

AMST 1800: the 1980s

Instructor: Katherine Jewell, PhD, Assistant Professor of History

Office: Miller 310

Office Hours:

Email: kjewell1@fitchburgstate.edu. Please give 24 hours during the week and 48 hours over weekends for a response.

Phone (but email preferred): 978-655-3866

Names/emails/phone # of two other students in the class:

1.

2.

OVERVIEW

Course Details

Meetings: every Wednesday and Friday, 12:30pm - 1:45 pm

Classroom: Thompson 202

Your Professor

Professor Jewell received her BA from Vanderbilt University with a double major in History and Anthropology and her MA and PhD from Boston University in American History, where she studied under Louis Ferleger and Bruce Schulman. Her dissertation is forthcoming as a book, *Dead as Dixie: the Southern States Industrial Council and the End of the New South, 1933-1964*. She has published several articles and book reviews, and presented at conferences across the United States and Great Britain. She specializes in U.S. political and economic history with a focus on the South, and has a particular interest in the relationship among institutions, popular culture, and politics.

Topic

This course introduces the field of American Studies through a case study of a particular historical moment: the 1980s. We will explore issues of American society and identity in that decade through variety of interdisciplinary primary and secondary sources. These include: discussion of historical, political, and cultural issues such as the Reagan Administration, the Cold War, and the changes in political culture related to regional development, technological change, and the culture wars; analysis of popular artistic media such as action movies, pop music, and sitcoms.

Required Materials

Gil Troy and Vincent J. Cannato, eds *Living in the Eighties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

One additional film, novel, or memoir produced in or written about the 1980s (available at the library or through ILL) for the second response essay. More details available in class.

Available at the campus bookstore or your online retailer. Also available as an e-book, if that is your preference. All other reading materials will be made available on Blackboard or handed out in class. I selected this book because it features essays from a wide range of historians and public figures writing on the 1980s. The historians who compiled these essays are well-known and respected historians of the United States, and each essay is accessible without compromising complexity and nuance. I will also place a copy of the reading on reserve in the library if you do not have the means to purchase a copy.

POLICIES

Remember, at Fitchburg State, we use the Carnegie Unit and Credit Hour. The definition, from the Carnegie Foundation, reads, "For a lecture class, one unit is considered to be one hour of lecture class time and two hours

per week of homework. For the typical three-unit class, a student spends three hours per week in class and should do six hours per week of homework.” Our class, as a three credit class, follows this expectation that you will spend at least 6 hours of time per week outside of class preparing assignments, reading, and reflecting on what has been discussed in class. This may vary week to week, and is considered the minimum effort for a passing grade. Excellence will require more effort.

Expectations

- 1) **Attend class.** This course relies heavily on discussion, and for this to succeed you must be present and on time.
- 2) **Read all assigned material.** Readings provide a common ground upon which we build our inquiry. Without that common ground, we cannot fully explore the themes and skills developed in the course. Important: **you should take notes on all assigned readings.**
- 3) **Be attentive and participate in class.**
- 4) **Complete all required assignments in a timely fashion.** The assignments provide formal opportunities to articulate your thought on what we discuss in class. Extensions, if necessary for emergency reasons, require advance arrangement and approval from me.

Fitchburg State encourages the full participation of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of campus living and learning. To support access and inclusion, Fitchburg State offers reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, sensory, etc.). If you require accommodations for this class, please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Agreement as soon as possible so that we can discuss your specific needs. Any information that you share with me will be held in the strictest confidence, unless you give me permission to do otherwise. Contact Disability Services a.s.a.p. to establish your eligibility: www.fitchburgstate.edu/disability or 978-665-4020.

Email

Email is my preferred form of communication. However, to manage time spent on emails, I tend to only check it twice a day. Because of this, you should plan to not hear back for 24 hours during the week and not over the weekend. That doesn't mean you won't hear back earlier, but you should not expect this. Some additional guidelines for email, which is a form of professional communication:

1. Copyedit and proofread
2. Have greetings/signatures
3. Have a meaningful subject line (not "Question" or "Class" or "From your student," or whatever.)
4. Don't demand that I write back by a set time or as soon as possible; almost by definition, if I've not responded, that means I've not been able to.
5. I do not discuss grades over e-mail, and I will not reveal meaningful grades over e-mail.

Attendance

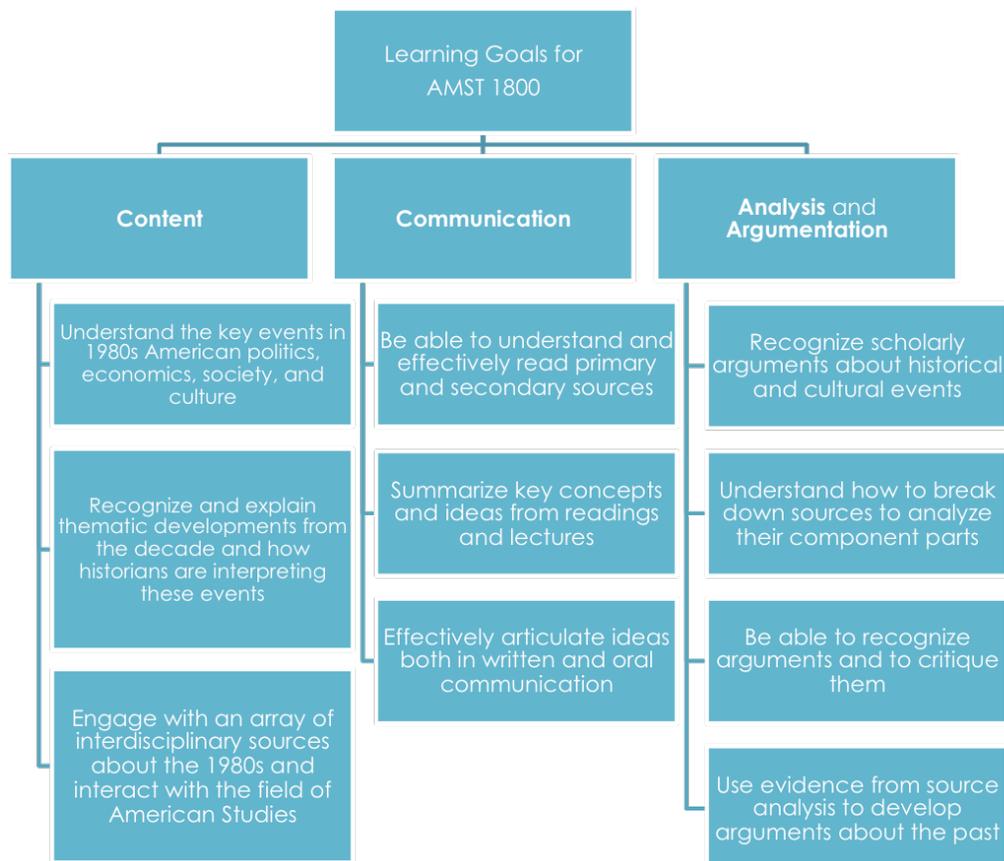
You may miss three classes without penalty. After three misses (whether excused or unexcused — I do not distinguish between them: you are either in class or you are not, and I don't want to play policeman to find out if you really were ferrying grandma to her hip replacement), I reserve the right to lower your grade at my discretion; after six absences you risk failure of the course.

Digital Etiquette

Rules of decorum and respect for others apply here. Use common sense. Please turn off all phones and DO NOT look at them during class (unless instructed to do so). The classroom should be a place apart from the outside world, at least for a brief time. Please notify your boss, family, and friends of when you will be unavailable because you are in class. They should not assume they can reach you during these times. Besides, it's good for you to unplug!

- Laptops: In theory they are excellent tools for note taking. However, data has shown me (and others) that they are more distraction than of use in taking notes. In an informal survey, students who use laptops in my class earn a final grade 8-12 points lower than the class average. **If you insist on taking notes on a laptop, I ask that you sit at the back of the class so your screen does not become a distraction for others.**

COURSE GOALS



Student outcomes may vary according to their level of competency in these abilities upon starting the class, and you can only expect to acquire these skills if you honor all course policies, attend class regularly, complete all assigned work on time and in good faith, and meet the course's expectations of you as a student.

Assignments and Grading

I will hand out more information about all assignments in class.

20% First Response Essay (3-4 pages) - due October 10

25% Second Response Essay (3-4 pages) - due November 14

30% Final Paper: to be based on your reading of a selection of primary sources from the 1980s. (6-8 pages) - due Final Exam date in class

15% Participation: based on your attendance as well as quality and quantity of class participation. Note that you will be expected to participate every class period. If you have problems with shyness or are otherwise unsure of what constitutes good participation, see me in my office hours. In-class activities will include ungraded writing exercises and other assessments.

10% Reading Quizzes (for each Troy/Cannato essay)

I grade all assignments on a percentage scale based off of the Fitchburg State University grading policies. Late work is only acceptable if you have obtained an extension from me ahead of time. Students must complete all assignments to pass the class.

Course Schedule and Organization

Our course topics will proceed both chronologically and thematically. We will begin with a discussion of why historians tend to talk in "decades," and look at some of the issues from the 1970s that affected Americans as they transitioned to a new decade. Next, we will explore the presidency of Ronald Reagan and the idea that he symbolized the decade. From there we will explore topics in depth related to how Americans lived in the 1980s, as well as how developments in the decade shaped American politics, economics, social dynamics, and culture.

Each week you will read at least one secondary source essay (sometimes more than one), as well as primary sources assigned inside or outside of class. Class will consist of both lecture and discussion, and will vary from week to week.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Date	Day	Topic	Reading (entries marked BB can be found on Blackboard)	Assignment
9/5/2014	Friday	Introductions		
9/10/2014	Wednesday	Introduction to the 1980s	TBA	

Date	Day	Topic	Reading (entries marked BB can be found on Blackboard)	Assignment
9/12/2014	Friday	The Decade Problem	Lasch, "Counting by Tens," (BB)	
9/17/2014	Wednesday	What the 70s Wrought	Primary Sources 1 (BB); Cowie, "Something's Happening to People Like Me" (BB)	
9/19/2014	Friday	Reagan and the Eighties: Conservatives in Power	Troy/Cannato Ch. 1. "Ronald Reagan's 100-Day Revolution", <i>Gil Troy</i>	
9/24/2014	Wednesday	Conservatism and the 1980s	Troy/Cannato 2. "The Conservative Renaissance: An Insider's Perspective," <i>Edwin Meese III</i>	
9/26/2014	Friday	Reagan and Conservatives: Evangelicals	Troy/Cannato Ch. "Reaganizing Religion: Changing Political and Cultural Norms among Evangelicals in Ronald Reagan's America," <i>Lauren F. Winner</i>	
10/1/2014	Wednesday	Yuppies, Reaganomics, and the "Greed" Decade	Troy/Cannato Ch. 8. "Reaganomics: The Rise of the Yuppie, the Decline of Labor, the Lure of Wall Street," <i>Kim Phillips-Fein</i>	
10/3/2014	Friday	Diagnosing a "Money Culture" with Popular Media	Bring three examples from popular media (tv, movies, ads, newspaper and magazine articles, even memes are fair game) that can help us diagnose current Americans' attitudes towards the economy and money.	
10/8/2014	Wednesday	The Other Side of the 1980s: Liberalism	Troy/Cannato: Ch. 4. "The Liberal Eclipse - and Reorientation," <i>David Greenberg</i>	
10/10/2014	Friday	Morning in America? The Reagan Decade? A Reaganized America?		Response Paper 1

Date	Day	Topic	Reading (entries marked BB can be found on Blackboard)	Assignment
10/15/2014	Wednesday	Politics and Place: Region	Troy/Cannato Ch. 3 "Conservatism - and the South - Rise Again," <i>Joseph Crespino</i>	
10/17/2014	Friday	Politics and Place: the Suburbs	TBA	
10/22/2014	Wednesday	Politics and Place: The City	Troy/Cannato Ch. 5. "Bright Lights, Doomed Cities: The Rise or Fall of New York City in the 1980s," <i>Vincent J. Cannato</i>	
10/24/2014	Friday	Politics and Place: Rural America and Popular Culture	Primary Sources 2 (BB)	
10/29/2014	Wednesday	Gender	Troy/Cannato Ch. 6. "Madonna Feminism: Steps Forward and Back in the 80s," <i>Sara Evans</i>	
10/31/2014	Friday	Women and the Media	Primary Sources 3 (BB)	
11/5/2014	Wednesday	Film and Television Review	Watch 1 movie or 3 episodes of a tv series and participate in online discussion	
11/7/2014	Friday	Race and Ethnicity I	Troy/Cannato Ch. 7. "The Disuniting of America?: The Rise of Multiculturalism," <i>Mark Brilliant</i>	
11/12/2014	Wednesday	Race and Ethnicity II	Primary Sources 4 (BB)	
11/14/2014	Friday	No Class	Online discussion and paper due	Response Paper 2
11/19/2014	Wednesday	80s Pop Culture intro	Troy/Cannato Ch. 10. "Just Where is Graceland?: 80s Pop Culture through Music," <i>Steve Greenberg</i>	
11/21/2014	Friday	The Mall and the 1980s	Troy/Cannato Ch. 11. "The Privatization of Everyday Life: Public Policy, Public Services and Public Space in Reagan's America," <i>Bruce J. Schulman</i>	

Date	Day	Topic	Reading (entries marked BB can be found on Blackboard)	Assignment
11/26/2014	Wednesday	Thanksgiving		
11/28/2014	Friday	Thanksgiving		
12/3/2014	Wednesday	Paper Workshop		Bibliography and Outline for Final Paper
12/5/2014	Friday	Generation X	Primary Sources (BB)	
12/10/2014	Wednesday	Diagnosing a Generation	TBA	
	Final Exam	Turn in Final Papers		