

Essentials of U.S. History

HIST 15

Fall 2025 Section 11 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/14/2025

Contact Information

Question? Concern? Comment?

- **Let's talk before or after class.**
- **Stop by my office Clark 414d** | Mondays, 11-12am; Tuesdays, 9-10am, or by appointment (in person or via Zoom)
- **Message me** through Canvas or via email (michele.bertolone@sjsu.edu). To speed things, in the subject line, jot down the class name, section, and assignment (if applicable). For example, "*HIST 15, sec 11, Midterm question.*"

If you find yourself starting to worry about an assignment or something else related to the class, connect with me early. Together, we'll figure out the best next steps. Don't stress out; take action!

About E-Mail Communication

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (known as FERPA) requires careful protection of your rights and academic record. To protect your right to privacy, all of our communication will happen using our SJSU e-mail accounts.

Please be sure to check your SJSU e-mail account regularly for updates about readings and changes to the course schedule.

Course Information

Mark Twain is often credited with this powerful observation, "history doesn't repeat itself but it often rhymes."

What rhythms of history echo in our world today? Can we enrich our lives and the lives of others by considering them? Can we avoid some of the mistakes of the past by learning about them?

Get ready to read, think, and discuss these questions as we examine a range of interesting and significant events and themes in North American history.

Course Workload Expectations | 9 hours per week (combined class and outside class time)

Success is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week, so nine hours per week for this 3-unit course) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course-related activities. This might include, but is not limited to, internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

In Class Participation Essential to Your Grade

30% of your grade is based on in class participation. Each day, a brief assignment based on the in class activity will be given to students who attend the class that day. This assignment will be completed in class or just after. ***Only students who attend the entire class are eligible for participation points. These points can NOT be made up by students absent.***

Missing an occasional class should not meaningfully impact your grade. A few extra credit opportunities are available for students to recover points to cover occasional absences (if you are sick or have transportation challenges).

Check the "Assignment" tab throughout the semester in our Canvas course for a list of Extra Credit opportunities.



Course Description and Requisites

Treatment of essentials of U.S. history. Satisfies the American Institutions (US1) and the GE Area D: Social Sciences requirements.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Read the entire syllabus carefully so you have the info you need to earn the grade you want.

What to Expect In Class

Our undivided attention is on helping each other succeed in developing stronger academic skills and understanding why history matters to our lives today. Here are some pro tips for a great course experience.

- Come to class with a strong understanding of the content in any assigned prep/homework.
- With rare exception, arrive before the official start time and stay until the entire class completes its work for the day; if you are running late, enter through the back door and quietly take your seat.
- Put away and turn off mobile phones, headphones, air pods, etc.
- Be ready to talk – in small groups, in the full class.
- Take notes. FYI, notes taken by hand on paper may be used during exams/quizzes.

- Students suspected of using digital devices for anything other than our specific academic work will be respectfully reminded to return their attention the class. The instructor reserves the right to ask students to put away their device and/or move the student to the front of the class to promote academic progress.
- If, on occasion, a learner must miss a class or leave early a message to the instructor is appreciated before class begins.
- If something prevents you from attending more than one class, message your instructor to let me know a) that you are ok, b) when you expect to return, and c) if you have concerns on keeping up with the coursework.
- Miss a class? Check in with others in the class for day-to-day things you might miss. If that doesn't work out, connect with me asap.

Deadlines, Extensions, Make Ups

Keep track of assignments, especially requirements and deadlines.

If you plan to earn a grade above a D, it is recommended that you begin assignments early to ensure you have the time you need to turn in your best work. Keep the following policies in mind as you plan your semester.

Extensions | In Class Participation Assignments

No extensions or make ups for any reason. See more info on this above in the "Course Information" section.

Extensions | Modern Connection Written Assignments

- Every learner is allowed one 72-hour extension per term with 12 hours' written notice to the instructor that they are using their extension.
- All late work (including late makeup work) will have its final grade reduced by 5% for each 24 hours late. Worked more than 7 days late will receive zero points.

Extensions | Quizzes/Midterm Exams

- Exams must be taken in person on the scheduled day. Please check the calendar immediately and mark your calendar accordingly.
- Missed exams/quizzes cannot be made up unless a documented emergency prevented the student from attending the scheduled exam.
- If something happens, please communicate early with your instructor.
- Documentation (ie. police report, hospital invoice, etc.) must be provided to the instructor within 4 days of the scheduled exam.
- When appropriate, an alternative midterm (from the one given on the scheduled day) will be rescheduled for the student to complete during instructor's office hours.

AI NOT permitted for ANY aspect of assignments

I am interested in your original thoughts on the topics we cover.

Therefore, artificial intelligence tools are NOT permitted for ANY aspect of assignments. This includes, but is not limited, to outlining/brainstorming, restating, writing intros/conclusions, sentence rewriting/smoothing/polishing, etc.

Do not consult any tool that using AI to generate text. Basic spelling/grammar checking tools and AI assisted bibliography tools are ok, but avoid tools like Grammarly Pro. (Important, be SURE to [turn off Grammarly's Generative AI Features](https://sites.google.com/sjsu.edu/aiwritertoolbox/ai-for-revisions/grammarly#h.263vlwu26pba) (<https://sites.google.com/sjsu.edu/aiwritertoolbox/ai-for-revisions/grammarly#h.263vlwu26pba>)).

Keep in mind, when grading, my focus is on your *organic reasoning* and not perfect written articulation. Your own unique voice should ring loud and clear in your writing. This means doing your best without AI.

Submitted assignments flagged for AI use will be graded only after an in-person student-instructor meeting during office hours to discuss the situation.

In addition, AI use may be reported to the University Academic Integrity Office per [University guidelines](https://catalog.sjsu.edu/content.php?catoid=13&navoid=4971#academic-integrity-policy). (<https://catalog.sjsu.edu/content.php?catoid=13&navoid=4971#academic-integrity-policy>).

Written assignment created and submitted using Google Docs

Each written assignment must be entirely created using Google Docs with your SJSU account. When ready to submit, a) go to "Share" and add your instructor (michele.bertolone@sjsu.edu) with "Editor" permission, b) "Copy Link", and c) submit in the assignment on Canvas.

This approach helps your instructor understand your writing development process. To this end, your instructor reserves the right to randomly inspect the version history (a detailed date & time stamp of every addition/edit) you submit as your own work.

An in-person interview may also be requested, if needed, for explanation of how the assignment was constructed before a grade is received.

Ensure Locked Down Browser is Working for Midterm Exams

Three midterm exams will be given during the semester via Locked Down Browser. Be sure to download and get this application (via Canvas) working.

Need help? Visit the IRC 209 or [view resources online](#).

Do this at least one week BEFORE the first midterm.

Don't waste time on midterm day getting the software to work on your laptop!

Acceptable Sources for Written Assignments

For written assignments, read instructions very carefully.

Frequently, it is required that students use only sources provided by the instructor in Canvas.

When other sources are accepted in the assignment, at least 90% of your sources must be academic sources ([see this link for the definitions and examples](#)). Some exceptions may be made for primary sources (people who experienced the history) or in-depth, expert reporting by professional journalists who specialize in the topic.

The following sources are NOT considered appropriate (although they may be useful as a place to begin your research): Wikipedia, Encyclopaedia Britannica, History.com, or similar.

Ask your instructor if you have questions or want to use a particular source that might fall outside this definition.

Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website \(https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php\)](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area D: Social Sciences

Area D courses increase students' understanding of human behavior and social interaction in the context of value systems, economic structures, political institutions, social groups, and natural environments.

Students develop an understanding of problems and issues from different disciplinary perspectives and

examine issues in their contemporary as well as historical settings and in a variety of cultural contexts.

The CSU requires students to complete General Education courses in the Social Sciences in at least two different disciplines. Students may meet this requirement by either 1) taking two lower-division Area D courses in different disciplines, or 2) taking two lower-division Area D courses in the same discipline and an Area S upper-division GE course in a different discipline.

GE Area D Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area D course, students should be able to:

1. demonstrate understanding of the ways in which social institutions, culture, and environment shape and are shaped by the behavior of individuals, both past and present;
2. compare and contrast the dynamics of two or more social groups or social systems in a variety of historical and/or cultural contexts
3. place contemporary social developments in cultural, environmental, geographical, and/or historical contexts;
4. draw on social/behavioral science information from various perspectives to formulate applications appropriate to historical and/or contemporary social issues.

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

American Institutions US1: US History

The American Institutions (AI) requirement is based on the premise that any student graduating from the CSU should have an understanding of the history and governmental institutions of the United States and the State of California. This requirement, which was put in place by the State of California, is laid out in California State University Executive Order 1061. The original mandate appears in the State Education Code Title 5, Section 40404.

US1 Learning Outcomes

To fulfill the requirements for U.S. History, students should be able to explain and evaluate the principal events, developments, and ideas covering a minimum time span of approximately one hundred years in all the territories now in the United States (including external regions and powers as appropriate).

As students explore the historical development of the United States, they should be able to evaluate and synthesize different positions, support analysis with relevant evidence, and create evidence-based interpretations of:

- A. major subtopics in United States history, such as Native Americans and their interactions with the U.S. government; slavery and its legacies; the foundational ideals of the American Republic; colonization and territorial expansion; economic development; political reform and reaction; immigration to the United States and the experiences of immigrants; foreign relations; wars and conflicts; and movements including religious, labor, civil rights, feminist, and environmental.

B. multiple perspectives related to, for example, diverse cultures, communities, and environments; age, gender, and sexuality; the history and experience of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities; the experiences of people with disabilities; and patterns of race and class relations.

Course Materials

Good news! No books to buy. Readings will be accessed via links or PDFs on Canvas.

Occasionally, there may be a small video rental fee for an assignment, but these don't usually total more than \$10-20 during the course.

Resources to Help You Succeed

Your tuition includes (usually) free services to help you do your best in school. There are teams of dedicated people ready to help you navigate nearly any barrier that might come up.

Here are some frequently helpful ones:

Academic Needs	Basic Needs
<p><u>Writing Center</u> (https://sjsu.edu/writingcenter/).</p> <p>Learn footnotes, bibliography, level up your writing, tutoring on specific assignments, and more.</p>	<p><u>SJSU Cares</u> (https://www.sjsu.edu/sjsucares/).</p> <p>Confidential help when students need help with emergency housing, food insecurity, and much more.</p>
<p><u>SJSU Library</u> (https://library.sjsu.edu/).</p> <p>(log into SJSU account for best results!)</p> <p>Look for sources to impress me and earn the grade you want.</p> <p>Email early the History Librarian, Nyle Monday (nyle.monday@sjsu.edu) for help.</p>	<p><u>Counseling & Psychological Services</u> (https://www.sjsu.edu/wellness/access/services/counseling/index.php?utm_source=counseling&utm_medium=301&utm_campaign=wellnessrelaunch).</p> <p>Help with issues on wellness/mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues.</p>
<p><u>Technology Help</u> (https://sjsuequipment.getconnect2.com/).</p> <p>Borrow laptops and other tech; get help getting tech to work.</p>	

Peer Connections

(<http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu/>).

Brush up on time management or note taking skills or get connected to peer tutors.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Points (% of grade)	Description	Outcome Notations
300 (30%)	<p>In-class participation assignments (about 30 individual assignments)</p> <p>Students in this course are expected to arrive on time, and actively participate in all discussion and breakout activities.</p> <p>See more info on this above in the "Course Information" section</p>	GELO 1 SLO 1 a & b
400 (40%)	<p>3 In Class Midterm Exams via Locked Down Browser</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Midterm #1 = 100 pts (10% of grade)• Midterm #2 = 150 pts (15% of grade)• Midterm #3 = 150 pts (15% of grade)	GELO 1, 2 & 3
300 (30%)	3 Modern Connection Written Assignments (3 assignments each with 100 pts, 10% of the grade)	GELO 1, 2 & 3
Total 1000 (100%)	See how these points translated to grades in the "Grading Information" section below.	

Extra Credit – A limited amount of extra credit assignments are offered during the term. Use these opportunities to make up points lost for missing in-class participation assignments due to absence. Extra credit must be submitted by posted deadlines for grading. Check the "Assignment" tab throughout the semester in our Canvas course for a list of Extra Credit opportunities.

(Access code = "Good2Know")

✓ Grading Information

Course assignments added up to a total of 1000 possible points (with occasional extra point opportunities). Here's how grades equate to the points earned.

Total Pts	Percentages	Letter Grade
970-1000	97-100%	A+
930-969	93-96%	A
900-929	90-92%	A-
870-899	87-89%	B+
830-869	83-86%	B
800-829	80-82%	B-
770-799	77-79%	C+
730-769	73-76%	C
700-729	70-72%	C-
670-699	67-69%	D+
630-669	63-66%	D
600-629	60-62%	D-
<600	<60%	F

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

A full and detailed list of our schedule, session by session, is posted on the "Module" tab. Click on "Module" on the navigation bar just to the left.

Here is a quick summary:

Wk #	Week of	Topic	Due/Imp. Notes
01	8/18	Introduction	1x In-Class Participation Assignment
02	8/25	Early American Colonies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bacon's Rebellion · Colonial Laws 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments
03	9/01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Stamp Act 	No Class 9/1 Labor Day Reading Homework Upload Headshot to Your Canvas Profile (5 EC pts) 1x In-Class Participation Assignment
04	9/08	U.S. Independence & the Market Revolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · African Americans & The War of Independence · Comparing Northern and Southern Lifestyle 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments SJSU Official Syllabus Content Quiz

05	9/15	Western Expansion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Native People Removal & Resistance · The Chinese Experience & the Gold Rush 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments Lock Down Browser Check (EC)
06	9/22	Mid 19th Century Reform & Midterm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 2nd Great Awakening · Midterm #1 	Reading Homework 1x In-Class Participation Assignment Midterm #1 Modern Connection Essay #1
07	9/29	Civil War and Reconstruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Going to War · Total War and the Home Front 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments
08	10/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Reconstruction & Reunion · Lost Cause 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments
09	10/13	Gilded Age & American Imperialism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Workers · American Imperialism 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments
10	10/20	Progressive Era and WW1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Women's Suffrage · WW1 and the Spanish Flu 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments
11	10/27	Great Depression & Mid Term #2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Dust Bowl and Migration · Mid Term #2 	Reading Homework 1x In-Class Participation Assignment Midterm #2 Modern Connection Essay #2

12	11/03	WW2 and Cold War <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Japanese Internment · Red Scare & Lavender Scare 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments
13	11/10	Civil Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · In the Southern U.S. · Beyond the South 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments
14	11/17	1960s & 70s Social Movements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Vietnam War Draft · The ERA 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments
15	11/24	1980s – NAFTA & Tariffs	Reading Homework 1x In-Class Participation Assignment No class Wed., 11/26 Thanksgiving Day Break Deep Dive History Essay (Max EC pts 25pts)
16	12/01	Early 21st Century <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 9/11 and The War on Terror · TBD 	Reading Homework 2x In-Class Participation Assignments
17	12/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · TBD 	Reading Homework 1x In-Class Participation Assignment Modern Connection Essay #3
18	12/15	Final Exam Period Midterm #3 Date TBD	Midterm #3 Date TBD