HI 468: American Society since 1970
Spring 2012
Tuesdays: 3:30pm-6:30pm
MUG 203

Professor Kathryn Cramer Brownell
Office: Room 506, History Department
Phone: 617-353-8305
Email: cramerk@bu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 9-11; and by appointment

Course Description: History 468 is a colloquium investigating the political, social, economic and cultural history of the United States during the last three decades of the twentieth century. The course includes such themes as Watergate and the imperial presidency, the urban crisis, the evolution of race and ethnic identity, feminism and the family, and the rise of Evangelical Christianity and the conservative movement. The class will also provide a detailed analysis of the era's film cultures.

Readings: The following books are available in paperback at the Bookstore.

Rick Perlstein, Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America
Bruce Schulman and Julian Zelizer (ed.), Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s
Susan Douglas, Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media
Frances FitzGerald, Cities on a Hill
James Goodman, Blackout
Michael Patrick MacDonald, All Souls: A Family Story from Southie
Gil Troy, Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s
Bradford Martin, The Other Eighties
Joe Klein, The Natural: The Misunderstood Presidency of Bill Clinton
William Finnegan, Cold New World

Other required readings will be available on Blackboard (check http://blackboard.bu.edu). Sources available on Blackboard are designated on the syllabus with **.
Assignments: The following describes the major assignments for the course. Please see the back of the syllabus for further details regarding the essays as well as criteria for the grades you will receive.

1. **Commitment to the Colloquium** (required): The Colloquium is the most important and intensive requirement of the concentration in History and the History minor. It demands a far greater level of preparation, effort, and commitment than a regular lecture or discussion class. You are expected to attend every session, to arrive on time, and to remain for the entire class period. Students are required to attend every session—there will be **no unexcused absences**. If you are unable to attend a meeting (due to illness or family emergency) it is your obligation to contact the instructor in advance. **If you miss more than three class meetings for any reason, you cannot receive credit for this class.**

2. **Class Participation** (20%): Class participation will account for twenty percent of your final grade in the course. Receiving a strong grade for class participation requires much **more than warming a seat**. Please see the grading rubrics on the last page of this syllabus to understand the criteria that will be used for this grade. Students will also need to sign up as discussion leaders for one week of the semester. As a discussion leader, students will be expected to collaborate with the other discussion leaders that week and develop poignant questions about the readings. These questions need to be emailed to me by **Sunday night at 5pm** before the Tuesday you are signed up as discussion leader so that I may circulate them to the class before our meeting.

3. **Short Artifact Essay** (25%): On **Wednesday March 7 by 5PM** you will turn in an essay of **5-6 pages**, analyzing an artifact of American culture during the 1970s or 1980s. You will select a consumer product, a work of art or culture, an advertisement, or any other suitable artifact of the era, and analyze its historical significance. Your task is to place the artifact in its larger historical context and determine what is says about some central aspect of American society or politics in this time period. You should **not** concentrate on describing your artifact or summarizing its contents (if necessary, you may attach a photocopy of the object or a brief one paragraph description of its plot, contents, etc.). In selecting you artifact, you should consult contemporary sources, such as popular magazines and newspapers, and/or the collections of local museums, libraries, and galleries.

4. **Major Research Paper** (35%): This seminar seeks to equip students with the necessary skills for producing a major research paper, while providing them with a forum to discuss and revise their work. Thus, students will design, research and complete a research paper on a topic of their own devising. The final paper should represent a historical essay that is between 15-20 pages. You must document it with endnotes or footnotes and provide a complete bibliography. The essay is due on **Thursday, May 10 by noon**.

5. **Prospectus, Bibliography** (10%): On **March 28 by 5PM**, each student will submit a prospectus for the major research paper. This brief document (**2 to 3 pages**) will describe the topic, propose a historical argument, and discuss the sources. We will discuss this prospectus during individual meetings the following week. On **April 18 by 5PM**, students will turn in a preliminary bibliography. The bibliography will divide the sources into appropriate categories (primary, secondary, archival, and media) and list them in appropriate bibliographic form following Chicago style.

6. **Final Presentation** (10%): In the final month of the semester, each student will make a formal presentation about his or her project. The scheduled dates for presentations are **April 17, April 24** and **May 1**. On each of these dates, a selected group of students will present their work during the first segment of class. Each student will have five minutes to present their research, after which the class will offer five minutes of suggestions, questions, and analyses. Time limits will be strictly enforced.
**Grade Breakdown:** You must complete and pass every requirement to pass the course. Grades will be calculated according to the following formula:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Required</th>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment to the Colloquium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prospectus and Bibliography</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Essay (15-20 pp.)</td>
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CLASS SCHEDULE

1. January 17  
   **Course Introduction**

2. January 24  
   **Easy Rider: The Silent Majority and Backlash against Liberalism**

   **READINGS:**


   David Greenberg, “The New Left Radicals: Nixon as Conspirator” in *Nixon’s Shadow***

3. January 31  
   **Patton: The Imperial Presidency from Vietnam to Watergate**

   **READINGS:**

   Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland* (chaps. 23-4, and 26-34; pp. 477-523, and 541-748)

   Arthur Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency*, excerpts***

   Bruce Schulman, “Down to the Nut-Cutting” in *The Seventies***

4. February 7  
   **Shaft: Race and the Urban Crisis**

   **READINGS:**

   James Goodwin, *Blackout* (all)

   Suleiman Osman, “The Decade of the Neighborhood,” in *Rightward Bound* (chap. 6; pp. 106-127)
5. February 14  

*The Godfather: The White Ethnic Resurgence*

**READINGS:**

Michael Patrick MacDonald, *All Souls* (all)


6. February 21  

*No Class: Substitute Monday Schedule*

7. February 28  

*Charlie’s Angels: Feminism, Femininity, and the Family*

**READINGS:**

Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are* (chaps. 7-10; pp. 139-244)

Phyllis Schlafly, *The Power of the Positive Woman* (pp. 7-32)*

Marjorie J. Spruill, “Gender and America’s Right Turn,” in *Rightward Bound* (chap. 4; pp. 71-89)


8. March 6  

*Network: Recession and the Religious Right*

**READINGS:**


**Artifact Essay Due Wednesday, March 7 by noon in Professor Brownell’s mailbox**
9. March 13  
   
   *No Class- Spring Break*

10. March 20  
   
   *Class Trip to the Gotlieb Archive*

11. March 27  
   
   *Rambo: Reasserting American Pride in the 1980s*

   **READINGS:**


   William Adams, "Vietnam Screen Wars" in *Culture in the Age of Money**

   Hendrik Hertzberg, "The Short Happy Life of the American Yuppie," in *Culture in the Age of Money**

   **2-3 page prospectus due by noon on March 29 in Professor Brownell’s mailbox**

12. April 3  
   
   *Wall Street: Consent and Dissent in the 1980s*

   Bradford Martin, *The Other Eighties* (all)

   Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, (chaps. 11-12; pp.245-294)

13. April 10  
   
   *Individual Meetings with Professor Brownell-*
14. April 17  

*Wag the Dog: The Clinton Years in American Politics and Culture*

**READINGS:**

Joe Klein, *The Natural* (all)

Joan Diodon, *Trouble in Lakewood* **

William Finnegan, *Cold New World*, (chap 4; pp. 270-340)

Presentations

**Preliminary Bibliography Due on Wednesday, April 18th by 5pm in Professor Brownell’s Mailbox**

15. April 24  

*Do the Right Thing: Race, Class, and Hip Hop*

**READINGS:**

William Finnegan, *Cold New World*, (chap. 1; pp. 92)

Jeff Chang, “Becoming the Hip Hop Nation” in *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop* **

Presentations

16. May 1  

*“Fahrenheit 9/11: A Global Power in the New Millennium*

**READINGS:**

David Brooks, “One Nation, Slightly Divisible,” *Atlantic Monthly* December 2001 (pp. 53-65)*

George W. Bush, “Second Inaugural Address”*

Barak H. Obama, “Inaugural Address”**

“The Return of the Silent Majority” *Time*, October 24, 2011 **

“Person of the Year: The Protestor,” *Time*, December 14, 2011**

Presentations

**Final Paper Due on Wednesday May 10th by noon in Professor Brownell’s mailbox**
GUIDELINES FOR THE ESSAYS

For each of these essays, your goal is not simply to summarize and regurgitate the ideas of others, but rather to craft an original and contentious argument that responds to the assignment at hand. You should support your argument with detailed evidence and analysis that is sustained throughout the entire paper in a clear and cogent manner. Your argument should be a historical one; your job is to make claims about what Americans thought at the time under consideration, NOT what you think about certain beliefs or policies. Try to imagine and uncover how Americans viewed themselves and their world in the past, and consider the historical conditions that led them to think in particular ways at particular moments in time. The first essay is designed to help you develop a scholarly question and focus on a particular artifact that will allow you to develop an analysis of a particular period.

All essays should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins and a reasonable font. For a detailed description of the proper format for historical essays and other things to keep in mind, students should consult the BU History Department Writing Guide at the following website:
http://www.bu.edu/history/writing_guide.html

Late policy: Late papers will be penalized one-third grade per day (example: a B paper that is one day late becomes a B-). All students are required to keep copies of their graded essays until the end of the semester.

NOTE ON PLAGIARISM. Remember that plagiarism is a serious offense, and it's your responsibility to know and understand the provisions of the CAS Academic Conduct Code. Plagiarism is subject to serious sanctions, including reprimand, suspension, and expulsion. Cases of suspected academic misconduct in this course will be referred to the Dean’s Office. For a detailed description of Boston University’s rules, consult the code of conduct at www.cs.bu.edu/students/conduct.html or pick up a copy in room CAS105.
Grades

ESSAY GRADES will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

An "A" range essay is both ambitious and successful. It presents a perceptive and independent argument backed up by well-chosen evidence, a creative and compelling use of sources, and sensitivity to historical context. Written with grace and confidence, it is the kind of paper that could be read aloud in class. It demonstrates that the writer has grappled seriously with the issues of the course, has done a close, critical reading of the texts, and has synthesized the readings and discussions.

A "B" range essay is one that is ambitious but only partially successful, or one that achieves modest aims well. It may demonstrate many of the aspects of A-level work, but falls short in organization and clarity, the formulation and presentation of its argument, or the depth of source analysis. It demonstrates a command of course material and understanding of historical context and contains flashes of insight, but lacks consistency in the writing or depth in the argument.

A "C" range essay has significant problems in articulating and presenting its argument, or seems to lack a central argument entirely. Oftentimes, C-range papers offer little more than a summary of information covered in the course, or they might prove insensitive to historical context, contain factual errors, unclear writing, poor organization, or insufficient evidence.

A "D" essay, in addition to displaying the shortcomings of a C-range paper, also fails to grapple seriously with either ideas or texts, or fails to address the expectations of the assignment. A D essay suggests seriously insufficient command of the course material.

An "F" essay falls short in the manner of a "D" essay. It is also often significantly shorter than the assigned length, does not demonstrate even a glint of potentially original thought, and suggests a lack of effort or no competence in the material at hand.

PARTICIPATION GRADES will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

A student who receives an A for participation typically comes to every class with questions about the readings in mind. An 'A' discussant engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others, and consistently elevates the level of discussion. An A participant also volunteers to take advantage of writing workshop events and other in-class activities.

A student who receives a B for participation does not always come to class with questions about the readings in mind. A 'B' discussant waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some discussants in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.

A student who receives a C for discussion in precepts or seminars attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion.

A student who fails to attend precepts or seminars regularly and adequately prepared for discussion risks the grade of D or F.