Course Description
For many, the story of the United States (not “America” – that term means something quite a bit broader) is a story of the triumph of liberty and democracy. Some elements of the familiar mythology are undoubtedly accurate, but much of it is exaggerated, misguided, misunderstood, and crudely celebratory. The United States began as a contested ground of competition between nations and peoples who long predated European incursions, colliding European empires, and numerous people who found themselves carried to North America by compulsion or force or hope. One might argue that this is still true of the United States in the twenty-first century, as various notions of liberty and democracy compete and often contradict each other. What is it (is the US just a place, or is it also an idea)? What does the United States represent? What does the United States mean in a global focus? Is it, as Thomas Jefferson (a slave
holder) expressed in the early nineteenth century, an “empire of liberty” – or does it merit the charge of “genocide,” as civil rights activist William Lorenzo Patterson (a lawyer, and a communist) argued shortly after the end of the Second World War in the middle of the twentieth century? Can we perhaps see the United States and US history as somehow both ends of this polarized question all at once?

The image at the top of this syllabus was shot by news photographer Stanley Forman in 1976, during the so-called busing crisis in Boston. At the heart of the conflict was the court-ordered plan to bus children from one neighborhood to another in an effort to combat segregation, and Forman caught a moment of violent tension at Boston’s City Hall Plaza. The African American man being assaulted is Ted Landsmark, an attorney, and the young white man wielding the flagstaff is Joseph Rakes. Landsmark wasn’t seriously injured during the incident, and Rakes claimed he was not stabbing at the lawyer, but rather swinging the pole at him. Nevertheless, this Pulitzer Prize winning image captures and reflects something about the contested understandings of freedom and liberty in the United States. Some people supported busing as one way to achieve equality in a deeply divided and imbalanced city, while others saw the measure as the government infringing upon their rights. In the photograph, the flag itself seems almost iconic in a troubled manner, a symbol and weapon at the same time. And that is part of the central aim of this course, to approach the recent history of the United States with particular attention paid to perennial struggles over the meaning of such concepts as “democracy,” “freedom,” and “liberty.”

US history is not easy. There is no unified story of the US, there is no clear path to follow from 1776 to 2013, guided by convenient thematic markers such as the expansion of democracy or opportunity or general prosperity and well-being. The history of the US is a history of multifaceted struggles around issues and disparities based on such differences as race, ethnicity, gender, and social class. In this course, we will center those struggles and avoid looking at US history as a preordained or inevitable march in any one direction.

**Prerequisites**
There are no prerequisites for this course.

**Course Objectives**
After completing our course, you will:

- be familiar with the main events of US history since the end of Reconstruction
- be familiar with some of the major themes of US history during the period
- be acquainted with the fundamental elements of historical inquiry and historical methods
- have honed and developed your critical and analytical skills
- have improved your ability to express yourself in writing
- understand the recent history of the United States in a broadly global and historical context

**Transformational Learning Objectives**
Our course addresses five of the University of Central Oklahoma’s six tenets of transformative learning. Engaging in a broad survey of US history since the period of Reconstruction – and focusing on the skills of historical analysis – pertains to discipline knowledge. Participating in group discussions and assignments aligns with the tenet of leadership. Our focus on critical analytical, research, and writing contributes to research, scholarly and creative activities. Much of what we will cover during the semester will concern various peoples’ struggles for full civil rights, and this aligns with the tenet of service learning and civic engagement. Finally, our class approaches the history of the United States from a global perspective, understanding the US as part of a wider, transnational set of histories, and thus addresses the tenet regarding global and cultural competencies.
Assignments/Grading/Participation

Midterm Exam 20%............................... (200 points)
Final Exam 30%................................. (300 points)
Newswatch 15%.................................. (150 points)
Historiographical essay 15%.................... (150 points)
Participation 20%............................... (200 points)

(1000 points total)

A: 90-100% (900-1000 points)
B: 80-89% (800-890 points)
C: 70-79% (700-790 points)
D: 60-69% (600-690 points)
F: below 60% (below 600 points)

The midterm and final exams will include short answer identifications, chronological, and take home essay questions. The final exam will be cumulative.

For the historiographical essay (4 – 5 pages), you will select two scholarly articles on a common subject of your choice (within the general scope of the course) to examine how historians interpret the past from different angles.

The “newswatch” assignment asks you to bring the broader historical perspective to more current events. Select an issue or event or debate that interests you, find at least five news articles that address the subject. Your paper (4 – 5 pages) should briefly explain the central issue, give a sense of how the different writers approached it, and pointedly tie it in to some of the main themes of our class. Toward the end of the semester, close to when the assignment is due, we will work in small groups and offer presentations in-class of some of our findings.

Participation is central to our course. I will offer some lectures, but discussion and interaction will be critical here.

Throughout the semester, we’ll have a number of in-class quizzes, readings, discussions, etc. that will cumulatively help to make up the participation percentage of the grade.

NOTE: Quizzes and in-class assignments may not be made up if you miss class.

With the exception of a valid and documented emergency (medical, etc.), makeup exams will not be offered. Similarly, late work will not be accepted. All assignments must be submitted by the due date.

Academic Integrity
UCO subscribes to the Turnitin.com plagiarism prevention service. Students agree that by taking this course, all required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted assignments will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com restricted access reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such assignments. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Terms and Conditions of Use posted on the Turnitin.com website. Turnitin.com is just one of various plagiarism prevention tools and methods which may be utilized by your faculty instructor during the terms of the semesters. In the UCO Student Handbook, there is a process for contesting any plagiarism allegations against you.
If you’re not certain what constitutes plagiarism, see me for a clarification. We will discuss this in-class early in the semester.

**Student Information Sheet**
Important information for students from the University of Central Oklahoma may be found at the following URL:
http://www.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/aa-forms/faculty/StudentInfoSheetFall13.pdf

This form contains information regarding academic integrity, important dates, etc. I urge all students to read it carefully. If you have questions, don’t hesitate to ask me.

**Readings**
The central text for our class is Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History*
Other assigned readings will be made available in PDF format on D2L.

Readings *must* be done before our class meets. I won’t be just lecturing from the textbook – it doesn’t make sense for me to repeat material you can read on your own – so you’ll only know the material if you read. We will have quizzes and discussions based on the texts, so please come prepared for that.

When there is more than one reading for the week, I’ll let you know which reading to do for which day.

**Communication**
You can contact me at my office phone, though the best way to be in touch is through email. I won’t be reachable on Facebook or Twitter, etc., nor will I be available via texting. Depending upon the circumstances, I expect to be able to respond to emails within twenty-four hours at the most.

**Technology**
This is a tough question, but for a number of reasons I’m going old-tech in our class. You may *not* record our class in any way without prior permission. Please don’t use phones or tablets or laptops during our class meetings. In this instance, the reliable tools of paper-and-pen (or pencil) should do just fine. If there’s a need for something more technologically sophisticated, I’ll let you know.

**A Note on What History Is**
To start with, I’d like to point out what history is not. History, the study of history, the craft and profession of history, the writing of history, is *not* the accumulation of names and dates. What historians do is analyze the past, and offer their interpretations on the significance of what happened based on primary source materials. History is about *interpretation* – facts (the names and dates, etc.), are part of the tools of historical analysis. Writing history, thinking about history, debating history is about making an informed *argument* (this is the thesis) about what happened, certainly, but more importantly about the broader significance of what happened.

**Climate**
Over the course of the semester, we will be discussing a number of controversial subjects here. I expect disagreements and I expect debate. All of our conversations, however, *must* be conducted in civil terms and tones, and with respect for others’ points of view. Anyone who behaves toward another with disrespect, disparagement, or verbal abuse will be asked to leave. We all bring different perspectives to this material – myself included – and we might completely disagree with one another. Disagreement is good, multiple viewpoints are good, debate is good. In our class I’ll encourage debate, and insist on mutual respect.
Week 1: Introductions - Thinking about US History

Introduction, 3-14

Week 2: Postbellum and Reconstruction

Foner, ch. 15, “‘What is Freedom?’: Reconstruction, 1865-1877”
Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments (in class)
Frederick Douglass, “Reconstruction,” Atlantic Monthly 18, Issue 110 (December 1886)

Week 3: Work, Industry, and the Gilded Age

Foner, ch. 16, “America’s Gilded Age, 1870-1890”

Historiographical essay due Wednesday

Week 4: Labor Struggles and Empire

Foner, ch. 17, “Freedom’s Boundaries, At Home and Abroad, 1890-1900”
Josiah Strong, “Anglo-Saxon Predominance,” (1891)
Albert Beveridge, “The March of the Flag” (September 1898)

Week 5: Progressivism

Foner ch. 18, “The Progressive Era, 1900-1916”

Newswatch ideas - presentations

Week 6: The First World War


Week 7: Into Economic Depression (MIDTERM EXAM)

Review discussion Monday
Midterm exam Wednesday

Foner, ch. 20, “From Business Culture to Great Depression: The Twenties, 1920-1932” (for Friday)
**Week 8: Interwar Troubled Times**

Foner, ch. 21, “The New Deal, 1932-1940”


F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Echoes of the Jazz Age” (1931)

**Week 9: The Second World War and Postwar Realignments**

Foner, Ch. 22, “Fighting for the Four Freedoms: World War II, 1941-1945”


**Week 10: Cold War**

Foner, Ch. 23, “The United States and the Cold War, 1945-1953”

Film: Dr. Stranglove (dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1964)

**Week 11: Suburbs, Flight, and Civil Rights Struggles**

Foner, Ch. 24, “An Affluent Society, 1953-1960”

Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (1964)

**Week 12: Rethinking It All – the 60s**

Foner, Ch. 25, “The Sixties, 1960-1968”


Music: TBA

**Week 13: Moving In a Very Other Direction from the 70s to the 80s**


Ronald Reagan, Presidential Inauguration (first), January 1981
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpPt7xGx4Xo

**Week 14: Millennium – the Turn of the Twenty-first Century**

Foner, Ch. 27, “Globalization and Its Discontents, 1989-2000”

Film: Lonestar (dir. John Sayles, 1996)
Week 15: Is the Paradigm New?
Foner, Ch. 28, “September 11 and the Next American Century”
Laila Lalami, “Echo” (2011)
Helon Habila, “The Second Death of Martin Lango” (2011)
Geoff Dyer, “Temple of Tears” (2011)

*Newswatch synopsis due, Friday*

Week 16: Bringing it up to Now

Barack Obama, Presidential Inauguration (second), January 2013
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzC135ql_wA

*Summation and review*

**Final Exam: Friday 12/13/2013, 9.00-10.50 a.m.**