# **U.S. History from Reconstruction to the Present**

# **HI 112 IL Winter 2021**

**Assignment 4 (Final) due Thursday 14 January (30%) NEW DATE**

All rewrites must be submitted by Friday 15 December

Over the course of the semester you will write a series of essays regarding the major themes of the course. The majority of successful essays have been five to ten pages (5-10 pp) in length, **but this one will almost certainly be longer given the cumulative component**. It will be almost impossible to fully answer the question in less than *five to seven pages* (typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font recommended) but *please try not to exceed fifteen pages.*

As a reminder, on the essays I provide numerous questions to guide you through each of the essays, but please do not simply answer the questions point for point. The ultimate goal is to write cohesive essays not compile a set of fragments. Please therefore provide an introduction and conclusion to each essay. You are strongly encouraged to write (or at least re-write) your introduction AT THE END, so that they actually introduce the essay you have completed. In addition, you will not cover all of the sub-themes equally but you will decide which are the most important points to cover IN ORDER TO make the most effective arguments.

You are expected to make arguments, which requires that all ideas are logically coherent and are supported with evidence. Without evidence you are only making assertions, which cannot be properly evaluated. Without logic and coherence, you are simply rambling. Any argument will be considered, as long it is coherent and supported by specific historical evidence. Deal with one topic per paragraph, use topic sentences and the active voice.  See below for guidance:

http://www.bartleby.com/141/strunk5.html

You are expected to review all of the sources and all sections of the textbook in order to understand the issues, although for analytic clarity you will focus on some sections and but a few sources. The most successful essays will use sources from BOTH Boyer AND Cobbs. That said, the **greatest emphasis** should be on the primary sources and interpretive essays from *Major Problems*.

No matter what, you are *primarily answering the central question of the essay*. This assignment will answer what did the civil rights movement achieve to the 1980s, how we explain and assess the Right Turn of the 1980s, and what were the foreign policy and domestic challenges of the 90s and then the 21st century providing specific historical evidence. Finally, you are asked to write a cumulative essay.

**For this Intersession, you have the option of meeting with me, or with the group, and answering ONE question per assignment orally REPLACING the written essay. In this assignment, you can choose any of the essays covering the 1980s to the present.**

**Affluence and Civil Rights**

Boyer, Chapter 27, “Midcentury,”

Boyer, Chapter 28, “Liberalism” (esp. “The Continuing Struggle for Black Equality”)

Boyer, Chapter 29, “Upheaval” (esp. “Divided Nation, Crises at Home”)

Boyer, Chapter 30, “End of the Cold War” (esp. “Divided Nation, Crises at Home”)

Boyer, Chapter 31, “Changing Nation” (esp. “Divided Nation, Crises at Home”)

Foner Chapter 27 “Triumph to Tragedy,” pp 1092-1103

Foner Chapter 28 “Triumph to Tragedy,” pp 1140-1144 and

Cobbs and Gjerde, “Affluence”

“Intro, Fourth of July, College Women, Perfect Wife, Other America, Friedan”

Coontz, “Way We Never Were (3d ed)”

“Intro, Security Risks, Perfect Wife, Harlem Disc Jockey, Friedan”

May, “Nuclear Cocoon (4th ed)”

Cobbs and Gjerde, “Civil Rights”

“Introduction, Brown v Board, Rosa Parks, Self-Defense, Equality, la Raza, Alcatraz (3d ed)”

“Introduction, Segregation, Fanon, Brown v Board, Southern Congressmen, Church Bombing, Freedom of Marriage, Alcatraz, Chicanas (4th ed)”

Cobbs and Gjerde, “New Right”

“Introduction, Brown v Board, Rosa Parks, Self-Defense, Equality, la Raza, Alcatraz (3d ed)”

“Introduction, Schlafly (3d and 4th ed)”

Carter, “The Politics of Race and the New Right,” (3d ed)

Foner Selections from Chapter 27 (Imprisonment, for example)

Foner Chapter 28 (New Orleans, Bubble Bursts, Continuing Economic Crisis, and Postracial America?)

1. **What did the civil rights movements of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s achieve? Why did these profoundly positive (in terms of equality, freedom and democracy) social changes of the 1950s to 1970s generate SO MUCH anxiety and resistance? What was life like for African Americans in the 1980s and 1990s? In the 21st century? What changed? What stayed the same? (40%)**

The U.S. experienced unprecedented prosperity in the generation after WWII, and in this context oppressed groups fought and struggled to improve their lives and force the nation to protect their rights. Others resisted these changes and, as in the 1920s, many of the struggles were over race and sex. What were the realities of life in the 1950s for black and white families, as well as women, Latinos, Native Americans and “homosexuals?”

Discuss the foundations of the Civil Rights Movements for oppressed racial and ethnic groups and for women. Why was black power, defined broadly, so popular among blacks, and so unpopular among whites (including some of those who supported black rights overall)? Why was feminism so resisted by many, including white women?

Finally how did rising economic inequality from the 1980s, mass incarceration from the 1990s, the 2000s financial crisis, etc affect the realities of lives of the poor, including those of color.

The primary sources reflect a wide variety of movements and issues. Integrate them into the analysis---to do that, feel free to adapt the essay accordingly. Feel free to delve deeper into issues in which you are particularly interested.

**EXTRA CREDIT**

In both the 3d and 4th editions of Cobbs, the secondary sources (Mackenzie and Weisbrot, Maclean, Tyson and Skrentny) all explore the questions of whether (and how much) social change is driven my top-down (legislative, judicial for example) action versus bottom-up (social movements, protests, etc). Discuss.

**Shorter Essays (20% each for 60% total)**

You can follow up with why the Reagan administration was a not able to fulfill some of the promises. For instance, government spending and deficits (Boyer) increased throughout the decade, despite the rhetorical emphasis on “small government.” You can integrate the material from Foner as well Boyer regarding the income inequality driven by policies from this era.

1. **What did Conservatives (and others) believe went wrong during the 1960s and 1970s? How do we define and assess the New Right into the 1980s and 90s and beyond? (20%)?**

Boyer, Chapter 30, “Conservative Revival”

Cobbs, Chapter 15, “The Rise of the New Right (3d ed)”

Cobbs, Chapter 14, “The Emergence of the New Right (4th ed)”

Disenchantment with the real and apparent failures of the 70s led to the “Right Turn” which at heart rejected much of what defined the era of the 1960s and 1970s. What happened?

Despite the *very real* successes noted above, the 1960s and 1970s also saw failures and even the positive changes generated anxieties, as in prior times of social change (like the 1920s or the 1950s). What were these real and perceived issues or problems?

Be sure to distinguish between the real and perceived failures of the era. For example, some of the anxieties and fears might have been over changes that were on sum positive but disturbed some people (such as women in the workplace or upward mobility for black people). And some of the failures were obviously real, such as inflation and government deficits. Or of course the defeat in Vietnam

Assess the primary merits and successes of the movement, but also note some of the issues. **For instance, discuss the Southern Strategy (Boyer) which is analyzed by Carter (Cobbs 3d ed),** or Boyer’s emphasis on Evangelical Conservatism (Cobbs, 4th ed).

You can follow up with why the Reagan administration was a not able to fulfill some of the promises. For instance, government spending and deficits (Boyer) increased throughout the decade, despite the rhetorical emphasis on “small government,” and economic inequality increased dramatically.

Whatever the reasons, the New Right transformed US society and culture. Explain some of the outcomes, both positive and negative, as you see them being sure to discuss religion (Falwell, Reagan and Boyer 4th ed, Falwell 3d ed), anti-Government sentiment (Californians Revolt, Reagan and Schulman, 3d ed, Californians, Sierra Club, and Brands, 4th ed), the economy (growth but deficits and downsizing) and foreign policy (end of the Cold War---Graebner et al and Lundestad, 4th ed)

1. **How do we define and assess the decade after the end of the Cold War? The generation in the 21st century? Were domestic or foreign policies and events more important (20%)?**

Boyer, Chapter 31, “Global Dangers”

Cobbs, Chapter 15, “End of Cold War and Terrorism (4th ed)”

Cobbs, Chapter 15, “Globalization and the Economic Challenge (4th ed)”

Cobbs, Chapter 16, “End of the Cold War, Terror, and Globalization (3d edition)”

What were the most important events and processes, in the decade after the end of the Cold War? Is the period best defined by economics and globalization for either good or ill (Unionist, No Globalization, Friedman and LaFeber)? The latest victories in the Civil Rights movement---for gay people? The persistence of racial inequality?

For example, and Mandlebaum (Cobbs, ed 4) and Friedman (Cobbs 3d ed) look at the issue that the US faced after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The closer we get to the present, the more debatable are the explanations and analysis. However, *like always*, it is *essential* to anchor the arguments in solid and specific evidence and to emphasize reality over rhetoric.

It is clear that 9/11 was a transformative moment in US history, but consider that in addition top that the Great Recession and the successive generations of increased inequality have also had a lasting impact on the American people. And many would look at other kinds of inequalities, for example the persistence of racial segregation as extremely important. You are invited to discuss how both foreign and domestic affairs have affected Americans to the present.

NOTE: You can discuss the gains made in terms of civil rights, but **MUST** address the persistence of racial and class inequality.

NOTE: In many people’s minds, Gulf War II and the War in Afghanistan are grouped together, BUT they were *distinct* conflicts fought for *different* reasons (Afghanistan in response to the attacks of 9/11, and Iraq was a pre-emptive war fought to destroy Saddam Hussein’s alleged Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)). **YOU MUST explain the differences** and evaluate them---being sure to address the differences, even if you argue that future action conflated the wars.

I will attach, in Blackboard, Boyer chapter 31, “New Global Realities 2001-Present” just in case you are working with an older edition. The most successful essays will take the analysis into the 21st century.

**Comprehensive Question (30%)**

How do we define US history from the Twentieth Century to the first decades of the Twenty-First? Focus on domestic OR foreign policy (explaining why the choice), using specific examples to defend the position. If you choose foreign policy you can focus on the Cold War and/or globalization.

If you choose domestic, you can focus on Civil Rights. **Just be sure** that you use **specific** evidence from after the **1980s and 1990s AND the 21st century. In other words write about the ENTIRE 20th century and beyond---do not stop in the 1960s.**

If you choose globalization, you should at minimum address up 2000, but even better, include the global crisis of 2007 and beyond.

If you select foreign policy, you need to address the wars that followed. If you choose this option, be sure to distinguish between the origins the two wars of the early 21st century (Afghanistan and then Iraq). Like Korea and Vietnam, they are not the same war! And note that in the cumulative essay---“double-dipping” is OK.

**But like the first choice, be sure to address material FROM BEFORE WWII, and not only TO the end of the twentieth century, BUT ALSO into the 21st century. Even if you go back as far as the Spanish-American War, you must still end in the 21st century.**

**NOTE that up to 110 can be earned on this assignment.**