

# HIST 346: From Omaha to Hiroshima: U.S. History, 1890-1945 Messiah College

**N.B. This syllabus can also be found on the “Q” drive accessible from computers in campus labs  
path: “Q” drive > InstructorFiles > LaGrand\_James > HIST 346 > HIST 346 (2007) syllabus**

Fall 2007

Tuesdays & Thursdays

11:55-1:10

Boyer 277

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Thursdays, 1:20-2:35 p.m. & by apt.

## DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

One of the topics discussed by Americans all across the country during the 1890s was the challenge posed by a group of farmers. Calling themselves the “Populists,” these farmers from the South and West, met in Omaha, Nebraska in 1892 to call for changes in the nation’s political and economic order. They argued it should be more just toward those who worked the land. Move ahead approximately fifty years to the 1940s and one finds Americans talking and debating about the nation’s involvement in the Second World War, and most pointedly, the use of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These two episodes illustrate just some of the ways in which the United States changed from 1890 to 1945. This will be our focus this semester.

We will examine changes in the economy during this time away from agriculture toward ever-evolving industry. We will look at the developing international role of the U.S. culminating in World War II. And we will study a host of other developments during the first half of the twentieth century--including reform movements; the political economy and the roles played in public life by women, immigrants, minorities, and workers; and the Depression and New Deal.

History 346 covers some of the same ground as the U.S. survey, History 142, but allows for a closer examination of the people, groups, trends, issues, and ideas during the first half of the twentieth century in the United States. Additionally, it offers more opportunities to do the work of the historian--reading and analyzing primary sources, looking at historiography of twentieth-century U.S. history, and doing original research. In this way, History 346 will both add to the liberal arts education of all students and offer those who are interested a glimpse of what historical work after college might look like. Course objectives are to develop critical reading, analytical, and writing skills.

REQUIRED READINGS--BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE IN BOOKSTORE:

- Bailey, Thomas A. and David M. Kennedy, eds. *The American Spirit: United States History as Seen by Contemporaries, Volume 2*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006 (11th ed).  
 Antin, Mary. *The Promised Land*. Penguin Classics. 1912. Penguin. ISBN 0140189858.  
 McGerr, Michael. *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*. Oxford University Press, 2005. ISBN 0195183657.  
 Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. Penguin. 1939. Penguin. ISBN 0140281622.  
 Westbrook, Robert B. *Why We Fought: Forging American Obligations in World War II*. Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004. ISBN 1588341305.

REQUIRED READINGS--ARTICLES:

- “Public Life in Industrial America, 1877-1917,” by McCormick (1997) [on reserve in library]  
 “In Search of Progressivism,” by Rodgers (1982) [available online via JStor]  
 “Prosperity, Depression, and War, 1920-1945,” by Brinkley (1997) [on reserve in library]  
 “Introduction,” by Dubofsky (1992) [handout]  
 “The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front,” by Leff (1991) [available online via Academic Search Premier]  
 “The Good War?” by Polenberg (1992) [handout]

FILMS:

- Matewan* (1987), week of Sept. 17-21; time and place TBA  
*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), week of Nov. 5-9; time and place TBA

REQUIREMENTS:

- read all required books and articles listed above  
 view the two films listed above  
 participate regularly in class discussions  
 write two exams  
 write an essay of 4-6 double-spaced pp. on either Antin or Steinbeck  
 write an essay of 4-6 double-spaced pp. on either McGerr or Westbrook  
 write an essay of 2-3 double-spaced pp. on either *Matewan* or *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*  
 read a chapter of a U.S. history textbook on the same topic as the other members of small group, report on your findings, and as a group lead class discussion  
 write a research paper of 10-15 double-spaced pages

STANDARD OF EVALUATION:

The final grade for the course will be derived as follows:

exam #1	20%
exam #2	25%
essays	25%
research paper	25%
participation	5%

**EXAMS:**

You will write two exams for this course: a midterm and a final. The midterm exam will have two sections: ID and essay. The first section will ask you to identify and give the significance of several terms from parts one and two of the course. These might be names, places, organizations, pieces of legislation, etc. In identifying these terms, play the role of the journalist who always answers the five “W” questions: who, what, when, where, and why. After you have identified the term, explain its significance--where it fits in or contributes to major themes covered in the course. IDs need not be more than a few sentences, but they should not be merely a series of disjointed notes or phrases. Make sure you write in complete, grammatical sentences in all your work for this course, including IDs. The second section of the exam will ask you to write an essay on a major theme from parts one and two of the course. Make sure that you answer this question completely. Many essay questions will have several different components. Your essay should be well-organized, persuasive, and draw on materials from all the different facets of the course--lectures, readings, class discussions, and films--for examples and evidence. The final exam--in addition to having an ID section and an essay section on parts three and four of the course--will also have a third section which will ask you to write an essay on a theme that spans the entire course from beginning to end. This final cumulative essay will ask you to think about the course as a whole.

**ESSAYS:**

You will write two essays of 4-6 pages over the course of the semester--one on either Antin or Steinbeck and one on either McGerr or Westbrook. Use the questions below to guide the writing of them. Feel free to expand on the questions given or to begin on a different but related matter. In other words, do not feel constrained by the questions provided. Frame your essays around issues and ideas that you think important and interesting. Yet you should not avoid the questions provided, as they help you address some of the more important issues raised in the work you will do this semester. In their finished form, your essays should contain prose that is both grammatical and persuasive. In other words, make sure they are both well-written and well-thought-out. Also, your essays should make specific references to the text being discussed when appropriate. We will talk about the essays and the process of writing them at various times throughout the semester.

Assignment for essays on Antin’s *The Promised Land* due Thurs., Sept. 13 in class:

a) What was the most important way in which Mary Antin was transformed in her migration from eastern Europe to America?

OR

b) What does Antin’s story tell us about American society and culture during the early twentieth century?

OR

c) What is the “American identity,” according to Mary Antin? Is her understanding of this idea the same as yours?

Assignment for essays on McGerr's *A Fierce Discontent* due Tues., Sept. 25 in class:

a) Use McGerr's book to support the thesis that the progressive movement was more successful than unsuccessful.

OR

a) Use McGerr's book to support the thesis that the progressive movement was more unsuccessful than successful.

Assignment for essays on Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* due Tues., Oct. 30 in class:

a) Ideas of individualism and community run throughout Steinbeck's novel. What does it have to say about each of these social values? How does it portray the relationship between individualism and community?

OR

b) Steinbeck's novel is in part about the Joad family's resistance to people and forces that threaten them. What shape does this resistance take? Is the Joad family's resistance ultimately successful or unsuccessful?

OR

c) Many historians have asked the question: "Why was there no revolution in the United States during the 1930s?" Use Steinbeck's novel to help answer this question.

Assignment for essays on Westbrook's *Why We Fought* due Thurs., Nov. 29 in class:

a) One of Westbrook's main themes in this group of essays is the nature of political obligation among Americans during World War II. He both describes the nature of this relationship of individuals to the nation and gives his opinion concerning it. Are you sympathetic to Westbrook's assessment? Why or why not?

OR

b) How does Westbrook's use of cultural history here change our understanding of the World War II experience?

Assignment for essays on either *Matewan* or *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*:

Write a movie review that briefly describes its plot or story, but that primarily suggests what you as a historian find interesting, insightful, inaccurate, etc., about the movie given your knowledge of the period it portrays. In other words, write a movie review that only someone with a deep knowledge of twentieth-century U.S. history (i.e. yourself) could write.

#### RESEARCH PAPER:

You will write a research paper for this course of 10-15 double-spaced pages which will be due Tues., Dec. 11 in class. You may choose to focus on any person, group, trend, issue, or idea in the U.S. from the 1890s through the 1940s that interests you. The research paper must be rooted in one or more primary sources. Examples might include magazine runs (several articles on a particular topic), newspaper runs, books, diaries, novels, etc. In addition to your reading and analysis of primary sources, you should also use at least two secondary sources, to reveal what other historians have written on your topic. No more than half of your sources may come from the internet. To ensure a successful final paper, the research and writing process will be divided into the following stages with accompanying deadlines:

topic	due Thurs., Sept. 20 via email
title and bibliography (including both secondary and primary sources)	due Tues., Oct. 9 via email
outline and thesis / theme	due Thurs., Nov. 1 via email
final paper	due Tues., Dec. 11

#### GROUP WORK AND ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

Student groups will be determined in the first week of the semester. Occasionally, these groups will be asked to discuss assigned readings together and then report to the class. In addition, each group will be asked to lead a seminar class meeting, in which we will look closely at the scholarly literature and historiography on: 1) industrialization, 2) progressivism, 3) the Depression and New Deal, and 4) World War II. When a group is responsible for a seminar class meeting, it should provide the instructor--at least three days beforehand--with a brief quiz and 5-10 reading questions on the common reading(s). On seminar days, each member of the group will give an oral presentation on his or her textbook chapter and the group as a whole will lead the class in general discussion. Therefore, each group should meet before its seminar class meeting and discuss how the various textbook chapters compare to one another and fit with other class material. Each group should decide on a representative, who will provide some introductory comments before the oral presentations begin. After oral presentations are finished, presenters will take questions and draw the entire class into the discussion.

#### TEXTBOOKS FOR SEMINARS--ON RESERVE IN LIBRARY:

Davidson et. al., *Nation of Nations*.

- ch 19 - The New Industrial Order (on industrialization)
- ch 22 - The Progressive Era (on progressivism)
- ch 25 - The Great Depression and the New Deal, 1929-1939 (on the Depression and New Deal)
- ch 26 - America's Rise to Globalism (on World War II)

Garraty and Carnes, *The American Nation*.

- ch 18 - An Industrial Giant (on industrialization)
- ch 22 - The Age of Reform (on progressivism)
- ch 25 - The New Deal, 1933-1941 (on the Depression and New Deal)
- ch 26 - War and Peace (on World War II)

Gillon and Matson, *The American Experiment*.

- ch 18 - The Industrial Experiment, 1865-1900 (on industrialization)
- ch 21 - The Progressive Era, 1889-1916 (on progressivism)
- ch 25 - "Fear Itself": Crash, Depression, and the New Deal, 1929-1938 (on the Depression and New Deal)
- ch 26 - War and Society, 1933-1945 (on World War II)

Harrell et. al., *Unto a Good Land*.

- ch 18 - The New Industrial Order (on industrialization)
- ch 24 - Progressivism in American Politics, 1901 to World War I (on progressivism)
- ch 27 - The Great Depression and the New Deal (on the Depression and New Deal)
- ch 29 - The Dilemmas of Power: America and the World, 1921-1945 (on World War II)

Henretta et. al., *America's History*.

- ch 17 - Capital and Labor in the Age of Enterprise, 1877-1900 (on industrialization)
- ch 20 - The Progressive Era, 1900-1914 (on progressivism)
- ch 24 - Redefining Liberalism: The New Deal, 1933-1939 (on the Depression and New Deal)
- ch 25 - The World at War, 1939-1945 (on World War II)

Nash et. al., *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*.

- ch 18 - The Rise of Smokestack America (on industrialization)
- ch 21 - The Progressives Confront Industrial Capitalism (on progressivism)
- ch 24 - The Great Depression and the New Deal (on the Depression and New Deal)
- ch 25 - World War II (on World War II)

Tindall and Shi, *America: A Narrative History*.

- ch 20 - Big Business and Organized Labor (on industrialization)
- ch 24 - The Progressive Era (on progressivism)
- ch 28 - New Deal America (on the Depression and New Deal)
- ch 30 - The Second World War (on World War II)

**NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Academic dishonesty of any kind (including cheating and plagiarism) violates the community standards of Messiah College, as well as those of the larger community of scholars into which you enter through this course. As such, any cases will be punished appropriately. However, please do not hesitate to talk to the instructor if you have questions about how to use or cite outside sources or about any other matter of academic practice.

Messiah College's academic integrity policy may be found here:

[www.messiah.edu/academics/advising\\_handbook/academic\\_policies/integrity.pdf](http://www.messiah.edu/academics/advising_handbook/academic_policies/integrity.pdf)

**NOTE ON AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:**

Any student whose disability falls within ADA guidelines should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester of any special accommodations or equipment needs necessary to complete the requirements for this course. Students must register documentation with the Office of Disability Services (Hoffman 101). If you have questions, call extension 5382.

## SCHEDULE

[NOTE: ALL DETAILS SUBJECT TO CHANGE]

### PART ONE

- Tues., Sept. 4 Introduction: Omaha, 1892  
 Thurs., Sept. 6 Business in Industrial America  
 reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 64-75
- Tues., Sept. 11 Immigration, Migration, and Urbanization  
 reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 94-109
- Thurs., Sept. 13 An Immigrant Life in Industrial America; **essays on Antin DUE**  
 reading: Antin, *The Promised Land*  
 [Matewan screening this week]
- Tues., Sept. 18 The Working Class in Industrial America  
 reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 80-93, 159-162
- Wed., Sept. 19 screening of *Matewan*, 7:00 p.m., Boyer 235
- Thurs., Sept. 20 Seminar: Historiography of Industrialization (led by group 1);  
**topic for research paper DUE**  
 reading: "Public Life in Industrial America," by McCormick, pp. 107-121 [on reserve]

### PART TWO

- Tues., Sept. 25 The Progressive Reform Impulse; **essays on McGerr DUE**  
 reading: McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent*; Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 204-231
- Thurs., Sept. 27 Debate: "New Nationalism" or "New Freedom"?  
 Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 232-240; handouts
- Tues., Oct. 2 Seminar: Historiography of Progressivism (led by group 2)  
 reading: "Public Life in Industrial America," by McCormick, pp. 121-130 [on reserve]  
 "In Search of Progressivism," by Rodgers [available online]
- Thurs., Oct. 4 Open  
 reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 178-203
- Tues., Oct. 9 World War I; **title and bibliography for research paper DUE**  
 reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 249-274
- Thurs., Oct. 11 [no class meeting; Mid-Fall recess]
- Tues., Oct. 16 Politics, Economics, and Labor in the 1920s  
 reading: --
- Thurs., Oct. 18 Mass Culture and Societal Backlash in the 1920s  
 reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 275-285
- Tues., Oct. 23 **EXAM #1**

PART THREE

- Thurs., Oct. 25 The Depression and the Culture of the 1930s  
reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 297-316
- Tues., Oct. 30 Responses to the Depression; **essays on Steinbeck DUE**  
reading: Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*
- Thurs., Nov. 1 The New Deal; **outline and thesis for research paper DUE**  
reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 316-326, 329-334  
[*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* screening this week]
- Tues., Nov. 6 New Deal Critics  
reading: --
- Wed., Nov. 7 *screening of Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, 7:00 p.m., Boyer 235*
- Thurs., Nov. 8 Labor in the 1930s  
reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 326-329
- Tues., Nov. 13 Seminar: Historiography of the Depression and New Deal  
(led by group 3)  
reading: "Prosperity, Depression, and War," by Brinkley, pp. 143-149 [on reserve]  
"Introduction," by Dubofsky [handout]

PART FOUR

- Thurs. Nov. 15 Debate: Should the U.S. have become involved in World War II by 1940?  
reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 336-359; handouts
- Tues., Nov. 20 World War II: The European Front  
reading: --
- Thurs., Nov. 22 [no class meeting; Thanksgiving recess]
- Tues., Nov. 27 World War II: The Pacific Front  
reading: --
- Thurs., Nov. 29 The War and American Life in the Forties; **essays on Westbrook DUE**  
reading: Westbrook, *Why We Fought*  
"The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front," by Leff [online]
- Tues., Dec. 4 Hiroshima, 1945  
reading: Bailey & Kennedy, pp. 374-381
- Thurs., Dec. 6 Seminar: Historiography of World War II (led by group 4)  
reading: "Prosperity, Depression, and War," by Brinkley, pp. 149-151 [on reserve]  
"The Good War?" by Polenberg [handout]

PART FIVE

- Tues., Dec. 11 student presentations; **Research Paper DUE**
- Thurs., Dec. 13 student presentations

**Wed., Dec. 19**  
**1:30-3:30 p.m.**

**EXAM #2**