2)

## **Week 13, November 25: Rough Draft Workshop II**

Students 3 and 4 from all groups should email me their rough drafts by **Friday, November 22** at noon. I will send these on to your groups by Friday evening.

**1– 2 pm: Group I** (students 3 and 4)

**2 – 3 pm: Group II** (students 3 and 4)

**3 – 4 pm: Group III** (students 3 and 4)

**4 – 5 pm: Group IV** (students 3 and 4)

## **Week 14, December 2: Final Class Meeting; Papers Due**

Debriefing, discussion of process, snacks.