

## HIST 5389: America Since 1945

### Introduction:

This graduate-level course provides an in-depth exploration of the scholarship in American history from the end of World War II to the contemporary era. It is designed to help graduate students become familiar with both the history and the historiography of modern America.

**Instructor:** Dr. M. Rhys Dotson

**Email:** mdotson@uttyler.edu

**Office:** CAS 117

**Office Hours:** MWF 10:15 - 11:15 *or*  
by appointment

### Note on emails:

If you reach out to me during the week, I will do my *best* to respond to you within 24 hours. If you contact me on the weekend *or* during a scheduled university break, I will do my *best* to respond within 48 hours.

### Required Texts:

- Brands, H. W., *American Dreams: The United States Since 1945*. Penguin Books, 2011.
- Crespino, Joseph. *Strom Thurmond's America*. Hill and Wang, 2013.
- May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. Basic Books, 2017.
- Johnson, David K. *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. University of Chicago Press, 2023.
- Self, Robert O. *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since 1960*. Hill and Wang, 2013.
- Shepherd, Lauren Lassabe. *Resistance from the Right: Conservatives and the Campus Wars in Modern America*. University of North Carolina Press, 2023.
- Bloom, Joshua and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*. University of California Press, 2016.
- Cowie, Jefferson. *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*. New Press, 2012.
- Prager, Joshua. *The Family Roe: An American Story*. W. W. Norton & Co., 2021.
- Bird, Kai. *The Outlier: The Unfinished Presidency of Jimmy Carter*. Crown, 2022.
- Belew, Kathleen. *Bringing the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*. Harvard University Press, 2019.
- Carroll, Tamar W. *Mobilizing New York: AIDS, Antipoverty, and Feminist Activism*. University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

## Accessing Required Readings:

- **Library Resources** – Many of the required books are available in the university library. You are encouraged to borrow copies from the library to minimize costs.
- **E-Books** – Several of the required textbooks are available as e-books. You can access these through the university's digital library or through other reputable online sources.
- **Purchasing Books** – While purchasing books is an option, it is **not** mandatory. If you prefer to own your copies, you may buy them from the campus bookstore or through other retailers.

## Course Objectives:

Following the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze significant events and themes in the United States since 1945
- Analyze the trends and shifts in the historiography of modern American history
- Critically evaluate primary and secondary sources related to modern American history

## Expectations and Etiquette:

In this graduate history course, we strive to create an environment that is respectful and conducive to learning. As members of this academic community, we must adhere to the following guidelines to ensure a positive and productive experience for all:

- **Respectful Communication** – Engage with your peers and the instructor respectfully. Listen actively and be open to new ideas and perspectives. Disagreements should be expressed thoughtfully and constructively.
- **Punctuality** – Arrive on time for all classes, discussions, and meetings. If you must be late or absent, inform the instructor in advance whenever possible.
- **Preparation** – Come to class prepared, having completed all assigned readings and ready to participate in discussions. Your contributions are valuable and enhance the learning experience for everyone.
- **Academic Integrity** – Uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism, cheating, the use of AI, and other forms of academic misconduct are strictly prohibited and will be addressed in accordance with university policies.
- **Participation** – Actively participate in class discussions and activities. Your insights and questions are important and contribute to a richer understanding of the material.
- **Feedback** – Provide and receive feedback graciously. Constructive criticism is a vital part of the learning process, and it should be given and taken with the intent to help improve and grow.

## Methods of Evaluation:

**Book Reviews (30%):** Students must write twelve book reviews over the course of the semester. These reviews are an essential component of the course, designed to develop your critical thinking and analytical skills.

**Participation (25%):** Active participation is a vital component of all graduate history courses. Engaging in discussions, asking questions, and sharing insights enrich your learning experience and contribute to the class's collective knowledge. Therefore, this is truly a **participation** grade and not merely credit for attendance.

**Final Paper (45%)** – Students have the option to complete either a research paper on a topic of their choosing or a historiography paper.

## Guidelines for Book Reviews:

- **Content** – Each review should provide a concise summary of the book's main arguments, analyze its strengths and weaknesses, and discuss its significance within the broader historical context.
- **Length** – Reviews should not exceed 1000 words.
- **Format** – As historians, you should always format your work according to the Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style guidelines.
- **Submissions** – All reviews must be submitted via Canvas by 1:00 pm on the day of our class meeting/discussion. No late submissions will be accepted.

## Options for the Final Paper:

- **Research Paper** – Choose a specific topic within the scope of the course (1945-2008) and conduct original research. Your paper should present a clear thesis supported by primary and secondary sources. This would be an ideal assignment for those interested in writing a thesis related to the course content.
  - You must submit a research proposal with a working bibliography to the instructor no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, February 20.
  - All secondary sources must be written by historians and published by reputable academic presses.
  - You must have a minimum of five primary sources and ten secondary sources.
  - The final draft of your paper should be a minimum of 4000 words (excluding the cover page and bibliography).
  - The final draft must be submitted via Canvas no later than 5:00 pm on Monday, April 27.
  - Dr. Dotson reserves the right to veto submitted ideas/topics.
- **Historiography Paper** – Analyze and compare the works of various historians on a specific topic related to our course. Discuss the evolution of historical thought, methodologies, and interpretations, highlighting key debates and contributions to the field.
  - You must evaluate at least twelve books for your final paper.

- You **must** submit a proposal with a working bibliography to the instructor no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, February 20.
- The final draft of your paper should be a minimum of 4000 words (excluding the cover page and bibliography).
- The final draft **must** be submitted via Canvas no later than 5:00 pm on Monday, April 27.
- Dr. Dotson reserves the right to veto submitted ideas/topics.

### Grade Scale:

A:  $\geq 89.5$   
B:  $79.5 - 89.4$   
C:  $69.5 - 79.4$   
D:  $59.5 - 69.4$   
F:  $59.4 \leq$

### Key Dates:

January 12: First Day of Spring Semester  
February 20: Paper Proposals Due  
March 9-13: Spring Break/Campus Closed  
April 27: Final Paper Due

### Class Schedule:

January 12 – Week 1 – Introduction

January 19 – Week 2 – Brands, *American Dreams*

January 26 – Week 3 – Crespino, *Strom Thurmond's America*

February 2 – Week 4 – May, *Homeward Bound*

February 9 – Week 5 – Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*

February 16 – Week 6 – Self, *All in the Family*

February 23 – Week 7 – Shepherd, *Resistance from the Right*

March 2 – Week 8 – Bloom and Martin Jr, *Black Against Empire*

March 9 – Week 9 – Spring Break/Campus Closed

March 16 – Week 10 – Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*

March 23 – Week 11 – Prager, *The Family Roe*

March 30 – Week 12 – Independent Research/No Formal Class Meeting

April 6 – Week 13 – Bird, *The Outlier*

April 13 – Week 14 – Belew, *Bring the War Home*

April 20 – Week 15 – Carroll, *Mobilizing New York*

## **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and This Course:**

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

For this course, AI is **not** permitted at all.