

# Course Syllabus

Course: U.S. History I, 3 credits

Days and Times: Online, Distance Learning

Semester: Fall 2017

Department: Social Science

Instructor: Dr. Victor A. Triay

On-campus Office: Snow Hall, 508

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## WELCOME

I would like to welcome all of you to HIS 201. My name is Dr. Victor A. Triay, and it is my pleasure to be your professor for this course.

As I have always done in my courses, I will begin by giving you a brief glimpse into my background and experience. As some of you may know, I was born and raised in Miami, Florida. I graduated from Christopher Columbus High School in 1984, and subsequently attended Miami-Dade Community College. From there, I went on to the University of Florida, where I received my B.A. in History in 1988. During my undergraduate years I also spent a good amount of time abroad, studying in Italy and Spain, and backpacking across Europe on different occasions. Upon receiving my bachelor's degree I taught high school history with the Dade County Public Schools for one year. I then began working on my graduate degrees at Florida State University in Tallahassee, from where I eventually received both my M.A. (1991) and Ph.D. (1995) in History. During my time in Tallahassee, I also taught (History and Spanish) and coached football at a local private academy.

I joined the faculty at MxCC in 1992, a few years before completing my Ph.D. Even though I was far from home, receiving a job at Middlesex was "a dream come true" for me at the time, since it was my ambition to become a community college professor ever since I was a student at Miami-Dade. After completing my Ph.D. in 1995, in addition to teaching at Middlesex and starting a family, I devoted a great deal of time to research and writing. As a result, I have published six books and a handful of essays, all dealing with Cuban and Cuban exile history.

After twenty-five years at Middlesex, I am as happy and enthusiastic as I was on my first day. Every year, every semester, and every class is a new and rewarding experience for me. Therefore, I look forward to working with each and every one of you during the present semester. I know this is going to be a fantastic course.

I sincerely hope you come away from this course a better informed and more enlightened student. Whether you are a recent high school graduate or a returning student, I applaud your decision to enroll in college since the monumental shift we are experiencing in our economy has made a sound educational base an indispensable asset.

But in addition to the practical reasons for receiving an education, there are others. Allowing ourselves to become educated is one of the most exciting opportunities available, for it opens our minds and allows us to experience and enjoy so much of the world that would otherwise be closed to us. At one time, the chance to become educated was limited to very few people. Our society, however, has created mechanisms such as the community college system so that every person could have such an opportunity. So, now that you have the chance, use it to the fullest.

## COURSE STRUCTURE

As in all courses, it is imperative that the professor and the students are clear on the requirements and expectations. Please read the following carefully.

1) Weekly readings

On the schedule, you will see the readings you are expected to complete on a week-by-week basis. You are expected to read the assigned chapters thoroughly and to understand them fully.

2) Weekly discussion questions

a. Every Sunday at 11:59 PM, you will be given discussion questions. You will have until 11:59 PM the following Sunday--exactly one week--to complete and post it.

b. It is expected that you will provide answers that are complete and thoughtful. If you include any outside information, make sure it is clearly cited.

- c. The discussion questions will be graded on scale of 0 (the lowest) to 10 (the highest).
- d. If a response is late, the final score will be penalized one point per day. After three days (Wednesday at 11:59 PM), you will receive a zero. Please notify me immediately if you have technological or other issues that prevent you from completing the assignment on time. These situations, which should be very rare (given that you have an entire week to complete the assignment), will be handled on a case-by-case basis. **(See late policy below)**
- e. And, please, use proper English spelling and grammar in your responses, not codes, abbreviations, or language used in instant messaging!

3) Tests

- a. The tests will be posted on the dates indicated on the schedule.
- b. You may sign on to take the test anytime during the week it is posted, but once you open the test, you will have FIVE HOURS to complete it. When the time is up, or after you have submitted the test, you will not be able to go back to it.
- c. The tests will be made up of multiple choice questions.
- d. You may use class materials on the test, but you are strongly advised to study, read, and outline the chapters during the weeks assigned to ensure success, for the test questions are not easy despite the format. You will also notice the chapters are quite intricate and require careful reading.
- d. Tests must be completed individually, i.e., no collaboration.
- e. If a test is late, the final grade will be penalized ten points each day it is late. You must contact me right away, since I must go in and reopen the test for you. After three days, the test will not be accepted and you will receive a zero. Please notify me immediately if you have technological or other issues that prevent you from completing the test on time. These situations, which should be rare (given that you have a full week) will be handled on a case-by-case basis. **(See late policy below)**
- f. Please try to make arrangements to have a back-up computer in case you experience problems. Late test submissions are a great burden on me and the staff at the Distance Learning office. Although computer and internet problems happen, you can avoid causing the staff a great deal of extra work by having a back-up and by submitting ALL WORK ON TIME!
  
- f. You are required to save each answer as you take the test, as well as keep a written record of your answers. Doing so prevents the problems presented by “losing” answers either because of errors at submission of Blackboard failures.

5) Final evaluation

The tests will count as 80 percent of your grade; the average of your discussions will account for the remaining 20 percent.

Final Averages/Letter Grades:

A: 90-100  
B+: 88-89  
B: 80-87  
C+: 78-79  
C: 70-77  
D+: 68-69  
D: 60-67  
F: 0-59

6) Setting the boundaries/Professor availability

Because this is an online course, it is important to establish boundaries and parameters with reference to when I will answer your emails and communications. As you may know, I also teach on-

ground courses, usually with a large number of students in each section. Therefore, it will be impossible for me always to respond to your emails instantly.

I check my email frequently during the work week (but not normally on weekends), and I will commit to responding to your emails by Tuesday and/or Thursday afternoons at 5pm. So, any email sent after Thursday afternoon, I will respond to by the following Tuesday at 5pm. Any email sent after Tuesday afternoon, I will respond to by Thursday at 5pm. This arrangement has been useful in the past, since these days fall during the middle of the week, at around the time you should be in the heart of working on your tests and/or discussion questions.

The above should also serve as a reminder to manage your time wisely and not to leave the completion of tests and discussion questions for the last minute. You should at least review the questions and the material before Thursday afternoon so that you may contact me for any clarifications you may need before the Sunday deadlines.

Of course, if you have a personal or pressing matter, you may telephone me directly at my on-campus office. You are also more than welcome to make an appointment to come see me personally during my on-campus office hours.

### **LATE POLICY (EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!!!)**

In recent semesters, I have had more than a few problems with late and missing work from students. Please be aware of the course's late policy outlined below. **READ IT CAREFULLY.**

#### Discussion Questions:

1. As stated above, discussion questions are released on Sunday nights at 11:59 PM and due by the following Sunday at 11:59 PM. If the answer is one day late, you will be penalized one point; if it is two days late, two points; three days late, three points—**NO MATTER THE REASON**. After three days, it will become a ZERO.
2. If you cannot turn your answer in within the three day late window (Wednesday at 11:59 PM) because of circumstances you cannot control (illness, illness of a family member, computer problems, etc.), **you must nevertheless contact me *within* the three-day window—that is, by the Wednesday after the due date—if you wish to seek an extension. In order for me to grant an extension you must have an excusable reason (illness, etc.) and DOCUMENTATION to back it up.**

You may message me through Blackboard requesting an extension. **If you are unable to do any of the above because you are incapacitated, you may do so through a third party (spouse, family member, friend).** If I hear nothing from you or a third party within the three days, the assignment will be averaged as a ZERO.

#### Checking Your Post:

It is your responsibility to make sure your answer posted correctly. I have had cases in which students were convinced they posted their answers, yet there was no answer there. The rule is: no answer, no grade (that is, a zero).

#### Tests:

1. Like the discussion questions, tests are posted at 11:59 PM on Sundays and due by the following Sunday at 11:59 PM. **UNLIKE** the discussions, the **TESTS CLOSE** and you cannot access them yourself after the due date. **You must contact me within three days to reopen the test for you.** If you complete it within one day, there will be a ten point penalty; two days, a twenty point penalty; three days, a thirty point penalty—**NO MATTER THE REASON**.

2. **If you cannot complete a test within the three day late window because of circumstances you cannot control (illness, illness of a family member, hospitalization, etc.), you must nevertheless contact me *within* the three day late window—THAT IS, BY THE WEDNESDAY AFTER THE DUE DATE—if you wish to seek an extension. In order for me to grant an extension, you must have an excusable reason (illness, etc.) and DOCUMENTATION to back it up.**

You may message me through Blackboard to request and extension. If you are unable to do any of the above within the three-day window because you are incapacitated, **you may do so through a third party (spouse, family member, friend)**. If I hear nothing from you or a third party within the three day window, the test will be averaged as a ZERO.

#### Checking Your Grade:

At the end of several semesters, I have had students contact me wondering why there were no grades for one or more of their tests. They claim to have taken the tests, but there are no grades for the tests or any record of them ever having accessed them. Clearly, many of them simply forgot to take the test or did not notice it on the coverage schedule. If you forget to take a test, it will be averaged as a ZERO if it is not completed within the three-day late window or if you did not contact me within the three-day late window. In order to avoid confusion over whether or not you forgot to take a test or if for some reason you took it and it did not post, **you are responsible for checking that your test grade posted upon submission**. Test grades are immediately available upon submission; therefore, unlike the discussion answers (which I need to grade one-by-one) you can check right away if the grade posted. **Keep in mind that the Distance Learning office can run a search to determine whether or not the test was ever accessed.**

**If you take a test and see that the grade did not post right away, you must contact me within 24 hours.**

**ALSO: Make sure to submit your tests correctly.** I have had students who completed their tests but forgot to hit the “submit” button.

#### Final Thoughts on Late Tests and Assignments:

I think it is safe to say that the issue of late/missing tests and assignments is, by far, what has had the greatest negative impact on student grades in my distance learning courses. All of the above can be avoided simply by following the coverage schedule, logging in to Blackboard every week to access your assignments/tests, and completing them before the following Sunday night. It is best to do so early in the week. YES, IT IS THAT EASY. You should also log-in to Blackboard daily in order to check for new announcements and emails.

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will study the development of British North America from the establishment of the first colonies to the founding of the United States with an emphasis on the nature of immigration, slavery, and overall themes of

colonialism. Likewise, students will explore United States development from the early days of the republic through the Civil War with a focus on regional development and Western migration.

#### COURSE RATIONALE-WHY WE TAKE THIS COURSE

In general, we study history for many reasons. Most importantly, studying history satisfies our natural human desire to establish a link with our past. On a more pragmatic level, a sound understanding of how our institutions, beliefs, and society originated and grew gives us an accurate perspective on the present and helps our decision making for the future. Although history does not literally "repeat itself," there are certain patterns in every human society that, with our knowledge of them, makes the present more comprehensible.

#### COURSE GOALS

You shall be expected to demonstrate a working knowledge of the patterns, trends, individuals, and various facts concerning United States History to 1865.

#### REQUIRED TEXT

Brinkley, Alan, The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People, Seventh Edition, volume 1.

#### DIVERSITY COMPONENT

Students will study the development of British North America from the establishment of the first colonies to the founding of the United States with an emphasis on the nature of immigration, slavery, and overall themes of colonialism. Likewise, students will explore United States development from the early days of the republic through the Civil War with a focus on regional development and Westward migration.

ADA Accommodations Statement: Students with physical or learning disabilities who may require accommodations are encouraged to contact the Counseling Office. After disclosing the nature of the disability, students are urged to discuss their needs with individual instructors. This should be done at the beginning of each semester. Instructors, in conjunction with appropriate college officials, will provide assistance and/or accommodations only to those students who have completed this process.

Academic Ethics and Classroom Behavior: At Middlesex Community College we expect the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in accordance with the Board of Trustees' Proscribed Conduct Policy in Section 5.2.1 of the Board's policy manual. This policy prohibits cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, unauthorized access to examinations or course materials, plagiarism, and other proscribed activities. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another's idea(s) or phrase(s) and representing that/those idea(s) as your own, either intentionally or unintentionally. (Board of Trustees' Policy 5.2.1)