

**HTS 6101-A: The United States in the Twentieth Century**  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Fall 2014

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Amsterdam

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**Office: Old Civil Engineering Building, G18**

**Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:15-4:15 pm and by Appointment**

Course Overview:

Through intensive readings, rigorous discussions, and periodic lectures by the instructor, this graduate-level seminar examines major developments in U.S. history in the twentieth century and how historians have written about them. It pays particularly close attention to the development of American government, its relationship to the economy and society, as well as to major social movements, including, but not limited to, “progressive reform,” the labor movement, the African American civil rights and Black Power movements, and the rise of modern conservatism. The course also touches on select, critical junctures in the United States’ relationship to the wider world as well as on issues related to gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality in addition to race.

Goals of the Course:

The goals of the course include a combination of the following, depending on the respective interests and needs of each member of the class:

- 1) to begin to prepare participants to teach a survey course in modern U.S. history;
- 2) to begin to prepare participants for a general examination field in modern U.S. history;
- 3) to help participants whose research might focus on U.S. history to constructively contemplate and/or make progress on a thesis/dissertation topic;
- 4) to help participants whose research topic might focus on another part of the world to use U.S. history and historiography to think in a comparative context and about different methodological approaches; and/or
- 5) to achieve another, personalized goal that might spring from conversations with the instructor.

### Required Readings:

See the course schedule below for the list of readings.

*You must obtain hard copies of all of the books, whether by purchasing new or used copies on-line or through the library. E-books are not acceptable because having fruitful discussions will hinge on our being able to locate passages quickly and efficiently using a common set of page numbers. An exception will be made in cases where students have already purchased the electronic version of the first book listed on the course schedule, Natalia Molina's Fit to Be Citizens?*

Articles listed below are available through the Tech library website.

### Assignments and Grading:

#### Class Participation (25%)

*This course is a collective enterprise. Its utility hinges on everyone completing all of the readings on-time and participating regularly and constructively in class discussions **during each and every class meeting**. You may miss one class meeting during the term, no questions asked. Thereafter, you will lose a full letter grade in this category for each absence except in the case of a documented medical or family emergency.*

#### Mid-Term Take-Home Exercise (20%)

Due: October 9, 11:59 pm (There will be no class held on Thursday, October 9).

*This exercise will take the form of essay-length, take-home responses to roughly one or two questions that will be distributed a week prior to when the assignment is due. The exercise will deal with the readings from the beginning of the course through Sept. 25. Your essays should be typed and uploaded to the Assignments page on T-Square by the deadline.*

#### Sample Reading Memos (5%)

Due: September 13 at 11:59 pm

*You are required to produce a brief "memo" on each week's readings and compile them into a portfolio that you will hand in at the end of the term. You must hand in at least two of these memos by September 13 at 11:59 pm. The goal of this exercise is to make sure that you are completing these memos in a manner that will allow you to obtain full credit on the final portfolio. A suggested template for your memos is appended to the end of this syllabus. Memos should be no more two-pages in length using a 12-point font.*

*You are welcome to hand in and receive feedback on any and all memos that you compose throughout the term if you would like. But after September 13, you will not be required to hand in a memo until the end of the semester.*

*Students who would like to receive feedback on their memos must hand theirs in by 11:59 pm on the Saturday after the reading dealt with in the memo was discussed in class. Memos should be uploaded to the Assignments Page on T-Square.*

#### Final Portfolio of Reading Memos (20%)

*Due: Sunday, December 7 at 11:59 pm.*

*As noted above, students must hand in a portfolio of the memos that they have written on the assigned readings each week. Again, a suggested template for these memos is appended to this syllabus. As mentioned above, students are welcome to submit and receive feedback on their memos as they wish throughout the term. Once again, students who would like to receive feedback on their memos must hand theirs in by 11:59 pm on the Saturday after the reading dealt with in the memo was discussed in class. The final portfolio should be uploaded as one document to the Assignments Page on T-Square. Individual memos should be no more two-pages in length using a 12-point font.*

#### Final Take-Home Exercise (30%)

*Like the mid-term, this exercise will take the form of essay-length, take-home responses to roughly one or two questions that will be distributed, in the case of the final, as least a week prior to when the assignment is due. The exercise will primarily deal with the readings discussed from October 9 through the end of the course, although it might include one or more facets that ask you to include readings from earlier in the semester as well. Your essays should be typed and uploaded to the Assignments page on T-Square by the deadline. A due date for this exercise will be determined through discussions with members of the class.*

#### Course Schedule:

August 21 – Course Overview

August 28 – Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939*

September 4 – Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*

September 11 – Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, Introduction-Chapter 4

September 18 – Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, Chapter5-Conclusion

September 25 – Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America*

October 2 – Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*

October 9 – Take-Home Exercise Due at 11:59 pm, No Class

*Please Upload to the Assignments Page on T-Square*

October 16 – Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*

October 23 –

- 1) Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, Intro-Chapter 4
- 2) Thomas Sugrue, "Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction Against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964," *Journal of American History*, 82 (Sept., 1995), pages 551-78. Available on-line through Tech's library.

October 30 –

- 1) Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, Chapter 5-Conclusion
- 2) Mathew Lassiter, "The Suburban Origins of 'Color-Blind' Conservatism: Middle-Class Consciousness in the Charlotte Busing Crisis," *Journal of Urban History*, 30 (May 2004), 549-582. Available on-line through Tech's library.

Nov. 6 – Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*

Nov. 13 – Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente*

November 20 – Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade against the New Deal*

November 27 – No Class, Thanksgiving

December 4 – Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States and the Rise of the New Imperialism*

**Final Portfolio of Memos Due on Sunday, December 7 at 11:59 pm. They should be uploaded as one file onto the Assignments Page on T-Square.**

## Sample Template for Reading Memos

**MEMOS SHOULD BE NO MORE THAN TWO PAGES LONG USING A 12-POINT FONT.**

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*Title of Book as well as Publication Information*  
**Name of Author**

**Thesis of the book:** *Memos must include at least one paragraph that outlines the main arguments of the book.*

**Main Scholarly Contributions:** *Memos must include roughly a paragraph describing the main contributions that the book makes (or at least hopes to make) to its respective field and to the study of twentieth-century US history more generally.*

**Methods:** *Memos must include a brief description of how the author goes about trying to make her or his main arguments in the book. This can include whether and to what degree the author relies on case studies, a description of what sources the author uses, and/or whether the author mainly uses social, political, cultural analysis, etc.*

**Critiques/Questions for Further Inquiry:** *Your memos should briefly summarize and justify the main critiques that you might have of the book as well as any questions that the book raised in your mind that you think might be fruitful for researchers to pursue further.*