



Course Syllabus

HIS 104a

American History II

Fall 2025

Class Information

Day and Time: 3:15pm-4:30pm Monday/Wednesday
Room Number: E205

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Kirk Spencer
Instructor Email: kspencer@criswell.edu
Instructor Phone: 469.834.5211 (Text First)
Instructor Office Hours: Mon. / Wed. 1:00 – 3:00 pm



Course Description and Prerequisites

A survey of American history from the Civil War through the present. (This course satisfies requirements for a Humanities/Fine Arts course.)

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course the student should be able to:

- A. Identify major figures and events in American history from the Reconstruction Era to the Present.
- B. Develop the facility of close reading by analyzing and evaluating primary texts.
- C. Practice critical thinking skills by crafting critical questions regarding the readings.
- D. Evaluate and appreciate political, military, religious and cultural developments and human achievements in Later U.S. history using Scripture (theology).
- E. Identify and evaluate lessons learned from America's past and begin to apply these to cultivate a better understanding of themselves, their faith and their social responsibility as a Christian.

Required Textbooks

Waskiewicz, Sylvie (Lead Editor), P. Scott Corbett, Jay Precht, Volker Janssen, et. al. ***U.S. History***. Houston: OpenStax, 2021

[Free Open-Source Public Domain and will be provided on Canvas.]

Link: [TEXT.USHistory-WEB.pdf](#)

Recommended Reading

A People and a Nation: A History of the United States, Volume II: Since 1865 | Brief Edition 11th Edition | Copyright 2023 | by Jane Kamensky/Carol Sheriff/David W. Blight/Howard P. Chudacoff/Fredrik Logevall/Beth Bailey/Mary Beth Norton/Howard P. Chudacoff

Kidd, Thomas. *American History, Volume 2: 1877-Present*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019.

Course Requirements and Assignments

- **Class Attendance, Department and Participation.**

Since class participation is vital to learning, absences should be taken only when absolutely necessary. Granting of excused absences is permitted at the discretion of the professor. Three instances of either being tardy to class or departing before the end of class will be considered one absence. You will receive a participation grade based upon attendance and informed participation in class discussion. The participation grade will be reduced by 4 points for each unexcused absence. The images and video shown in class will reinforce what is being learned. For this reason, you should not use I-phones or laptops in class. You may look at phones for notifications which will require only a few seconds of distraction at a time. If you are notified of an emergency and need to respond, you can step out of the room. I include these expectations here because refusal to follow this department requirement, requiring class time to correct it, will dramatically reduce your participation grade. Beyond your presence and attention in class, it is expected that you will participate in the discussion by sharing your knowledge and experiences, asking questions and volunteering answers when the professor asked questions in class. This will also be considered when determining your participation grade.

The participation grade will constitute **25%** of your course grade.

- **Textbook Reading Assignments**

The textbook will be provided for you in Canvas and you will be assigned weekly reading assignments. You will report the percentage of the reading you have done each week in a reading report. This report will include assigned readings of the Textbook and also assigned primary texts and any short video lectures. Your percentages will be averaged together to determine your final reading grade.

Your final reading grade will constitute **10%** of the course grade.

- **Background Knowledge Pretest**

At the beginning of the semester a background knowledge pretest will be given to assess your basic knowledge of the content we will cover throughout the semester. If you follow the instructions and complete the test, you will make a perfect score of 100. The purpose is to assess the baseline knowledge for the class. This knowledge will help the professor direct the instruction and expectations for the course. For this reason, you must do your best and answer only from memory without using any other sources or aid. Although the test will be scored, if you complete the test you will get a 100 no matter what your

score. It is very important to take the pretest strictly from memory so I will know which areas to focus on in the course. For instance, if everyone in the course is looking up answers and give me the impression that you have retained all the information you learned in your High School history and civics classes, then I will move on to more specific advanced discussions that you may not be ready for and your grade will suffer because you really do not have, in your memory, the background information you need.

Your Pretest grade will constitute **5%** of the course grade.

- **Exams:**

Four exams will be given during the semester. Each exam will cover the material in one four-week unit. There will be a Progression Exam (1877 to 1920), Profusion Exam (1920 to 1941), Integration Exam (1941 to 1960) and Dissolution Exam (1960 to Present). Exams will cover content from the reading, lectures and class discussions. All exams will include mostly multiple choice and matching questions.

All exam grades will be averaged to determine **30%** of your course grade

- **Critical Questions and Discussion:**

As you read the textbook and primary texts assigned, you should think about an area of what you are learning and craft a fascinating, thought-provoking and relevant question you would like to discuss with the class. Submit these questions on the discussion board.

[Critical questions go beyond simple questions of fact. To answer a quality critical question, you must commit yourself to a position and defend it. For instance you could ask: "What do you think caused the cultural revolution of the 1960s and what do you think Christians could have done to stop it and why did this not happen?"]

During the semester you should have submitted at least two Critical Questions from different units and responded to at least four of your fellow classmates questions with a thoughtful, well-written answer. It is expected that your answers will be somewhere around 250 words. You should also monitor your question on the discussion board and respond to the students who answer it. Near the end of the semester, after students have had time to see and respond to your answer you should also submit your own answer to your critical questions.

At the end of the semester the professor will provide a Question and Discussion grade based upon the quality of your question and response to other's question. Other factors used to determine the grade will be how well written your questions and answers are in terms of overall quality, clarity, creativity and insight of your discussion, as well as style, grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, organization etc. of your writing. You will have an average grade if you do average work such as doing the minimum requirement or waiting to the end of the semester to do the assignment. The professor expects that the answers you give will be your own answers based upon you unique insights and perspective, showing a significant amount of individual thought. There is a temptation today to take the question and feed it into an AI BOT and just cut and paste the answer. Do not do this. I do not want your answers to come for an AI search. I want your response, from your perspective based on what you have read. [If I feel like you are giving AI answers, I will ask you to face-time with me and have a discussion about your answers.]

Your Question and Discussion grade will determine **15 percent** of your final grade.

- **Research**

Before the end of the second week of class, you should select an area of interest that falls within the general time-frame of this course (American History from the end of the Reconstruction Era, 1877 to the present) and spend time each week doing research on this topic. It is important to get an early start. Once you have your topic selected, send an email to the Professor defining what you would like to research. If you have trouble finding a topic, just consider the kinds of things you are most interested in and see if you can find a connection to the period we are studying. This will make your research more interesting to you, and to the class, if you make the topic your own and find something that fascinates you... something that will probably not be covered in the textbook. As you investigate your topic, make sure that you find primary text to read and evaluate. Try to understand it from its own time and not just from secondary analysis. Also attempt to connect your area of research to major figures and events of the time. Be sure to include what you are researching in our interactions in classroom and our discussion board. This will not only add to our analysis, but you may find new insights and perspectives. And, as you begin thinking about your presentation to the class, consider any areas of controversy or debate within your topic and how Scripture could help in solving or at least evaluating the issues involved. Lastly, attempt to find any lessons learned or wisdom gained in your research and how this could be applied to life today.

It is very important that you have a chance to present your research to the class. It will not be a long presentation (15-20 minutes) but will give you a chance to practice your speaking and teaching skills. [If you are an education major and you want to design the presentation for the particular grade you want to teach, that will be fantastic. After the presentation, the class will have opportunity to ask questions to you related to the subject. Before the presentation you should summarize what you have discovered in your research in a one to two page document that can be made available to the class.

A grade will be assigned for the project based upon the summary handout and the quality, clarity and relevance of your class presentation.

The Research Grade will determine **15%** of your final grade.

Grade Weight

Informed Class Participation	25%
Textbook and Primary Source Reading	10%
Pretest	5%
Exams	30%
Questions and Discussion	15%
<u>Research Grade</u>	<u>15%</u>
Total	100%

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

ONLINE EXAM PROTOCOL

Because the exams are timed, you should take the exam as quickly as possible from memory, making note of the questions you are unsure of. After the exam is completed, you can go back and spend more time on these questions.

Here is a list of activities which will be considered cheating:

- Talking to someone about the exam to give or get information about the content of the exam.
- Taking or receiving screenshots of the exam questions.
- Using the course text or other sources other than your memory to choose answers.
- Letting someone else take the exam for you or taking the exam for someone else.

Video Recording

To ensure FERPA compliance when a course is live-streamed or recorded, students can opt out of video recordings by requesting seating in a designated area off camera. Students who sit outside of this area are giving implicit permission to be recorded.

Class Attendance:

Students should only enroll in courses they are able to attend regularly.

- **On-campus** students are expected to attend class **in person** according to the course syllabus.
- Students enrolled in the **online section** must pay any applicable online course fees.
- Online students are expected to attend class **synchronously** at the scheduled time via the designated video conferencing platform, Zoom, found in the left-hand global menu in Canvas.
- Online students must have their **cameras turned on with sound muted** during class, and actively participate in discussions and activities. In order to be properly identified, students must upload a picture ID to their Canvas Account Profile *prior to the first online meeting*. For instructions on how to upload a profile picture, [click here](#).

Missed Classes:

- Each instructor may decide how attendance impacts your grade and learning objectives. Details are provided within the course syllabus.
- Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence or tardiness.
 - Instructors are **not required** to allow make-up work for missed classes.

Attendance & Financial Aid:

- Students receiving **grants, loans, or scholarships** must meet participation requirements set by the college.
- It is the student's responsibility to:
 - Review relevant sections of the Academic Catalog.
 - Contact the **Financial Aid Office** for details on how attendance affects aid.
 - Understand the consequences of non-participation.

Census Period Attendance Requirement:

- Though Criswell College does not officially take attendance, it must verify that students **begin their courses** to meet federal aid regulations.
- **During the census period** (first two weeks of a 16-week semester or first week of shorter terms), students must participate in **academically related activities**, or they may be dropped from the course.

Examples of Qualifying Activities:

- Attending class in person or via live video with the instructor present
- Submitting an assignment, quiz, or exam
- Taking part in assigned tutorials, study groups, or discussion boards
- Having documented communication with the instructor about course content

Important Note:

Simply logging into Canvas or a Zoom session without participating (e.g., camera off, no interaction) **does not count** as attendance.

Canvas:

- Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based Learning Management System (LMS).
- **For online courses** at Criswell College, instructors use Canvas to:
 - Organize course content on a module basis using organizational tools within Canvas
 - Control the timing of course requirements through module control or assignment due dates to ensure that students are engaged for the full length of the semester or term
 - Accept assignments from students only inside the Canvas course (emailed assignments are not acceptable)
 - Provide written feedback on assignments only within Canvas, preferably through Speedgrader
 - Use the Announcement or e-mail feature in Canvas to communicate with the students rather than by broadcasting to a class email listserv outside of canvas
 - Use Zoom in Canvas for all “live” (synchronous) class sessions

Important Note:

Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at 844-358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure’s impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student’s Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses’ objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus’s closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

Assigning grade definitions (i.e., above average, average, below average) is optional. Please delete the last column below if not assigning definitions. Additionally, delete these instructions when completing syllabus.

			Grade Definitions (optional)
A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour	

A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour	
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour	
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour	
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour	
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour	
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour	
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour	
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour	
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour	
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour	
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour	

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An “I” may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar’s Office. The “I” must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the “I” will become an “F.”

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Course Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

(Instructors may use, modify or replace these guidelines as appropriate for their course.)

Examples of AI-related functions you **may not use** without permission:

- Text Generation – You may not use AI to generate text for use in an assignment.
- Outline Generation – You may not use AI to generate an outline for an assignment.

AI-related tools you **may use** without permission:

- Spellcheck and grammar – built into Word, Pages, and Google Docs
- AI re-writing tools – tools that take what you’ve written and help make it clearer, such as what Grammarly offers. However, you must cite Grammarly or other sources in your assignment/paper and submit both original draft of paper and the final paper.
- AI research and summarize – tools that help you find sources to cite, such as the new AI tools built into Logos Bible Software.)

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college’s academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student’s course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student’s work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students’ institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access a wide range of academic resources and receive research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, located on the second floor of the Education Building.

Login credentials for accessing the library’s databases are emailed to students near the beginning of each semester.

For more information or assistance, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu or visit www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/.

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to enhance their skills and build confidence. All tutors are recommended by faculty to ensure they are qualified to support the student body. To meet with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly at <https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>. The Tutoring Center is located in room E203 of the Education Building.

For questions, email tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

Weekly Session

Assignment

UNIT 1 PROGRESSION of Ideas, Technology, Industry and Society (1840- 1920)

Week 1 (August 18-22)

Introduction and Syllabus
Western Progress

Study Chapter 17

Go West Young Man! Westward Expansion
1840-1900

Complete Background Knowledge Pretest

Week 2 (August 25-29)
Electric Energy & Railroads
Unions & Consumerism

Study Chapter 18
Industrialization and the Rise of Big Business
1870-1900
Email Research Topic to Professor

Week 3 (September 1-5)
Cities and Immigration
Political Machines & The Middle Class

Study Chapter 19
The Growing Pains of Urbanization,
1870-1900

Week 4 (September 8-12)
Expanding Democracy & Social Reform
Progression Unit Review

Study Chapter 21
Leading the Way: The Progressive Movement,
1890-1920
Study for Exam over Progression Unit
Take Reading Quiz to Submit Reading Percentage

TAKE EXAM over PROGRESSION Unit

UNIT 2 PROFUSION of Goods, Consumption, Hardships, Solutions (1890-1941)

Week 5 (September 15-19)
Island Empire Across the Pacific
Profusion of Goods to the World

Study Chapter 22
Age of Empire: American Foreign Policy,
1890-1914
Each Week Work on Research Topic

Week 6 (September 22-26)
Isolationism, Nativist, America First

Study Chapter 23
Americans and the Great War
1914-1919

Week 7 (September 29 – October 3)
Mass: Production, Entertainment, Mobility
Immigration, Advertising, Consumption

Study Chapter 24
The Jazz Age: Redefining the Nation
1919-1929
Each Week Work on Research Topic

Week 8 (October 6-10)
Profusion of Hardships

Study Chapter 25
Can You Spare a Dime? The Great Depression
1929-1932

Profusion of Solutions

Study Chapter 26
Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal
1932-1941

Profusion Unit Review

Take Reading Quiz to Submit Reading Percentage
Study for Exam over PROFUSION Unit

TAKE EXAM over PROFUSION Unit

Week 9 STUDENT DEVELOPMENT WEEK (October 13-17)

UNIT 3 INTEGRATION with the World and Other Races (1941-1968)

Week 10 (October 20-24)
America Finally Enters the War

Study Chapter 27
Fighting the Good Fight in World War II
1941-1945

Week 11 (October 27-31)	Each Week Work on Research Topic
Rebuilding Europe & Fighting Communism Presentations	Study Chapter 28 Post-War Prosperity and Cold War Fears 1945-1960
Week 12 (November 3-7)	Study Chapter 29
Integrating Races Presentations	Contesting Futures: America in the 1960s 1960-1968
Week 13 (November 10-14)	
Integration Unit Review Presentations	Catch-Up on Reading Take Reading Quiz to Submit Reading Percentage Study for Exam over INTEGRATION unit
TAKE EXAM over INTEGRATION Unit	

UNIT 4 DISOLUTION of Society and Security and Country (1968-2016)

Week 14 (November 17-21)	Study Chapter 30
Social, Political and Economic Unrest Presentations	Storms at Home and Abroad Each Week Work on Research Topic
THANKSGIVING FALL BREAK (November 24-27) Read Ch.31 From Cold War to Culture Wars	
Week 15 (December 1-5)	Study Chapter 32
Fractures in the American Culture Dissolution Unit Review Presentations	The Challenges of the Twenty-First Century Study for Exam over DISSOLUTION Unit Take Reading Quiz to Submit Reading Percentage
Week 16 (December 8-12)	
TAKE EXAM over DISSOLUTION Unit	

Selected Bibliography

- Benjamin, Jules R. *A Student's Guide to History*. 13th ed. Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016.
- Fritzer, Penelope Joan, and Ernest Andrew Brewer. *Social Studies Content for Elementary and Middle School Teachers*. 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2010.
- Schweikart, Larry, and Michael Allen. *A Patriot's History of the United States: From Columbus's Great Discovery to America's Age of Entitlement*. United States: Sentinel, 2004.
- Trueman, Carl R. *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.
- Wineburg, Sam. *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.