

HI 990 Constitutional History Since 1877



Worcester State University, Spring 2012

Course website: <http://wsu.tonahangen.com/conhist2>

Mondays 6-9pm

Room location: Sullivan 102

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Course Description:

This graduate-level seminar on American constitutional history engages with major concepts, issues, events, historical interpretations and ongoing conflicts related to the U.S. Constitution since the end of Reconstruction (1877-present). Course participants will deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Constitution and its history through focused seminar discussion, independent research into constitutional history topics, and by designing ways to apply constitutional history to their own educational settings. This course is taught under the auspices of “Securing the Blessings of Liberty,” a Teaching American History (TAH) grant jointly administered by the American Antiquarian Society and the Worcester Public Schools. Satisfactory completion of the course earns its participants graduate credit through Worcester State University’s Division of Graduate and Continuing Education.

Required Books:

You will be provided the following texts as readings for the course and to keep as professional resources for your own collection. We will not use all of them in their entirety since our course only emphasizes the period since 1877, but hopefully they will also prove valuable to you beyond our coursework this semester.

Akhil Reed Amar, *America’s Constitution: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2005). ISBN 978-0812972726

Kermit L. Hall and Timothy S. Heubner, eds., *Major Problems in American Constitutional History*, 2nd ed (Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2010). ISBN 978-0618543335

Brook Thomas, ed., *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford St. Martins, 1997). ISBN 978-03120137434

Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford St. Martins, 1998). ISBN 978-0312111526

Course Schedule:

#	Date	Topic	Reading	What's Due	Discussion Leaders
1	1/23	Course Intro	The Constitution		n/a
Unit 1: From Reconstruction to <i>Plessy</i> : Race, Gender, Contract, and Liberty in late c-19 America					
2	1/30	Reconstruction	MP 7 + Amar Ch 10		
3	2/6	The Plessy Case	Plessy book		
4	2/13	Liberty of Contract	MP 8	Doc Analysis	
	2/20	<i>No class – President's Day</i>			
Unit 2: Suffrage, Progressivism, and the Constitution, 1890-1940					
5	2/27	Civil Liberties/War	MP 9 + Amar 405-19		
6	3/5	Suffrage	TBA + Amar 419-28		
7	3/12	New Deal	MP 10 + Amar 428-38	Prospectus	
	3/19	<i>No class – WSU Spring Break</i>			
Unit 3: Eyes on the Prize: Civil Rights, Civil Liberties and the American Social Contract					
8	3/26	Japanese Internmt	Urofsky 811-823 + JARDA + Drama Delta	Bibliography	
9	4/2	CRM/ Brown	Brown book	Review	
10	4/9	CRM Beyond Brn, Warren Court	MP 11 + Amar 440-57		
	4/16	<i>No class – Patriot's Day</i>			
Unit 4: The Constitution in 21 st Century America					
11	4/23	Presidents on Trial	Watergate + Clinton + Bush MP 15 531- 536	Final Paper	
12	4/30	War on Terror	MP 15 536-554 Urofsky 1111-35 Amar 458-463	Abstract	

Snow Days and Other Schedule Modifications:

This schedule may be subject to change, weather permitting. If we have to miss a Monday class due to an official University closure or other unforeseeable event, we may need to adjust or renegotiate deadlines and/or syllabus expectations. Stay tuned to the course website and our text communication service for updates, cancellations, or tweaks. Instructions for signing up to the free cell phone text notification service are attached to this syllabus.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Attendance and engaged participation is a very important part of this course, since we meet only once a week. Because we are a relatively small group, each person's enthusiasm and effort contributes greatly to a positive learning environment for the entire group.	30%
Each class member will have 2 opportunities to lead discussion, demo a teaching point, profile a resource, or share an insight on the course readings. We'll map out a schedule so everyone has a couple of turns at bat.	15%

<p>Research Project – You will select and explore a course-related topic over the course of the semester. Your project will have three separately-assessed parts, for a total of 35%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research prospectus and annotated bibliography (15%) • Final paper (15%) • 150-word abstract, to be published on the course website (5%) 	35%
<p>Writing Assignments: will be chosen from the list below or similar assignments to these – you’ll do at least 2 of these.</p>	20%

Possible Writing Assignments

Document Analysis. In this assignment you’ll take a single primary source and give it a close reading. Your analysis could consider content, form, context, structure, language, meaning, aesthetics, or other relevant aspects. 3-5 pages.

Monograph/ Book Review. You will select and read one scholarly monograph on a course-related topic, and write a 750-word book review of the work, addressing its contribution to the field of US Constitutional history. 3-5 pages

Film Review. You will select and analyze one film or documentary on a course-related topic, and write a 750-word book review of the work, addressing its utility in teaching secondary students about US Constitutional history. 3-5 pages

Archive Partner Review. Locate, investigate, and assess the quality of an archival partner (whether local, brick-and-mortar or digital) for 20th century Constitutional history. 3-5 pages

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Devise a personalized plan to engage the history and core concepts of the US Constitution both as a learner and as an educator.
- Categorize and explain the history of the Amendments to the US Constitution since the Civil War.
- Analyze changing interpretations of the Constitution using appropriate resources, historical context, and pedagogical tools.
- Investigate a Constitutional history topic by framing a substantive research question, engaging in graduate-level scholarly research, contributing to new historical knowledge and thoughtfully presenting your findings to peers, your students, and/or public audiences.

WPS - TAH Professional Development Workshop Topics (Proposed) Mapped w/ MA Curriculum Frameworks

Civil Rights, 1954-1964	High School – US History II, USII.25-26
Women’s Rights, 1950-1973	High School – US History II, USII.22 and 27
Exportation of the Constitution, comparing postWW2 with 2003-2006	High School – US History II, USII.18-19
The Imperial Presidency in the 20 th century	High School – US History II, USII.6-7, 14, 18-21, 28-29, 33
A Nation of Immigrants (emphasis on 20 th century)	High School – US History II, USII.3, 10, 17, and 30
Science, Technology and the Constitution: Innovation and Challenges to Liberty	High School – US History II, USII.30
“Us v. Them”: The War on Terror in Historical Context	High School – US History II, USII.18 and 33

Some Fine Print:

While course information is provided in the Blackboard shell, you’ll notice that it is somewhat pared down – we don’t need many of its features, so I have only kept the essentials: course roster & email capability, Digital Dropbox, and a few others. Blackboard links out to a public website for the course, <http://wsu.tonahangen.com/conhist2>. Please bookmark this site and/or subscribe to its RSS feed (we will talk about how to do that in class). I use a public website because it’s accessible from any computer, so if Blackboard or the campus computer system is down, our work goes on.

You will get one copy of this printed syllabus, but it is subject to change (like the US Constitution, it’s something of a “living document”). The course website will always be the most accurate source of current information, so subscribe via RSS and/or check prior to each class for readings, discussion questions, and any changes to the syllabus. I will also keep the electronic PDF version of the syllabus updated online.

Communication: This term I’m trying out a cell phone text notification system for emergencies or last-minute information (I’m using Remind101). Sign up at the beginning of the term so I can send notices to the entire class. Unfortunately it doesn’t allow for 2-way communication, so if you need to reach me, email is the best way, at [thangen @ worchester.edu](mailto:thangen@worchester.edu). I have two offices on campus and you can often catch me at either one or leave a voicemail for me.

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