

HIST 2112 – The United States Since 1877

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Professor Daniel Amsterdam

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General Course Information

Description

Through a combination of lectures, readings, visual art, documentary photography and film, this course examines the major political, economic, social and cultural trends that have made the United States the nation that it is today. The class also examines related dynamics in Atlanta and in Georgia more generally. The course focuses on the period since 1877 and especially examines:

- 1) the rise of a modern industrial economy and its transformation in recent decades;
- 2) the creation of modern American government as well as debates over its proper size and scope;
- 3) how inequality has riddled American society and how various groups have sought to redress this fact;
- 4) why the United States has gone to war since the late 19th century and how these conflicts have, in turn, shaped American life.

Course Learning Outcomes

- 1) To give students a greater understanding of major events and trends that have shaped the development of the United States since 1877, including in Georgia and Atlanta.
- 2) To give students a greater understanding of what historians do and therefore what “history” is.
- 3) To convince students that historical inquiry is critically important for making sense of the world around them.
- 4) Additional, related learning objectives specific to general education (Core Impacts) requirements as discussed below.

Required Course Materials

- 1) Rebecca Burns, *Rage in the Gate City: The Story of the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot* (available as an e-book through the Georgia Tech Library; there is no need to purchase this book).
- 2) Michael C.C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (available as an e-book through the Georgia Tech Library; there is no need to purchase this book).
- 3) Robert A. Pratt, *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Desegregation of the University of Georgia* (available as an e-book through the Georgia Tech Library; there is no need to purchase this book).
- 4) Warren St. John, *Outcasts United: An American Town, A Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference*. ISBN: 0385522045

You will need to purchase this book at the Georgia Tech Bookstore on Tech Square, online, or obtain it through the Georgia Tech Library or Interlibrary loan. Be sure not to read the young adult version.

- 5) Brief excerpts (1-3 pages) from the following primary sources, which will be posted on Canvas and do not need to be purchased.

Josiah Strong, *Our Country*

Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exhibition Address"

W.E.B. DuBois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others"

Preamble to the Constitution of the Knights of Labor

Platform of the Populist Party.

Albert J. Beveridge, "March of the Flag"

Platform of the Anti-Imperialist League

Mrs. Arthur M. Dodge against Suffrage

Lyman Abbot, "Why Women Do Not Wish the Suffrage"

The Kennan Telegram

The Novikov Telegram

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Clark M. Clifford, "A Viet Nam Reappraisal"

Students for a Democratic Society, "The Port Huron Statement"

Casey Hayden and Mary King, "Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo"

Ronald Reagan, "A Union of Individuals" (1988)

William Jefferson Clinton, "Statement on Signing 1996 Welfare Reform Act"

Grading Policy:

Students' final grades will be determined through the following exams/exercises:

In-Class Exercises on Required, Book-Length Readings (15%)

Mid-Term I (20%)

Mid-Term II (20%)

Mid-Term III (20%)

Final Exam (25%)

Grading Scale for Final Grades:

90-100 – A

80-89.99 – B

70-79.99 – C

60-69.99 – D

59.99 and Below – F

Final grades will not be “rounded up.” In other words, to receive an A in the course, you must earn an actual, final average of 90.00 or above. A final average of 79.95, for instance, will be a C.

Description of Graded Components:

Due to the high student-teacher ratio in the class, all exams will be multiple choice. The in-class exercises related to required book-length reading will vary, but students should feel confident that they will perform well on them if they have completed the assigned readings.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

Attendance is mandatory for exams and on days when we discuss the required book-length readings. Exceptions will be made only for documented medical and family emergencies or due to an Institute-excused absence. Although I do not take attendance on days when there is a lecture, it is exceedingly difficult to succeed in the class without attending all classes. If you do miss a lecture, I am happy to answer questions about the content that you missed **but only after** you have obtained notes from a classmate.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Core IMPACTS

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

This is also a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Georgia Legislative Requirement

This course should also direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I prepare for my responsibilities as an engaged citizen?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history of the United States and the history of Georgia

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Critical Thinking

- Intercultural Competence
- Persuasion

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.