

Topics in American History: American Identities and Institutions

HIST 170S

Spring 2026 Section 83 Fully Online 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/19/2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Caitlín Jeffrey

Office Location: DMH 141

Email: caitlin.jeffrey@sjsu.edu

- If you email me after 5pm Monday-Thursday, I will not respond to your message until the following day.
- After 5pm Friday, I do not check my email until Monday morning.

Office Hours:

In Office Meeting Times:

- M/W: 8:00-8:30am
- M/W: 12:00pm-12:30pm

Zoom Office Meeting Times:

- Tuesday: 10:00-11:00am

Please email me to set an appointment to meet during office hours.

Course Information

This course is a history class for mostly non-historians that encompasses the diversity of history of the United States for a diverse group of students. All students bring important skills and attributes to the course, and I look forward to learning together through the semester.

Course materials such as syllabus, reading materials and course materials, class exercises, assignment instructions, etc., can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website, which can be accessed via the SJSU home website using student ID and password. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through Canvas to learn of any updates.

For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources](#) page.

Type of Class: Online

Meeting Times: Asynchronous

Course Description and Requisites

An investigation in depth of selected periods or problems. This topic focuses on historical relationships between social groups and the political, social, economic and cultural institutions they created.

Satisfies UD GE Area 4. Self, Society, and Equality in the U.S. (formerly Area S) and US 1. U.S. History

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all UD GE courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

Grading: Letter Graded

Sustainability Related - SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities 

* Classroom Protocols

This course will consider issues in the political, social, economic, and cultural history of the United States and the effects of inequality and privilege on the development of American society and institutions.

These issues will lead us in an exploration of varying viewpoints that will engage discrimination, racism, sexism, class antagonisms and other topics that define American society.

In our intellectual investigation of the past to understand our present, we need to conduct ourselves in a civil and respectful manner that promotes a collaborative and supportive learning environment.

Accessible Learning Accommodations

Students who may need accessible learning accommodations are advised to reach out to the Accessible Education Center (AEC) as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Documentation from Accessible Education Center needs to be provided to the instructor so that your learning needs are incorporated into the course.

Academic Honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and plagiarism detection tools such as Turnitin will be used to monitor academic honesty.

Additional Information on proper citation in your writing is provided in the section on grading policy in the syllabus.

Cases of Academic Dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development (SCED). Students who violate the academic integrity policy of the University will receive a failing grade on an assignment, exercise, quiz, and exam where plagiarism and/or cheating occurred.

Changes to Classroom Protocol

The instructor reserves the right to create new policy for classroom protocol and assessment during the semester if a need arises.

Dropping the Course

If you feel you cannot complete the work required for this class, you must drop before the required deadline!

- Last Day to Drop Class without a "W" Grade: **February 17**
- Last Day to File Late Drop/ Semester Withdrawal Petition: **April 20**

It is the responsibility of the student, NOT the instructor to drop, so don't assume that because you have stopped attending, you will be dropped.

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 UD Area 4: Self, Society, and Equality in the U.S.

SJSU Studies courses -- GE UD Areas 2/5, 4, and 3 -- help students integrate knowledge between and among disciplines. SJSU Studies courses develop abilities that enable students to live and work intelligently, responsibly, and cooperatively in multicultural societies and to develop abilities to address complex issues and problems using analytical skills and creative techniques.

In **UD Area 4 courses**, students study the interrelationships of individuals, racial groups, and cultural groups to understand and appreciate issues of diversity, inclusion, inequalities, and justice in the United States. By exploring different perspectives and helping students articulate and discuss their own values, UD Area 4 courses prepare students to live and work responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural society.

GE UD Area 4 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an GE UD Area 4 course, students should be able to:

1. describe how identities are shaped by cultural and societal influences within contexts of equality and inequality. Examples include, but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, disability status, age, generation, regional origin, national identity, language, and intersectionalities;
2. analyze historical, economic, political, or social processes that shape diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S. and reflect on one's own identities and positions within these structures;
3. evaluate social actions which have or have not led to greater equality and social justice in the U.S.; and
4. engage in constructive interactions about social issues in the U.S. within the framework of equality and inequalities.

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 3000 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

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; and
- 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

Required Textbook:

Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*.

Available copies of the textbook at King Library:

- *print copy of text (ISBN-13: 978-0316499071) available via King Library Course Reserve, first floor*
- *ebook of text (ISBN: 9781456611064) available via the link provided in class site*

Other Options:

- You can check if text is available via your public library
- You can use the ISBNs provided to locate used print copies or acquire eBook of the text.

Other Required Readings & Sources (Available on Canvas):

Assigned primary sources, secondary readings, documentaries, and other source materials will be available on canvas.

Course Requirements and Assignments

CLASS EXERCISES (175 points)

You will complete seven (7) class exercises addressing various historical topics, sources, and readings. Class Exercises factor for twenty-five (25) points. Class Exercise will address primary source analysis, quizzes on lecture and readings, and written responses on specific issues of American culture. A rubric is provided in canvas.

DISCUSSION FORUMS (250 points)

There are five (5) discussion forums for the semester. Each forum factors for fifty (50) points. The forums serve as virtual discussion of the course materials and topics. Students should make one post based on course readings and resources and one follow-up post. A rubric is provided in canvas.

FIRST ANALYSIS PAPER (100 points)

For the midterm, you will write an assessment on Takaki's approach to multicultural history, noting how Takaki's approach complements or challenges your understanding of American history, based on your past learning.

SECOND ANALYSIS PAPER (125 points)

The Second Analysis paper will ask you to reflect upon themes of the course that has educated you to the specific dynamics of American institutions and American people, exploring how specific historical patterns shape present day.

EXTRA CREDIT:

Extra Credit will be available for certain activities throughout the semester that students can choose to complete.

✓ Grading Information

Assessments	Points	%	Course Learning Objectives Assessed
Exercises (7x)	175	27	Addresses Objectives US1 A-B; S-1, S-2
Discussion Forums (5x)	250	39	Addresses Objectives US1 A-B; S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4
First Analysis Paper	100	15	Addresses Objectives US1 A-B; S-1, S-2
Second Analysis Paper	125	19	Addresses Objectives US1 A-B; S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4

Total Points:	650	100	

GRADING and LATE POLICY:

Rubrics for curriculum assessments are provided in Canvas.

All assessments for the courses should be completed by their due dates and times.

Extending Circumstances:

If you have extending circumstances, you need to communicate to me privately your needs **BEFORE** a due date by email or Canvas message. You need to provide documentation for your extending circumstances, verifying your absence (i.e., a doctor's note explaining your absence).

Once you have provided documentation, the instructor will discuss with you an extension to an assignment.

Late Penalties:

Class discussions and class exercises facilitate the learning process and serve as building blocks for your understanding of the curriculum, learning outcomes, and your successful completion of assignments.

Assessment is based on active engagement in discussions and exercises. If you are not engaged in the discussions and exercises, this will impact your grade.

Late Class Exercises:

Late submissions to a class exercise will be penalized five (5) points for missing the deadline and additional five (5) points for every day late after the original due date and time. After forty-eight (48) hours from the original due date, no late submissions will be accepted.

Late Discussion Forums:

Late Submission to a Discussion Forum will be penalized five (5) points for missing the deadline and additional five (5) points for every day late after the original due date and time. After forty-eight (48) hours from the original due date, no late submissions will be accepted.

Late Papers:

Late Papers will have ten (10) points deducted from the overall score for every day pass the original due date.

An extension window is built into the paper assignments, allowing for late submissions. After forty-eight (48) hours from the original due date, no late submissions will be accepted.

If you miss the extension deadline, you will receive a zero for your missed assignment.

Papers must be submitted to the drop box on the class website. I will not accept papers to my email inbox.

If you do not submit your papers to the class website correctly or submit a paper that is unreadable by the system, you will not receive a grade for the assignment.

Technological Difficulties with Exercises and Assignments:

If you are unable to complete an assignment by the due date because of problems with technology, you must take the following steps:

- notify me within a 24-hour period after the due date of the assignment.
- You must provide me via my email a snapshot of your computer screen, documenting the technological difficulty you are experiencing.
- You need to create a ticket to SJSU Canvas helpdesk to get assistance and to resolve the matter.

If you do not follow these steps, I will not accept late assignments due to technological issues.

If the system is down, then the due date for an assignment will be adjusted for the entire class.

Citation, Plagiarism, AI-Generated Text:

- Class Exercises and Assignments for the course are submitted to Turnitin.
- You can submit your assignment prior to the due date to check your citations and possible areas of plagiarized text.
- Turnitin will generate a report immediately upon your submission to let you know if you are not citing correctly and will highlight text that exhibits plagiarized text that needs proper citation. You should review this report and revise your writing if needed to cite sources correctly and to correct any areas in your writing that exhibit plagiarism and upload a second corrected file to your drop box before the due date for the assignment.
- If you submit your response at the due date and time and Turnitin provides a report that your assignment has more than 30% of text incorrectly cited and exhibiting plagiarism or submission of AI-generated paper, the instructor will schedule a meeting with you to review the assignment in question.

- If you use AI software for translation, grammar construction, writing/editing software, spelling and word choice selection or AI software that has aided you in your thinking about an assignment such as ChatGPT, Microsoft CoPilot, Google Gemini, editing software or other programs, you need to give citation to these sources in your writing and give acknowledgement to these programs in your Works Cited.
- You **may not use** AI software to craft an argument for an assignment or generate a paper for you that you present as your own writing. This will be viewed as plagiarism.
- Turnitin will tag AI generated areas of your writing for my report and if you have not acknowledged your use of AI in your writing, then you will meet with the instructor during an office hour to discuss proper citation and use of AI in this course.
- Turnitin will tag AI generated areas of your writing for my report and if you have not acknowledged your use of AI in your writing, then the following policy applies:
 - If you use AI software in aiding you in your writing and do not disclose use of AI software in your in-text citations and Works Cited and Turnitin tags your paper; ten (10) points will be deducted from your overall score with the first instance.
 - If you use AI software for generating your argument, providing content of paper, you will redo your writing assignment for partial credit with the first instance.

After this first instance, this policy applies:

- If future submissions for an assignment or exercise exhibits plagiarized or AI-generated text that you are presenting as your own argument or you have not given citation and acknowledgement to the software, the percentage of plagiarized text and/or AI-generated text will be multiple by the points of the assignment, resulting in given points deducted from your overall score for the assignment. For example, 30% AI generated text multiple by 50-point assignment results in fifteen points deducted from overall score.
- The instructor reviews Turnitin reports to make the final determination if an assignment exhibits plagiarism or AI-generated text that compromises the Academic Integrity Policy of the University.
- If you commit plagiarism or submit AI-generated text as your own writing, the University Academic Integrity Policy will be adhered to.

Breakdown

Grade	Points	Percentage
-------	--------	------------

A	605-650	93-100%
A-	585-604	90-92%
B+	566-584	87-89%
B	540-565	83-86%
B-	520-539	80-82%
C+	501-519	77-79%
C	475-500	73-76%
C-	455-474	70-72%
D+	436-454	67-69%
D	410-435	63-66%
D-	390-409	60-62%
F	0-389	0-59%

University Policies

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

Week	Topic	Assignments
Week 1 Module (Jan. 22)	Introduction	Review Class syllabus and Class site in Canvas

Week 2 Module (Jan. 26)	Lecture 1: Master Narrative of American History	Read Takaki, Chapter 1 Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 2 Module of class site. Discussion Forum #1
Unit I: Foundations		
Week 3 Module: (Feb 2)	Colonial America: Lecture 2: Defining the American Dream Lecture 3: Origins of Slavery	Read Takaki, Part One: Foundations; Before Columbus; and Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 3 Module of class site. Class Exercise #1
Week 4 Module: (Feb 9)	Lectures 4-5: American Revolution and Political Institutions of Early America	Read Takaki, Part Two Contradictions; The Rise of the Cotton Kingdom; and Chapter 4. Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 4 Module of class site. Discussion Forum #2
Unit II: Contradictions		
Week 5 Module (Feb 16)	Lecture 6: Market Revolution Lecture 7: Cherokee Removal	Read Takaki, Chapter 6 Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 5 Module of class site. Class Exercise #2

Week 6 Module (Feb 23)	Lecture 8: Abolitionism Lecture 9: Women's Rights Movement	Read Takaki, Chapter 5 Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 6 Module of class site. Forum Discussion #3
Week 7 Module (Mar. 2)	Lectures 10-11: Settling the West	Read Takaki, Chapters 7-8 Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 7 Module of class site. Class Exercise #3
Week 8 Module (Mar 9)	Lectures 12-13: Civil War/Reconstruction	Read assigned sources on Canvas. Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 8 Module of class site. Analysis Paper #1 due
Unit III: Transitions		
Week 9 Module (Mar 16)	Lecture 14- Lecture 15: Manifest Destiny and the America Empire	Read Takaki, "Part Three: Transitions: The End of the Frontier; Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 9 Module of class site. Class Exercise #4

Week 10 Module (Mar 23)	Lecture 16- Lecture 17: Immigration and the American City	Read Takaki, Chapter 11 Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 10 Module of class site. Class Exercise #5
SPRING BREAK: March 30 - April 3, 2025		
Week 11 Module (Apr. 6)	Lecture 18 - Lecture 19: WWI and Great Migration	Read Takaki, Chapter 13 Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 11 Module of class site. Discussion Forum #4
Unit IV: Transformations		
Week 12 Module (Apr. 13)	Lecture 20: Up from Mexico Lecture 21: Great Depression	Read Takaki, Part Four: Transformations The Problem of the Color Lines, Chapter 12 Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 12 Module of class site. Class Exercise #6

<p>Week 13 Module (Apr. 20)</p>	<p>Lecture 22-Lecture 23: WWII and American Society</p>	<p>Read Takaki, Chapter 14</p> <p>Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 13 Module of class site.</p> <p>Class Exercise #7</p>
<p>Week 14 Module (Apr. 27)</p>	<p>Lecture 24 - Lecture 25: Civil Rights Movements</p>	<p>Read Takaki, Chapter 15</p> <p>Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 13 Module of class site.</p>
<p>Week 15 Module (May 4)</p>	<p>Lecture 26: TWLF Lecture 27: Women's Movement</p>	<p>Read Takaki, Chapters 16-17</p> <p>Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 14 Module of class site.</p> <p>Discussion Forum #5</p>
<p>Week 16 Module (May 11)</p>	<p>Summary of Class</p>	<p>Assignments provided in Assignment List of Week 16 Module of class site.</p>
<p>Week 17 Module (Final Exams)</p>		<p>Analysis Paper #2 due</p>