



HISTORY 489.1HE (#82626)
Independent Study
History through Biography
COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2024

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Baker

Office Location: Ferguson Social Sciences 126

Office Hours: Monday 3-5 PM; Tuesday/Thursday 3:30-5 PM; Wednesday 3-5 PM and by appointment

University Email Address: Andrew.Baker@tamuc.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: email

Communication Response Time: 24 hours (excluding weekends)

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description:

Individualized instruction/research at an advanced level in a specialized content area under the direction of a faculty member. May be repeated when the topic varies. Prerequisites: Non-majors may enroll with consent of the department.

This independent study will focus on the uses of biography as a way to examine American history and historiography, with a particular focus on questions of individual agency and the relationship between individuals and institutions within history.

Required Materials

Caro, Robert A., *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, Vintage, 1975.

Gaddis, John Lewis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life*, Penguin Books, 2011.

Kazin, Michael, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

McDaniel, W. Caleb. *Sweet Taste of Liberty: A True Story of Slavery and Restitution in America*, Oxford University Press, 2019.

Norrell, Robert J., *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington*, Harvard University Press, 2009.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Student will evaluate the historiographical uses of biography.
2. Student will assess the historical relationship between political power, institutional power, and personal power in history.

Grading

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 895-1000 Points

B = 795-894 Points

C = 695-794 Points

D = 595-694 Points

F = 000-594 Points

Assessments

Analysis Posts (20x13)	260
Book Analysis (50x5)	250
Final Paper	200
Participation	290
Total	1000

Assignments

Analysis Posts

In order to keep students on-track with our course readings and to ensure students come to class prepared to engage in course discussions, Analysis Posts will be due most weeks through the D2L discussion tab. Student posts should be 1-2 paragraphs (roughly 200-300 words) and demonstrate a comprehension of the readings for the week. All sources should be cited using turabian footnotes. These should be submitted through D2L by noon the day of class.

Book Review

Each student is responsible for writing a 700-1000 word book review for each of the five books for the semester. Each review should summarize the book's argument and critically engage with its content. See the book review guide posted under guides on the D2L site and the department orientation D2L page for more information. Submit your review through the D2L assignments dropbox and bring a printed copy to class.

Final Paper

For the course final paper each student should write a 1000-1200 word essay that demonstrates the students' mastery of both of the course SLO's.

Course Schedule

Week 1: August 30 Henrietta Wood and the Legacies of Slavery
Read: McDaniel, *Sweet Taste of Liberty*, p1-225

Week 2: September 6 Historian as Detective
Read: McDaniel, *Sweet Taste of Liberty*, p226-325
Review Due: McDaniel (September 8)

Week 3: September 13 Bryan the Politician
Read: Kazin, *A Godly Hero*, chapters 1-5

Week 4: September 20 Bryan the Reformer
Read: Kazin, *A Godly Hero*, chapters 6-12
Review Due: Kazin (September 22)

Week 5: September 27 Washington the Builder
Read: Norrell, *Up from History*, chapters 1-9

Week 6: October 4 Washington the "Leader of the Race"
Read: Norrell, *Up from History*, chapters 10-18
Review Due: Norrell (October 6)

Week 7: October 11 Robert Moses
Read: Caro, *Power Broker*

Week 8: October 18 Robert Moses
Read: Caro, *Power Broker*

Week 9: October 25 Robert Moses
Read: Caro, *Power Broker*

Week 10: November 1 Robert Moses
Read: Caro, *Power Broker*
Review Due: Caro (November 3)

Week 11: November 8 Kennan the Diplomat
Read: Gaddis, *George Kennan*,

Week 12: November 15 Kennan the Policymaker
Read: Gaddis, *George Kennan*,

Week 13: November 22 Kennan the Elder Statesman
Read: Gaddis, *George Kennan*,
Review Due: Gaddis (November 24)

Week 14: November 29 - Thanksgiving

Week 15: December 6 Course Wrap-up

Discuss final paper draft
Final Paper Due Friday, December 13, noon

Statement on AI (ChatGPT)

At A&M University-Commerce we recognize that there are potentially legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that can generate text or suggest replacements for text. AI is a powerful tool for consolidating information. As a tool it requires that both students and faculty think through how to use it wisely and responsibly to accomplish our goals. AI is also a powerful tool for gathering the work of others and combining it, without citation, into a product for distribution and misattribution. In this it is, at best, morally dubious.

For this course our goals are to practice historical thinking, to engage in historical scholarship, to interpret historical scholarship, and to grow in our understanding of the past and of the ways humans have sought to understand it. As a tool, AI does little to help us in these tasks. To the contrary, using AI for course assignments would undermine your learning in these areas—the learning you are paying for. It would outsource the valuable human endeavor that is historical scholarship to an algorithm that can only parrot back predigested scraps of the work humans have done before. For this reason, students and faculty are not authorized to use any AI software in this course. Any use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism) as well as a betrayal of the norms and values of graduate-level historical scholarship. As a student you are to be fully responsible for the content of any assignment you submit.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:
<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Email Communication

All course communications will come through your university email account. Be sure to check it regularly. You should contact me through my TAMU-C email address (Andrew.Baker@tamuc.edu). I check my email regularly between 8 am and 5 pm Monday – Friday. I do not check my campus email on Sunday. A failure of planning on your part does not constitute a crisis on my part.

Counseling Center

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

Statement on Student Grievances

Students who have questions or concerns about the Instructor's course policies or the conduct either of the Instructor or a classmate should first consult with the Instructor. In the event of a lack of resolution or satisfaction on the matter, the student may bring their concerns to the head of the History Department, Sharon Kowalsky (Sharon.Kowalsky@tamuc.edu). If this does not result in a satisfactory conclusion to the matter, students may bring the issue to the attention of the Associate Dean of Students per procedures outlined on pp. 15-19 of the Student Guide Book.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Drop/Withdrawal

If you decide that you need to drop or withdrawal from this course, it is your responsibility to complete the necessary paperwork. I will not drop you from the course if you stop attending.

Attendance

Regular attendance is vital to success in the course. Unexcused absences will impact your participation grade for the semester. Only medical and family emergencies and university approved absences will be excused. If you anticipate any difficulties attending course sessions, please be proactive in contacting the professor.

Late Work

Make-up tests will only be offered in the case of an excused absence as described above. Students who anticipate university-approved absences must make arrangements to complete the work at an alternate time. Unexcused late work will be penalized a letter grade per day late (excluding weekends) to a maximum penalty of half credit.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

Health and Safety

Students should not attend class when ill or after exposure to anyone with a communicable illness. Communicate such instances directly with your instructor. Faculty will work to support the student getting access to missed content or completing missed assignments.

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.