

Chaminade University
HIST/POL 305: Contemporary America
Fall 2018

INSTRUCTOR:

Terrence L. Monroe

Email: terrence.monroe@chaminade.edu

Consultation: email will be responded to by no later than the next business day.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is a survey of American history from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 to the present day. The focus of the course will be on why events happened and what meaning they have for today's United States. This course will stress social history as well as traditional political history.

COURSE MATERIALS:

No textbook is required for this course. We will be using "WisdomMaps", for which there is a software fee of \$25.

Mind maps are a concept that was actually pioneered by Leonardo da Vinci some 500 years ago, but which we've taken to a new level. WisdomMaps are premised on the idea that all information is inter-related, and provide a way of laying out information *visually* so that the learner can see how everything fits together. It uses a "relational ontology" to link information together in terms of causes, means, consequences, meaning, implications, shared concepts, and more.

This course invites you the learner to go wherever you like in the maps and explore whichever topics most interest you (while at the same time developing a balanced and well-rounded perspective of the overall material), and it asks you to develop insight into the meaning and implications of those topics. You will find that there is considerably more information (along with a galaxy of multimedia resources) on your topics of interest than you will find in a textbook.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, the successful student should be able to:

- Analyze the history of the United States, particularly from a political and social standpoint.
- Demonstrate a general but clear understanding of our cultural heritage.
- Evaluate our time in light of achieving better solutions to future problems.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- This is a hybrid course in which some of the instruction is done face-to-face, and some of it is self-directed and done on your own with the mind maps.
- The software used to display and run mind maps requires a desktop or laptop computer (or late-model tablet) to display and operate the mind maps. The latest generation of tablets will generally work, but older tablets do not have the necessary speed. Phones are completely inadequate for mind maps.
- Your only course assignments are a) a weekly PowerPoint journal, and b) your review and comments upon at least three of your colleagues' journals.
- You are expected to (carefully) read the Orientation at the end of this syllabus. This explains how mind maps work, how this course will proceed, and how you should do the PowerPoint journals and review of your classmates' journals.

GETTING STARTED:

Click on the link below to go to the login portal for the WisdomMaps set we'll be using for this course:

ctc1302-mindmaps.talentlms.com

When you log in, you'll see "Course Catalog over to the right—click on that to take you to the various map sets that comprise the course. Click on any one of them to open up a list of maps for that particular set.

Follow the Assignment Schedule below for guidance on which maps to review for each particular week. The map sets and their maps are listed in the order in which they should be reviewed.

Any questions, concerns, or complications, you know who to ask. That said, welcome to the future of learning!

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

Journal 1 due Wednesday, Oct. 10; choose topics from the following map set for this assignment:

1877 – 1900 (Society and Culture)

Review at least three of your classmates' journals and submit your commentaries by Sunday, Oct. 14.

Journal 2 due Wednesday, Oct. 17; choose topics from the following map set for this assignment:

1877 – 1900 (Power and Economy)

Review at least three of your classmates' journals and send me your commentaries by Sunday, Oct. 21.

Journal 3 due Wednesday, Oct. 24; choose topics from the following map set for this assignment:

1900 - 1920

Review at least three of your classmates' journals and send me your commentaries by Sunday, Oct. 28.

Journal 4 due Wednesday, Oct. 31; choose topics from the following map set for this assignment:

1920 - 1932

Review at least three of your classmates' journals and send me your commentaries by Sunday, Nov. 4.

Journal 5 due Wednesday, Nov. 7; choose topics from the following map set for this assignment:

1932 - 1945

Review at least three of your classmates' journals and send me your commentaries by Sunday, Nov. 11.

Journal 6 due Wednesday, Nov. 14; choose topics from the following map set for this assignment:

1945 - 1960

Review at least three of your classmates' journals and send me your commentaries by Sunday, Nov. 18.

Journal 7 due Wednesday, Nov. 21; choose topics from the following map sets for this assignment:

1960 - 1973; Cold War

Review at least three of your classmates' journals and send me your commentaries by Sunday, Nov. 25.

Journal 8 due Wednesday, Nov. 28; choose topics from the following map set for this assignment:

1973 - 2000

Review at least three of your classmates' journals and send me your commentaries by Sunday, Dec. 2.

Journal 9 due Wednesday, Dec. 5; choose topics from the following map set for this assignment:

2000 - Present
Civil Rights Movement

Review at least three of your classmates' journals and send me your commentaries by Sunday, Dec. 9.

ORIENTATION

Welcome to WisdomMaps!

Mind maps are a way of laying out information visually, so that the user can see how everything fits together. Mind maps were actually pioneered by Leonardo da Vinci some 500 years ago, so I'm in the process of updating Leonardo's brain-child for the 21st century.

A word about why I teach the way I do. I believe that if you enjoy, you engage, and when you engage, you learn, and you learn best what you enjoy the most. I want you to enjoy your adventure in mind maps, which are designed to let you go wherever your curiosity takes you. You'll be surprised and delighted at the stuff you'll bump into as you get into the habit of wandering and wondering.

This is not the usual sort of directed-study course where I tell you what you must learn and what you'll be examined on. I provide the mind maps for each week, and you focus on what you like within those maps. I want you to wander and wonder and learn as much as you like. Then, I want you to share what you've learned with the rest of us. We'll all compare notes as we go along (I will always be available to comment and consult), and you'll learn by teaching each other (which is the best way to learn).

In the course of a college education, students will learn at least as much from each other as they will from any other source (including the teacher). That's especially true in today's social media-driven environment. My role as mentor is to guide the development of your journals and your discourse with each other.

Now, as for the maps themselves. The information in a mind map is presented in bite-sized "text-bites." This is because reading long passages of text no longer works very well for the present generation of learners, who more than ever are *visual* learners given to tripping the light fantastic on the Internet and extracting the nectar of whichever multimedia resources capture their attention along the way. People today are wired to take in information differently, and mind maps are designed to engage the learner's interest in ways that work best for them.

Mind maps are easy. Just click on the plus-sign next to the "aspect" node up at the top of the map axis—this will cause the content of the map to display. Remember that the topics in a map are organized from top to bottom (much of it chronologically), and from left to right (from more general to more specific). Some of the maps are tiny, but some are pretty big. It may look overwhelming at first, but think of it as going for a swim at the beach: the ocean is endless, but you're just there to splash around in the shore-break—there's no need to wander off into deep water (unless that's what you want to do).

You'll see that the maps are filled with topics (colored in blue), and that each topic has a set of links to multimedia resources, via different search engines, depending on they're best at doing (click on "why use different search engines" for an explanation). Click on the right-pointing arrow to open up those resources. The point of all this multimedia is to cause you to engage and have fun with the subject; once this starts to happen, your curiosity will take you as far as you want to go (and with mind maps, there are truly no limits).

These links are where you're going to see 95% of the action, so to speak. But as much fun as they are, they're really just the trimming on the tree: the ornaments, the tinsel, the bling. It's the tree itself, the structure of the mind map, that contains the true meaning of a mind map: it's how we tie information together that matters, because information acquires meaning only when it is considered in relation to other information. To that end, I've developed a "relational schema" of link-words (in bold blue font) that tie information together in terms of...

why: the reasons for something;

how: the means by which it happened;

so: the results, effects, or consequences;

In addition, we have *thinking points* (in bold magenta font), which are meant to get you to think and to wonder. These are:

meaning: the significance of something (not its definition);

implications: a topic's roots--where it comes from, and where it may lead;

analogy: a comparable event or situation, found elsewhere in another map on another subject (history repeats itself... in countless ways);

concept: a concept that "governs," describes, sheds light, or characterizes a topic, and which characterizes other topics elsewhere.

Main thing: the right-pointing arrow that you see in many of the map nodes is a link, either to another map or to a topic somewhere within another map, or in that map itself. Click on it and it will take you there. You can return to the map you were in by simply closing the map you are now linked to (do not use the back arrow).

As for the color scheme of the map node, click on "color coding" in the map.

Eventually (the maps will always a work in progress), all of these map links and topic links will create a cat's-cradle of interconnectivity and "unity of knowledge" that we're trying to achieve with mind maps... and unity of knowledge is ultimately what this is all about.

That said, I'd like to discuss course requirements. There is only one assignment (but it's in two parts):

The assignment is for you to develop and present a weekly PowerPoint journal as a log of your intellectual adventure for that week. I want you to tell us, in your own words, what topics you bumped into that you really liked and why you think they matter. Here's how I want you to do the journal:

- 1) Start by quickly reviewing the maps assigned for the week, and identify the topics to address in your journal (you decide which ones, but there needs to be at least several).
- 2) The information for those topics should be formatted into one paragraph for each topic. This paragraph should begin with a few sentences to introduce the topic, and then give us a couple sentences to tell us why it's important and what it means for history.
- 3) Post some graphics near your topic paragraphs, choosing images that relate to and support those topics. In addition, choose at least three images (on any of the topics in the week's maps) that you find especially thought-provoking, and reflect on each of those images with a "stream of consciousness" paragraph that describes all that it brings to mind and what it means.
- 4) Watch lots of videos. Give us the link of one such video that you really liked, and tell us in a few sentences why you liked it. Be sure to give us just the text for the link so that we can just copy and paste it into our browser. Do not embed video or other links in your journal: it really slows down upload time, and they generally won't work for viewers.
- 5) Build three image reflections into your journal. For this, you'll need to select three images from any of the maps assigned for the week and give us (for each) a paragraph of stream of consciousness as to what the image evokes and what it means. Go as far out on the limb as you like (we can always call the fire department) in drawing your conclusions and associations. You may want to augment your insight with supporting information on the image topic from some of the websites or other multimedia for that topic. As an example: "I selected this image of human sacrifice among the Aztec, who sacrificed a victim to the sun god every day to ensure that the sun would rise the next morning. The sun god was the lynchpin of Aztec civilization, in the same way that the pharaoh was for ancient Egyptian civilization."

Each week's journal should be on the order of 10 - 15 slides.

You are encouraged to use your own words, however humble, since you are talking to your classmates, and I want you to communicate in whatever way you're most comfortable with (minus the profanity). Keep in mind that your classmates are not going to like it if they see writing that doesn't quite seem spontaneous and natural (neither will I, for that matter).

You do not need to cite sources of any kind or worry about academic formatting, although I would appreciate it if you would at least spell-check your work, since spelling and grammatical errors really detract from the quality of your work. Do not recite or quote long passages of anything.

For those of you who do not have PowerPoint, there is a free "PowerPointLite" version available for download from Microsoft and other sources online (just Google "free powerpoint"). PowerPoint is easy to learn, and there are numerous training videos available on YouTube. PowerPoint enables you to include pictures and video in your journals, which are a hugely important part of the journal assignment.

Once you finish your PowerPoint journal for the week, I want you to post it (as an attachment to a discussion thread) in the journal forum for that week in Dropbox. Each week's journal must be posted by Wednesday of that week, as specified in the Assignment Schedule.

The second part of your weekly assignment is to review three (or more) of your classmates' presentations (you decide which ones) and to develop commentaries on those journals. You will send me your commentaries by the Sunday that ends each journal assignment. Your postings must have academic substance, so that you are responding to an academic point raised in the journal you're reviewing.

You should review as many of your classmates' journals as possible (this is a big part of how you learn). Try to review a certain number each day, rather than all at once. Do things in measured doses so that you don't get worn out—you're supposed to enjoy this.

As for submitting your journals and commentaries, we'll be using Dropbox for that. Each week, I'll send you links for the Dropbox folder to post your work to, and another link that will enable you to view all the work posted by your classmates.

To summarize:

- One weekly journal assignment per week. Each week's journal should be on the order of 10-15 slides, blending topic information with images, video, and other multimedia. The images should tell a story about the topic you're discussing—they're especially important, since interesting images help to get the viewer into the habit of *wondering*.
- Review as many of your classmates' journals as you can, and comment on at least three of those journals in the commentaries that you'll post to Dropbox.

Again, I want you to have fun doing this, since the object of this course is to whet your appetite for the subject. If we succeed in doing that much, you'll take it from there, on your own time, and perhaps parlay it into a lifelong interest in the subject (then you'll *really* learn).

Hopefully, you'll be revisiting the maps from time to time as your interest grows (a subscription to the complete Global History and Cultures portfolio—several thousands of maps altogether) costs \$7.50/month or \$59/year. If you're planning to take more history courses, or just have a casual interest, this could be indispensable to you.

I need for us to be very clear on this: a) your journals must be submitted on time, Wednesday 11:59 PM of each week. Being late with these will incur a 10-point/day penalty, since it deprives your classmates of the opportunity to review and comment upon your work. b) no incompletes.

As for your assignment grades, each week (for the first couple weeks) I'll give you a brief and concise response that will include your grade for the assignment (70 points for the journal + 30 points for the discussion = 100 points total) and brief mention of the things that need to do better. If you take that guidance you will do just fine in this course. Your grade in this course will depend in large measure upon how well you *improve*. However, a good faith effort on your part will suffice to keep you out of trouble, and I will always work with you.

One more thing before you go: please understand that you are not expected to absorb and scrutinize *all* the maps that are assigned for the week—most weeks, there's far too many maps and far too much material. All I expect you to do is to lightly review the content of the week's maps so that you can decide which maps and which topics you'd like to focus on (again, you decide), and then hone in on those (several per week at the minimum). Mind maps are meant to give you as much material as to need to completely satisfy your curiosity about the stuff that interests you, but don't let yourself be overwhelmed by trying to cover too much ground overall. Just go with what interests you, and by the time you've reviewed your classmates' journals, you'll have acquired a fairly comprehensive picture of the subject of that week's maps. And remember, the best way to learn something is to teach it, however badly at first. That's how it works.

Let's get started, shall we? The syllabus tells you which maps you should be perusing in each week. Go ahead and open the maps up, and go wherever your curiosity takes you. Keep us informed in your journals of the progress of your adventure. Mind maps are for the curious, and the more curiosity you indulge, the better you'll do in this course. Wander and wonder!