“... we should have such an empire for liberty as she has never surveyed since the creation: & I am persuaded no constitution was ever before so well calculated as ours for extensive empire & self-government.” --- Thomas Jefferson, 1809

“Since... the manufacturer insists on having the world as a market, the flag of his nation must follow him, and the doors of nations which are closed against him must be battered down. Concessions obtained by financiers must be safeguarded by ministers of state even if the sovereignty of unwilling nations be outraged in the process." --- Woodrow Wilson, 1907

“We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality.” --- Karl Rove, 2004

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**Figure 1:** "American Progress" (1872) by John Gast

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**Details**

Class: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:00 to 9:15 am, Hellems 241
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 to 11:00 am, Hellems 351; and by appointment
Instructor: Graeme Pente, Ph.D. candidate; graeme.pente@colorado.edu
Course Description
This course surveys American history from the end of the US Civil War in 1865 to the present. We will place the United States in a global context, looking at both domestic developments and international trends. Some critics of American foreign policy, both within the country and abroad, have used the framework of empire to understand the United States’ behavior in the world and to launch their critiques. We will evaluate this perspective on modern American history and come to our own conclusions on the existence, justness, and beneficence of American empire and power. Two other integral themes emerge from this perspective: labor and race. It was during the period under study that the United States became an economic powerhouse and transformed from an agricultural to an industrial nation. We will examine the economic history and development of the United States, while paying particular attention to the ordinary women and men who built the country and its wealth as well as to their struggles to define themselves and their freedom. Finally, race is perhaps the most important aspect of the history of this country. We will investigate how ideas about race have changed over the last 150 years, what role they have played in shaping domestic and foreign policy, how they have affected relations between different groups of Americans, and how they have defined access to citizenship and its benefits.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Describe the major events, movements, ideas, and people in the development of the United States since 1865;
2. Recognize that there is no monolithic History composed of a series of facts and dates but, rather, competing historical narratives and arguments—history is an interpretive discipline;
3. Evaluate historical arguments and identify their weaknesses;
4. Critically read primary sources; and
5. Construct your own synthetic historical arguments marshalling evidence to support your claims.

Required Texts

Assignments
Primary/Secondary Source Assignment (5%): You will produce your own primary source based on something that happened or something you observed. You will then receive someone else’s (anonymous) primary source and use it to write a secondary source history. Part 1 is due on September 6, and Part 2 is due on September 13.
Primary Source Analysis (10%): You will write a two-page analysis of a primary source reading, explaining its origins and what it tells us about the period of US history in which it was produced. The analysis is due October 11.

Midterm Exam (20%): The midterm will be a take-home exam due October 25. You will write a well-argued essay that answers one of two questions pertaining to Units 1 and 2.

News Assignment (5%): This is a simple assignment. You will choose a news article and write a short paper that applies historical knowledge from the course to the issue being discussed. What aspects of American history is the author missing? Use specific examples and draw on primary or secondary source readings when appropriate. It is due by December 11.

Participation (30%): Attending class, reading carefully, and engaging in class discussion are essential parts of a college history course. Reading checks and in-class activities also fall under this grade item.

Final Exam (30%): In a take-home exam, you will write two well-argued essays. One will address one of two questions pertaining to Units 3 and 4. The other will address one of two cumulative questions pertaining to the entire course. The exam will be due during finals week.

Extra Credit Opportunities (up to +2% to Final Grade):
1. Rocky Mountain Interdisciplinary History Conference (RMIHC): The History Department hosts this graduate conference every Fall. Graduate researchers in many disciplines come from across the country to present their work. This year’s conference will be held September 22 and 23. Your assignment will be to attend one panel session and write a one- to two-page report on it. I will make the conference schedule available on Canvas.

2. Movie Review: You may choose one of the following movies and write a two-page review connecting the work to that period of US history. The movies are:
   a. Modern Times (1936), dir. Charlie Chaplin
   b. Casablanca (1942), dir. Michael Curtiz
   c. Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964), dir. Stanley Kubrick
   d. Apocalypse Now (1979), dir. Francis Ford Coppola
   e. Do the Right Thing (1989), dir. Spike Lee

3. Other opportunities TBA: Every year, units across campus host speakers, panels, and events with historical bearing. I will update you about further opportunities as they become available.

Below is a general outline of how I will grade essays and exams:

A = Excellent Work: original, exceptionally insightful, very well written/presented, efficiently organized, and thorough, with very few mistakes and a professional appearance.
B = Good Work: insightful, clearly written/presented, organized, and thorough, with few mistakes and a professional appearance.
C = Satisfactory Work: solid but unremarkable in terms of insight, lacking some organization and/or clarity, and adequately written/presented, with several mistakes.
D = Poor Work: lacking insight, disorganized, poorly written, mistake-ridden, and reflective of a general lack of effort.
F = Failing Work: work that fails to meet the basic requirements of the assignment.

I encourage you to ask questions about these guidelines and to speak with me if they are unclear, or if you are confused or frustrated about a grade.

Course Policies

Attendance
Being present is essential for taking notes on class lecture and participating in class discussions. However, I will not force you to attend class by making it count toward your final grade, and if you are sick I would prefer you to stay home and get well. It is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate on meetings you miss. I will take roll call at the beginning of each class for my own records.

Deadlines
Assignment due dates fit within a careful schedule for our course. However, I recognize that other aspects of life can interfere with the best-laid plans. I am willing to be flexible should sickness, family emergency, or similarly legitimate circumstances arise. You must make prior arrangements with me to adjust an assignment deadline. It is best to contact me as far ahead of the deadline as possible. I will penalize work submitted late without prior arrangement ten percent per day.

Technology
During lecture, I encourage you to take notes. This, you will have to do by hand, which studies increasingly suggest improves content retention. For discussion of readings, you may use your laptop or tablet in order to have the material in front of you. If these devices become a distraction and detract from discussion during the semester, I may revisit allowing their use. There is no need for cell phones in our class. Please turn off your phone’s ringer and keep it in your bag. I will not permit cell phones on desks, as the temptation to check them is too great.

University Policies

Accommodation for Disabilities
If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the Disability Services website. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or
dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Medical Conditions under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

Classroom Behavior
Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on classroom behavior and the Student Code of Conduct.

Honor Code
All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu; 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the Honor Code Office website.

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation
The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, anonymous reporting, and the campus resources can be found on the OIEC website.

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Holidays
Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with
scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, you must notify me of a conflict at least a week in advance, and we will make mutually satisfactory accommodations.

See the campus policy regarding religious observances for full details.

Course Schedule

N.B.: I will post on Canvas all readings that are not listed in “Required Texts.” You must complete all the assigned readings before the class period under which they are listed. I reserve the right to adjust reading assignments during the semester, though I will always notify you of changes and I will always ensure new readings are accessible for free online.

Week 1: Toward a Definition of Empire
August 28- Introduction to the course

August 30- Historical Empires: Ancient Rome, Modern Britain


UNIT ONE: Empire on the American Continent (1800-1898)

Week 2: American Civil War and Reconstruction
September 4- Resolving Competing Visions of Empire


Selections from Alexander Stephens, “Cornerstone Speech” (1861)

September 6- Black Life under Reconstruction
Reading: Selections from Du Bois and Dunning

Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address” (Mar. 4, 1865)

*** Original Primary Source Due ***
Week 3: Westward the Star of Empire
September 11- The Violence of the 1870s

Reading: Elias Hill, “Testimony before Congressional Committee Investigating the Ku Klux Klan, 1871”

Selections from *Pittsburgh Daily Post*’s “Reign of the Mob” article (1877)

Explore the NPS’s interactive map of the Nez Perce Flight of 1877
(https://www.nps.gov/gis/storymaps/maptour/v3/index.html?appid=3e07d74becd24e428b1b0c71192bb548)

September 13- Conquering the West

Reading: Chief Joseph, “Speech to a White Audience” (1879)

Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893)

*** Original Secondary Source Due ***

Week 4: The Gilded Age
September 18- The Rise of Big Business and the Restructuring of American Capitalism

Reading: Andrew Carnegie, “Wealth” (1889)

Marshall Kirkman, “The Railway Army” (1894)

September 20- The People’s Political and Economic Revolt

Reading: Skim Thomas O’Donnell, “Testimony before a U.S. Senate Committee” (1885)

“National People’s Party Platform” (1892)

Henry Demarest Lloyd, “Wealth against Commonwealth” (1894)

UNIT TWO: The Reluctant Superpower (1898-1945)

Week 5: American Empire Heads Overseas
September 25- Immigration and Race in the Gilded Age

Reading: Ortiz, Ch. 4: “Global Visions of Reconstruction,” p. 71-94

Jacob Riis, “Ch. 5: The Italian in New York” in *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)
September 27- Wars of Empire: Spain, Cuba, and the Philippines (1898-1902)

Reading: Andrew Carnegie, Op-Ed to New York Times (1898)

Emilio Aguinaldo, “Case against the United States” (1899)

*** Practice Exam Due ***

Week 6: Progressivism
October 2- The Radical Middle Class and the White House

Reading: Jane Addams, “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements” (1892)

Selections from Theodore Roosevelt, “The New Nationalism” (1910)

October 4- Wilsonianism and “Making the World Safe for Democracy”

Reading: Ortiz, Ch. 5: “Waging War on the Government of American Banks in the Global South,” p. 95-117

North American Review, “For Freedom and Democracy” (1917)

Eugene V. Debs, “Speech at Canton, Ohio” (1918)

Week 7: Interwar
October 9- The New Era and Interventions of the 1920s

Reading: Marcus Garvey, “The Principles of the Universal Negro Improvement Association” (1922)

Hiram W. Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism” (1926)

Dudley Fields Malone, “Scopes Trial Speech” (1925)

Reinhold Niebuhr on Christianity in Detroit (1925-1928)

Senator David Reed on immigration reform in the New York Times (1924)

Bartolomeo Vanzetti, “Last Statement” (1927)

October 11- The Great Depression and the Turn to the Good Neighbor Policy

*** Primary Source Analysis Due ***
**Week 8: World War**
October 16- Labor in Peace and War

Reading: Ortiz, Ch. 6: “Forgotten Workers of America,” p. 118-142

  - John L. Lewis, “Guests at Labor’s Table,” (September 15, 1937) in Foner, *Voices of Freedom*, 168-171
  - A. Philip Randolph, “Call to Negro America to March on Washington for Jobs and Equal Participation in National Defense” (May 1941)

October 18- Race and World War

Reading: Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Four Freedoms” (1941)


**UNIT THREE: Competition for Global Dominance (1945-1980)**

**Week 9: Cold War**
October 23- The New World Order

Reading: Document 26-1, “General Marshall Summarizes the Lessons of World War II,”

October 25- The Cold War Mentality and Decolonization


*** MIDTERM DUE ***
**Week 10: A Second Reconstruction**  
October 30- Consensus and Consumerism in the 1950s

Reading: David Riesman, “The Saving Remnant” (1949)  

November 1- The Civil Rights Movement and Decolonization

Reading: George Wallace, “Civil Rights Movement: Fraud, Sham, Hoax” (1964)  

**Week 11: Vietnam**  
November 6- Origins of US Intervention and Mr. Johnson’s War

William F. Buckley Jr. on Vietnam  
Martin Luther King, “Casualties of the War in Vietnam” (1967)

November 8- Countercultures

Reading: Ortiz, Ch. 7: “Emancipatory Internationalism vs. the American Century,” p. 143-162  
Young Americans for Freedom, “The Sharon Statement” (1960)  
Students for a Democratic Society, “Port Huron Statement” (1962)  
Rodolfo Corky Gonzales, “I am Joaquin/Yo soy Joaquin” (1967)

**Week 12: Malaise (1969-1979)**  
November 13- Nixon’s Folly: Cambodia and Watergate

Reading: George McGovern, “Speech on the Hatfield Amendment” (1970)  
Transcript from Nixon Tapes (1973)
November 15- The Carter Administration and the Rise of Conservatism


Ronald Reagan, “A Time for Choosing” (1964)

Jimmy Carter, “Crisis of Confidence Speech” (1979)

Week 13: Fall Break; No Class, Nov. 19-23

UNIT FOUR: Triumph and Descent (1980-Present)

November 27- Reaganomics and the Rise of Neoliberalism

Reading: Ronald Reagan, “First Inaugural Address” (1981)


November 29- Empire’s Workshop and the End of the Cold War


December 4- The Triumph of Neoliberalism and Interventions of the 1990s


December 6- Globalization and Resistance


Week 16: The End of Empire? (2001-2016)
December 11- “Where empires go to die”: Neoconservative Militarism


**** Newspaper Assignment Due ****

December 13- Obama’s Imperial Presidency

Reading: Ortiz, Ch. 8: “El Gran Paro Estadounidense,” and Epilogue, p. 163-189


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i Letter from Thomas Jefferson to President James Madison, 27 April 1809.
iii Journalist Ron Suskind originally reported this exchange between himself and a “high official” in the George W. Bush government; he later acknowledged the official was Karl Rove.