

KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE
of The City University of New York
Department of History, Philosophy and Political Science

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Title: Modern America: 1920 to the Present

Number: HIS 59

Credits/Hours: 3 credits/3 hours

INTRODUCTION

History 59 begins with the onset of the modern era in Post-World War I America and ends at the present day. The course attempts to cover aspects of the development of the United States from many different points of view. It tries to go beyond dates and facts and to consider why the United States developed as it did.

To what extent has modern America been shaped by the seminal events of the Twentieth Century? How has America been defined by the continuing evolution of its government, its land, and its people? How has the United States faced the challenges of domestic and global change in terms of politics, economics, technology, and culture? To address these and other historical questions, the class integrates elements of history, political science, economics, art and literature to present a multifaceted vision of America and its history.

OBJECTIVES

A primary objective of the course is for the student to achieve a deeper insight into the American experience, past, present and future. Through intensive study of the events and individuals that comprise the history of the United States of America, undergraduates will develop a sense of perspective and a broader frame of reference for their own individual and collective histories. The knowledge students acquire in our learning environment will provide them with the necessary intellectual and cultural background to define for themselves what it means to be American.

Additionally, as a central offering in the liberal arts, the course acquaints students with many of the core concepts, theories, and facts essential to academic and cultural literacy. Through emphasis on reading and interpreting texts, comparative conceptual analysis, the explication of graphic charts and illustrations, and communicating clearly and effectively through writing, the course develops and enhances student skills in the areas of critical thinking, reading comprehension, and both oral and written communication.

ASSESSMENT

History 59 employs a wide variety of pedagogical techniques including lecture, discussion, and computer-based (online and web-enhanced) instructional technologies. Oral presentations, low-stakes writing assignments, and small discussion groups are also encouraged.

Assessment of student learning will be based on class assignments, which include readings from primary and secondary texts, group discussions in class and/or online, class presentations, and written work, which may take the form of essays, journals, reports, research papers, or other assigned writing. The specific combination of assignments is left to the discretion of the individual instructor.

In addition to informal or low-stakes assignments, student achievement of basic skills and knowledge will also be measured through examinations and term papers. Examinations require essay writing and will test reading comprehension and fluency as well as mastery of critical thinking skills. Specific weighting of various assignments and requirements is determined by the individual instructor. However, students in all sections are expected to master a common body of information as measured by their responses to selected questions. Final examinations will therefore incorporate a common element constituting fifty percent of the exam, and will be in essay form.

COURSE OUTLINE

The following topics will be covered by the course. Instructors may vary the content and organization of their sections.

I. The Jazz Age

Introduction to the era after the Great War; religious, economic, cultural, and social aspects of the decade of the Roaring Twenties.

II. The Great Depression and World War II

The New Deal and governmental activism; the effects of the Depression on the American people and their responses; WWII background and leaders, in both the military arena and the home front.

III. The Cold War

Postwar America's rise to prominence and political supremacy; America's response to Communism on a domestic and global level.

IV. Postwar America

Post-WWII prosperity and development; suburbanization; Civil Rights; domestic policies through the era of the Great Society programs.

V. Vietnam Era

The history and background of the war in Vietnam, and concurrent domestic developments; protest movements; Watergate.

VI. The Modern Era

American society, culture, and politics from the late Twentieth Century to the present day.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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