

SYLLABUS

**AMERICAN HISTORY: 1914 - 1945**  
**HIS 324/550**  
**10506/10520**

Rhode Island College

Providence RI 02908

Gary Donato

FALL SEMESTER

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** The Beginning of World War I to the end of World War II was a period of significant change for America. This is an examination of major social, economic, political, and foreign policy events and trends that contributed to that change.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Doenecke, Justus. 2003. *The New Deal and Its Critics*. Krieger Publishing. ISBN: 1575240831
- Gordon, Colin. 1999. Major Problems in American History 1920-1945. Houghton Mifflin. ISBN: 0395-87074-7
- Iriye, Akira. 1995. The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations Volume The Globalizing of America 1913-1945. ISBN: 0521483824.
- Iriye, Akira. 1999. Pearl Harbor and the Coming of the Pacific War. Bedford/St. Martins. ISBN: 0312147880
- McElvaine, Robert S. 1993. The Great Depression. Times Books/Random House. ISBN: 0812923278
- McKay, Ernest A. 1996. Against Wilson and War 1914-1917. Krieger Publishers. ISBN:0894649647
- Polenberg, Richard. 2000. The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt 1933-1945. Bedford St. Martins. ISBN: 0312133103
- Rosenberg, Emily. 1982. Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion 1890-1945. Hill and Wang. ISBN: 0809001462

**Useful journals:** *Diplomatic History; American Historical Review; Department of State Bulletin.*

**OBJECTIVES:** Though the course is predominantly about a thirty year time period dominated by two major wars, our focus will be more along the lines of explaining the totality of interactions that dominated the period. Many scholars identified the interwar period especially as one of isolationism. We will evaluate the validity of that assessment. With regard to foreign policy, America is schizophrenic in that we are pragmatic yet adhere to the mythology of American exceptionalism. On the one hand America is a nation to whom others look for unselfishness and the righteousness of representative democracy. On the other hand, America is also a culture dominated by the consciousness of unconditionality. Our goal is to openly evaluate America's foreign policy programs from 1914-1945 looking beyond war and its causes and results to more fully understand the underlying objectives of U.S. policy makers. This course, while advancing your understanding of a particular time period, is also designed to improve your critical thinking ability, your ability to acquire and integrate knowledge, and your communication effectiveness. By the end of the semester, students should have a grasp of the historical basis of the time; the complexities of foreign policymaking; the uniqueness of America during the interwar period, and the importance of particular decisions in domestic and foreign policy. There will be extensive use of primary source documents both in the library and online. You will use that understanding to explore and present a brief on your particular area of interest.

**DISABILITIES STATEMENT:** If you have a hidden or visible disability requiring classroom or test-taking modifications, please see me as soon as possible.

**METHOD OF EVALUATION:**

- Student participation/Presentations/Contributions
- Book review (there are eight books, select one or present me with an alternative)
- Individual Assignments (4)
  - These are progressive assignments to be used to write your final project.
  - The assignments will be:
    - Thesis/introductory paragraph
    - Literature review
    - Draft #1
    - Draft #2
- Final research project.

**GRADING CRITERIA:** I compute your final grade as follows:

- Participation/Presentations 20%
- Book review 10%
- Individual Assignments 40% (10% each)
- Research Project 35%

A	93-100	C	73-77
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	88-89	D+	68-70
B	83-87	D	63-67
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	78-79	F	Unsatisfactory

**READINGS:** I assign the readings for each session in the syllabus. To properly prepare for class sessions, I expect you to complete the readings, prepare questions on areas you do not understand, and engage in discussion with your classmates.

**BOOK REVIEW:** See the addendum to the syllabus for guidelines on a book review. You may choose one of the assigned books or you may present me with an alternative. The alternative must be approved by me and must deal with the time period under study. Book reviews will be shared with all members of the class. I expect students to both read and critique their colleagues' assessments of books under review.

**RESEARCH PROJECT:** The research project for this class will be of two parts: an individual component whereby the student will conduct research on a particular subject of interest and a presentation/"lead the class" component. In the second part, the student will take the topic of the week and lead the discussion in a small discussion group.

**PERFORMANCE:** How well you perform is a combination of three factors:

- How well I present the material.
- You're personal motivation to learn.
- You're personal discipline to prepare.

**ONE FINAL NOTE OF IMPORTANCE: ENJOY THE CLASS THIS WILL BE FUN.**

**RIC**  
**American History (1914 - 1945)**

**Individual and small group sessions M/W before and after class.**  
**Classroom: G307**

**GARY DONATO**

**M 11-12:20pm**

**Office: G249**

**WEEK**

**READINGS**

**TOPIC**

1 (9/8)

Iriye Ch 1  
Rosenberg Ch 3

Introduction

2 (9/15)

Iriye Ch 2  
Rosenberg Ch 4  
McKay Ch 1  
Documents

Pre-WW I

Why were Europeans anxious for war? What were conditions of Wilson's foreign policy pre-WW I (e.g. Panama Canal; Japanese; Dollar Diplomacy; Mexico; Europe generally).

**Topic of Interest due**

3 (9/22)

Iriye Ch 3  
Rosenberg Ch 4  
McKay Ch 2-6

Culture WW I

Was Wilson's administration neutral? Why did the U.S. declare war on Germany rather than England?

4 (9/29)

Rosenberg 5  
McKay Ch 7-11

Opponents to WW I

Why, if there was such anxiousness for war in Europe, did the U.S. experience such an opposition to war from 1914-1917? What were the proximate causes of America's engagement in WW I?

**Book selection for review & Thesis/Introduction Due**

5 (10/6)

Iriye Ch 4

League of Nations

What is the legacy of the League? Who were the progressives, reservationists, and irreconcilables? How do you explain the rejection of the league by the U.S.?

6 (10/15)

Iriye Ch 5  
Rosenberg Ch 6 & 8

Interwar Security

How was the postwar spirit of nationalism reflected in the U.S.? What did Harding mean by "normalcy"? Explain the following quote: "In the quarter century following American entry into WW I, the quest for security against both outer and inner threats to the country's well-being became, for the first time, a national response." Did America, become a de facto participant in the League of Nations? I would argue America was more internationalist than isolationist in the inter-war period. Take the following and justify my claim: export/import ratio; disarmament as a correlative to political security.



What were the responses to New Deal legislation? Where the negative responses borne out? Some would argue the New Deal (or Roosevelt revolution) actually commenced at the turn of the century? Justify that argument. Both the Left and the Right, even the Middle attacked Roosevelt's New Deal. What were their arguments and which was most convincing? How did the New Deal usher in the "modern political age?"

**Draft #3 due - this should be very close to completion.**

**THANKSGIVING RECESS 11/27 - 12/1)**

13 (12/1)                      Gordon Ch 14                                      Prelude to WW II  
   Iriye (Pearl) Part I  
   Polenberg pp 24-37

Was FDR determined, dangerous, or just a juggler? What option would you choose - Support lend lease; reject lend lease, or accept lend lease without convoy? Was the U.S. Wise to choose a Europe first agenda?

**All book reviews completed.**

14 (12/8)                      Gordon Ch 14, 15                                      Pearl Harbor/WW II  
   Iriye (Pearl) Part II  
   Iriye Ch 11, 12  
   Polenberg Ch 8, 9

In what ways was WW II more of a total war than WW I? Was FDR more prepared for war than Wilson? Why/why not? Iriye argues that "the war was the culminating point in the story of the steady globalization of the United States." Do you agree?

15 (12/15)                      The Bomb Debate                                      Post WW II

**Final Examination week.**  
**Final papers due no later than 12/15.**

## **RANGE OF VIEWPOINTS IN AMERICA**

**LIBERALS** would like to see a country in which there are no great disparities of income, wealth, power, and status. They would also like to see stalemate and inertia removed from our constitutional system. In foreign policy, they favor discouraging the obsession of ideology.

**RADICAL LEFTISTS** desire a socialist society. Property, except for a few personal possessions, should be communally owned, and cooperation replaces competition in the economic realm. Inequalities should be eliminated and corporate wealth broken up. In foreign policy, the radical left wants a reconstruction of America's aims and an elimination of corporate businesses' undue influence in shaping that policy.

**CONSERVATIVES** believe that America should be a land in which individuals are encouraged to improve themselves by hard work, initiative, and creativity. Power should reside at the state and local levels. America must remain a leader among nations. They denounce the drab conformity of the welfare state and denounce liberal programs that engage in "social engineering."

**RADICAL RIGHTISTS** have two differing strands of thought. One embraces the elitist position typified by the John Birch society, which advocates competitive individualism and unrestricted business activities. On the other side, populist rightists seek a much broader base for their ideal system that denounces the poor, the minority, and the counter-culturalists. They are highly aggressive in foreign policy.

**CENTRISTS** hope to create a land of moderation, reasonableness, and goodwill based on diversity and multiple interests. They believe in equality of opportunity, but allow substantial variations in income and property. Their foreign policy, they believe, has been a judicious mixture of firmness and restraint.

The continuum would look something like this:

**RADICAL LEFT --- LIBERALS --- CENTRISTS --- CONSERVATIVES ---  
RADICAL RIGHT**

## Papers and Examination Information

I will constantly evaluate your writing skills as the course develops.

**EXAMS** Examinations will be of the "mixed type" combining true/false, multiple choice, short answer (less than a paragraph), longer answer (paragraph), and essay (page to page and a half). Responses other than multiple choice require supporting evidence in the form of citation/quotation using either MLA/APA/Chicago Manual of Style format.

**NOTE: Grading on examinations consist of 50% for the correct answer and 50% for germane supporting evidence.**

**PAPERS** All written material must be typed double-spaced and with 1 ½" left margin, 1" margins top/bottom/right. The writing must comply with MLA standards. I most strongly recommend you acquire a writing guide/handbook. I evaluate the papers for content, grammar, and historical accuracy. The best way to ensure you have a presentable paper is to conduct both spell and grammar check and have at least one peer read your paper, preferably aloud so you can hear your errors. The quality of your papers falls into and between three categories: Superior, Excellent, and Good.

**Superior:** Paper is historically accurate with main ideas supported by facts. The paper has a clear thesis, original/thoughtful interpretation and demonstrates significant knowledge of the topic. This paper also exhibits creative use of wide ranging sources that advance the thesis and analysis. Finally, this paper exhibits a balance between interpretations.

**Excellent:** The main ideas have factual support but can be improved with more evidence. The thesis is present, but not clearly stated. This paper presents more description than analysis. The author uses a variety of sources to support the thesis but provides little analysis of the supporting material. Finally, this paper inordinately selects one position over another with little convincing evidence or analysis.

**Good:** Little evidentiary material to support thesis. The paper has a focus but no clear thesis. The work is essentially non-specific in that there is little analysis and factual material to support a position. Source material is not diverse, too much emphasis on one type of resource. The paper only presents one point of view when it is obvious that others exist.



## Case Study Preparation

A case, or topic of interest is a narrative of an actual, or realistic, problem that typically portrays policy makers confronted with the need to make a decision. Teaching cases presents information, not analysis; your task is to supply the latter, as well as to advocate a solution. Like the situations faced by real policy makers, information provided in the case may be ambiguous, complex, or incomplete. Generally, a case has no single "correct" answer; there are only choices, some better, some worse, and all open for discussion and interpretation.

Learning with cases requires active participation, requiring you to learn by doing analysis and recommending action.

### **Case Discussion**

1. Be prepared to present your ideas forcefully, and to support them with as much care and persuasion as possible. At the same time, be equally prepared to listen to commentary. This is not an exercise in who can shock whom. Keep an open mind and do not hesitate to incorporate ideas of others.
2. Do not wait too long to engage yourself in discussion. Waiting deadens the "gray matter." I will call on you to participate if I deem you are sitting back. Be ready.
3. Link your commentary to those of others so as not to move the discussion along a tangent.
4. Admit confusion, ask for clarification. By doing so, you may help the discussion stay focused on the problem.

### **Case Preparation**

The quality of case analysis depends critically on the degree to which you read and think about the case and to the extent you participate in discussion. Read the case, formulate positions, be ready to explain your position, anticipate critique, and be ready with alternative perspectives.

1. Get a sense of the whole case. Who are the central actors? What is the case really about? Look for broad outlines.
2. State the issues. What problems are the people within the case dealing with? Where is the conflict between ideas, perspective, and values?
3. Organize the details. Establish a timeline. Ask yourself where are the "holes" in the case; what additional information would you need to make a more informed decision, if you had more time?
4. Return to the textual material. What analytical tools do the authors provide? What approach can you take to get more meaning out of the information provided in the case?
5. Prepare to justify, present, and explain your analysis.
6. Ask yourself what you've learned from the case. Prepare to present and defend your recommendations.

### **What am I looking for?**

1. Evidence of careful preparation including knowledge of the factual details of the case and readings. Know the case story.
2. Logical consistency, appropriateness of discussion, use of relevant evidence, originality and creativity, make the connections between theory and practice.
3. Comments that are clear, concise, fluent, enthusiastic, and civil.
4. Comments must contribute to the process of discussion: must build upon ideas of others, criticism must be constructive, and questions must be deliberative. In a nutshell, I'm looking to see if you've listened to others.
5. Voluntary participation. If you are uncomfortable with in class speaking, please come by and talk with me. I'll help you.

## **Writing a Book Review** **(not a book report)**

1. Provide complete reference including name, title, place of publication, publisher, publication date, number of pages, ISBN, and cost.
2. Describe the subject, scope, and purpose of the book.
3. Summarize the author's thesis or hypothesis.
4. Identify the evidence used to support the thesis.
5. Summarize the author's conclusion.
6. Critique the argument.
  - a. Is it logically sound?
  - b. Is there a fair balance of opposing viewpoints?
  - c. Is the argument/controversy clearly identified?
7. Critique the evidence:
  - a. Is it adequate?
  - b. Is it factual or merely opinion?
  - c. Is it based on respectable authorities?
  - d. Is there substantive information?
8. Critique the author's conclusion:
  - a. Does it follow from the evidence presented?
  - b. Does it generalize beyond the evidence?
  - c. Were the goals of the author accomplished?
9. Suggest how the book correlates to current issues or other books/material on the subject.
10. Suggest how the book relates to material presented in the course - how does it contribute to the body of knowledge in the field?

### **Hints for writing a book review.**

1. Look in various indexes/journals for other reviews.
2. Offer only evidence, omit "I think" or "He/she thinks" phrases.
3. Assert your perspective without stating opinion with shallow words of praise or condemnation.
4. Look at the table of contents, index, preface, introduction, conclusion, and data tables/charts carefully before reading any text.

## Terms History 324

1919 Steel Strike  
*Abrams v US*  
Adolf Hitler  
Alfred E. Smith  
Allied Patriotic Societies  
Amendments 17-20  
American Individualism  
Am Union against Militarism  
*An American Tragedy*  
Andrew Carnegie  
Andrew Mellon  
Associationalism  
Atlantic Charter  
Atomic Bomb  
*Babbitt*  
Black Dahlia movement  
Black Tuesday  
Bolshevik Revolution  
Bonus Army  
Bracero Worker Program  
Bretton Woods Conference  
Californios  
Calvin Coolidge  
Canal Policy 1914  
Capone  
Carranza  
Cash and Carry  
Charles Lindbergh  
Clark Memorandum 1928  
Classical Liberalism  
Collective Security Committee for Industrial Organization  
Committee on Public Information  
Communist Party USA  
Consumer Durable  
Cultural Dislocation  
Dawes Plan  
D-Day  
Dollar Diplomacy  
*Duck Soup*  
Eightieth Congress  
Emergency Banking Act  
End Poverty in CA (EPIC)  
Equal Rights Amendment  
Esch-Cummins  
Transportation Act  
Espionage, Sabotage, and Seditious Acts  
Executive Order 9066  
Farmer-Labor Party  
Father Charles Coughlin  
Federal Emerg Relief Act  
First New Deal  
Five-Power Treaty  
Flappers  
Four Freedoms  
Frances Perkins  
Franklin Roosevelt  
Fundamentalists  
Glass-Steagall Banking Act  
Good Neighbor Policy  
*Grapes of Wrath*  
Great Depression  
*Great Gatsby*  
Harlem Renaissance  
Hawley Smoot Tariff 1930  
Herbert Hoover  
Huey Long  
Hundred Days  
Immigration  
Restriction Act Indian Reorganization Act  
Interventionists  
Iron Curtain  
Irreconcilables  
Isolationism  
John Dewey  
Johnson Reed Act 1924  
Josef Stalin  
Kellogg-Briand Pact  
Ku Klux Klan  
Laissez-Faire Politics  
Lansing Ishii Agreement  
League of Nations  
League of Women Voters  
Lend Lease Act  
Liberal Protestantism  
Liberty Bonds  
Lost Generation  
*Main Street*  
Marcus Garvey  
Marian Anderson  
Marshall Plan  
Maternity and Infancy Protection Act  
Mexican Repatriation  
*Middletown*  
Modernists/Fundamentalists  
Montevideo Conference 1933  
Munich conference  
NAACP  
National War Labor Board  
National Women's Party  
Navajo Signal Corp  
Neutrality Acts (FDR)  
New Negro  
New Woman  
Nuremberg Trials  
*Outline of History*  
Palmer Red Scare  
Peace without Victory  
Pearl Harbor  
People's Capitalism  
Petting parties  
Prohibition  
Radio Corporation of America  
Reservationists (Lodge)  
Return To Normalcy  
Rio/Buenos Aires/& Lima Conferences  
Robert La Follette  
Roosevelt "Revolution"  
Roosevelt Liberalism  
Roosevelt-Taft Debate  
Sacco & Vanzetti  
*Schenck v US*  
Scopes Trial  
Second New Deal  
Securities Act  
Sheppard Towner Act  
Social Security Act  
Spheres of Influence  
Suffrage Movement  
Superman Comic 1938  
Tenant Farmers/Sharecropping  
Tennessee Valley Authority Act  
*The Man that Nobody Knows*  
Total War Concept  
Treaty of Versailles  
Triple Alliance  
Triple Entente  
Underconsumptionism  
Unrestricted Warfare  
Urbanization  
VE Day  
VJ Day  
Volstead Act  
W.E.B. Dubois  
Warren G. Harding  
Teapot Dome  
Welfare Capitalism  
Woody Guthrie  
Yalta Conference  
Yellow Dog Contracts  
Zimmerman Telegram