

# Topics in Economic History: In the Public Interest

## Spring 2018

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Office Hours: Wednesday 11:00 to 1:00, and by appointment

Throughout twentieth century U.S. history, policymakers and citizens struggled to define and redefine which issues were best settled between private individuals or local interests and which issues were so invested in the public and national interest that the federal government should intervene. In this seminar, we will examine the shifting boundary between what constitutes a public and a private concern in twentieth century U.S. history. We will consider how social movements, policy regimes, and new ways of thinking about American society helped to reconstitute notions of the public interest. For instance, in the early twentieth century, issues of civil rights as they pertained to African Americans were generally considered matters of private, local and state concern, but by mid-century the federal government took an increasingly active role in defending the civil rights of African Americans and other groups. In this course, we will consider what brought this shift, its durability, and its consequences. Along with civil rights, we will also consider similar shifts in other policy domains, among them health care, immigration, finance, and the rise and fall of organized labor. Course requirements include weekly readings, active participation in seminar discussions, and a research paper.

### Required Texts

Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*  
Beatrix Hoffman, *Health Care for Some: Rights and Rationing in the United States since 1930*  
Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*  
Jefferson Cowie, *The Great Exception: The New Deal and the Limits of American Politics*

### Course Requirements

- 1) **Reading and Preparation:** Students should come to the weekly seminar meeting having read all required reading and ready to discuss the reading in depth. In order to ensure effective learning, students are required to bring all readings to class, along with notes.
- 2) **Book Reviews (30%):** (*5 short papers*) each paper should be a THREE page, typed, and double-spaced response to the readings assigned for the week. Follow instructions for “Book

Reviews” below (page five) for guidance on writing the paper. I will also distribute a list of questions that can guide your reading of the texts.

Please email a copy of your paper to me no later than **1:00 PM** on the Sunday afternoon before class. Bring a hard copy of the paper to class to refer to during class discussion. The papers represent 30% of your grade. The purpose of this paper is to prepare you for discussion; **late papers will not be accepted.**

- 2) **General Statement and Proposal of Research Project (5%)**—See page six for guidance and note that this is a two-part assignment (I and II)
- 3) **Participation in peer review session of rough drafts (5%)**—we will talk more about this as we get closer to the Week #8 meeting
- 4) **Research Paper (40%)**: (*Monday of Finals Week*)  
See details on pages 6 and 7
- 5) **Participation (20%)**: Careful reading of all the assigned reading and informed and active participation in the discussion is crucial for the success of this seminar. Therefore, the quality of your class performance, including your final presentation of your research, is an important element of your overall evaluation.

The themes addressed in this course are clearly of significance for current policy debates. For weeks 3, 4, 5, and 6, groups of 3-4 students will be responsible for selecting one article from journalistic coverage. This reading should be selected, scanned, and, sent to me as a pdf attachment by the Friday preceding our discussion. You should be prepared to lead the class in a discussion after making a short—5-7 minute—presentation concerning the reading you have selected. You should focus on important questions raised in materials, connections to the week’s assignments, and the broader course themes. I will, of course, be available for consultation about the presentation and the reading selections.

## Course Schedule

### **Week #1: Introduction**

### **Week #2: Civil Rights and Foreign Policy**

Mary Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights* (entire book)

#### Optional Readings

Thomas Sugrue, “Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and Reaction Against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1960,” *Journal of American History* 82 (1995), 551-78

**Week #3: Health Care Policy**

Beatrix Hoffman, *Health Care for Some: Rights and Rationing in the United States since 1930*

Optional Readings

Jennifer Klein, *For All These Rights*

Colin Gordon, *Dead on Arrival*

**Week #4: Immigration Policy**

See Handout and Readings on TritonED

**Week #5: The Rise of the American Right**

Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (entire book)

**--By Sunday evening, please e-mail me your general statement.**

Optional Readings:

Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*

Elizabeth Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism*

**Week #6: Economic Citizenship and Public Policy**

Jefferson Cowie, *The Great Exception: The New Deal and the Limits of American Politics*

Optional Readings

Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of American Resistance to Organized Wealth and Power*

Emmanuel Saez "Striking it Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the US

Paul Krugman, "The Great Compression" in *The Conscience of a Liberal*, 37-56.

Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor*

**Weeks #7:**

Research and individual meetings

**Please e-mail me a copy of your proposal by Saturday evening so that I can read it before our meeting.**

**Week #8: Group Meeting and Peer Review of Rough Drafts (At this stage, your draft should be at least 5 pages)**

**Week #9:**

Memorial Day—no class

**Week #10: Presentations**

### *On Writing Book Reviews*

A book review is a critical analysis of a secondary text, not a summary of the work's content. In a book review, you should evaluate the way in which the author handled the subject and the contribution of the book to your understanding of the issues discussed.

In writing a review, you do not just relate whether or not you liked the book; you also tell your readers *why* you liked or disliked it. It is not enough to say, "This book is interesting"; you need to explain *why* it is interesting. Similarly, it is not enough to report that you disliked a book; you must explain your reaction. Did you find the book unconvincing because the author did not supply enough evidence to support his or her thesis? Or did you disagree with the book's underlying assumptions? **As in all historical writing, you should provide specific evidence from the text to support your argument.**

As a critical reader, you are not passive; you should ask questions of the book and note reactions as you read. Though there is no "correct" way to structure a review, the following are some questions you might consider addressing in your review.

- Identify the author's theme or thesis. Why did she write the book? What is he trying to prove? It is not enough to simply identify the subject; you must tell what the author says about it.
- Describe the author's viewpoint and purpose for writing.
- Identify the scope of the work, e.g., what era does it cover, what subtopics?
- Explain how the author supports her thesis and assess her success in proving it.
- Explain what kind of evidence she uses to support her conclusions. Be specific - do not simply say she uses primary or secondary sources. Identify the type of sources: oral interviews, personal papers, newspaper accounts, census data, etc.
- Evaluate the author's style. For example, is it narrative or analytical?
- If it is not obvious from the title, explain the general nature of the book. Is it public policy, labor, diplomatic, social, economic, military, or psychological history?
- Conclude with a final evaluation of the book. You might discuss who would find this book useful and why.

## **RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

This assignment has four parts—completion of all is necessary to passing the course.

### **I. General Statement**

- a. A general statement of your research interests should be e-mailed to me.
- b. Statements need only be a two to three sentences long. I will use it to prepare us for a research resources meeting during our week #5 meeting; the more specific you can be the better guidance I will be able to provide you during our meeting.

### **II. Proposal**

- a. 2-page statement should include the following elements
  - a) Research paper topic,
  - b) The research problem and specific questions you want to explore,
  - c) A preliminary list of pertinent scholarly articles or books and primary sources

### **III. PAPER**

- a. Develop a coherent interpretive paper on a topic that develops from additional reading and research you have conducted of scholarly books and articles and/or historical documents.
- b. This paper is required to follow Chicago Manual of Style or MLA guidelines for proper footnotes and bibliographic citations.
- c. The required length of this paper is 12-15 typed double-spaced pages of interpretive text in 12-point Times font.

### **IV. PRESENTATION**

- a. Presentation to the class of your project during our week 10 seminar
- b. Details TBD

## Research Paper: The Basics (40% of your course grade)

### Arguments and the thesis

The best papers are not surveys of historical data, but *arguments*. That is, they stake out a *thesis* (a conclusion or historical argument) and try to support it. Arguing a point provides focus for your paper; it engages you as the author and challenges you to think critically.

### Developing your topic into a thesis

The best way to devise a thesis to argue is to pose yourself questions about subjects that interest you. Here are some examples of questions that you might approach from the perspective of policy history:

To what degree are the current policies concerning immigration, labor, finance, and health care a departure from past policy regimes?

Did the civil rights movement in the West/California/southern California/San Diego/UCSD develop in distinct ways from that of the movement in the South and North?

Why was southern California such a fertile ground for the rise of what Lisa McGirr called the “new American right”?

How do we explain the rise and fall of organized labor in the twentieth century?  
Does the relative weakness of the union movement today matter?

How has the face of organized labor changed over the twentieth century?

How do panics and busts alter Americans expectations of capitalism?

What brought on the mortgage crisis?

What role has religion played in American politics and policymaking in the twentieth century? Has it changed?

How has immigration as a public and policy concern changed over the course of the twentieth century? What caused this change?

These are examples of questions or problems that can lead you into a thesis. Begin your process by looking into the question you set for yourself. As you learn more, you refine your question until you develop the problem that will guide you through your paper writing. Ideally, your question will be interesting enough to let you do a sophisticated paper, yet narrow enough to be manageable. I can help you develop a problem and narrow your topic once you have expressed an interest in a particular time or subject.

## Academic Integrity

Students are expected to complete the course in compliance with the instructor's standards. No student shall engage in any activity that involves attempting to receive a grade by means other than honest effort; for example:

- No student shall knowingly procure, provide, or accept any unauthorized material that contains questions or answers to any examination or assignment to be given at a subsequent time.
- No student shall complete, in part or in total, any examination or assignment for another person.
- No student shall knowingly allow any examination or assignment to be completed, in part or in total, for himself or herself by another person.
- No student shall plagiarize or copy the work of another person and submit it as his or her own work.
- No student shall employ aids excluded by the instructor in undertaking course work or in completing any exam or assignment.
- No student shall alter graded class assignments or examinations and then resubmit them for regrading.
- No student shall submit substantially the same material in more than one course without prior authorization.

For more information, please consult the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship (<http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/manual/Appendices/app2.htm>).

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- We reject acts of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs, and we will confront and appropriately respond to such acts.
- We affirm the right to freedom of expression at UCSD. We promote open expression of our individuality and our diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity, confidentiality, and respect.
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