

**Class Meeting Times:**

Section Three: MWF Noon-1pm (213 CCC)

Section Four MWF 1pm-2pm (213 CCC)

Dr. Neil Prendergast

[nprender@uwsp.edu](mailto:nprender@uwsp.edu)

473 Collins Classroom Center

**Office Hours:**

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 2-3pm, Library 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

*(Look for me at one of the open study tables.)*

Freedom is the most contested idea in American history. Its widespread use in today’s political culture derives from a long past in which Americans—of all types—turned to the word as a symbol for their many hopes and dreams. In this course, we will ask a seemingly simple question: **What does freedom actually mean?**

As we will see, Americans have defined the word in several different ways, often depending on their own circumstances. As we investigate the meaning of this uniquely American word, we will tour the nation’s past. On our trip, we will see that not only did Americans in different time periods use “freedom” differently, but Americans in the same time period often fought over the word.

The goal of this tour is to leave us with an understanding that the vocabulary of our public culture is the result of not only our hopes and dreams, but also long-lasting battles over the meaning of America.

**Enduring Understandings**

- Americans have long fought over the *meaning* of freedom.
- Understanding *why* Americans fight about the meaning of freedom widens our perspective of diverse American experiences.

**Learning Outcomes** After taking this course, students will be able to:

- understand how ‘freedom’ became a central idea in modern American culture
- describe changes to American government, culture, and society
- synthesize information to understand social context



*Although we think of the 1950s and early 1960s as a time of peace and prosperity, Americans were then passionately engaged in debating the meaning of freedom.*

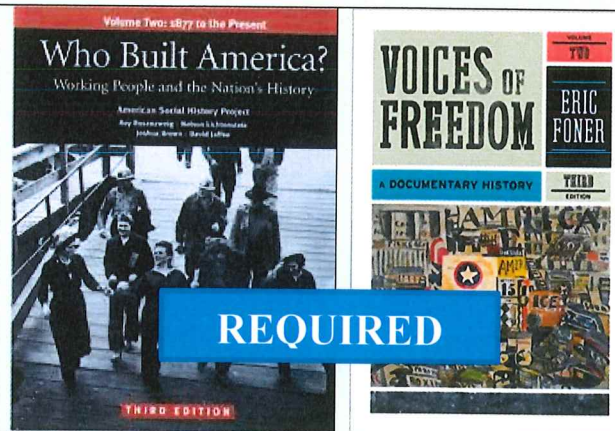


**Required Materials:** For this course, you need the two books listed below as required. In addition, there will be PDF's posted on D2L that will also be required reading.

**From Text Rental at the University Bookstore**

*Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's History*, Third Edition, Volume 2 (Boston and New York: Bedford St. Martin's Press, 2008). This is our textbook for the semester.

Eric Foner, *Voices of Freedom, Volume 2, Third Edition*.



THE  
UNWINDING  
AN INNER HISTORY  
OF THE NEW AMERICA  
GEORGE PACKER  
A GUIDE TO THE SEVENTIES CASE



RECOMMENDED

**Recommended Book** Each semester I receive great questions about how the past is connected to the present. As a response, I have gradually shifted my teaching so that it explores new themes and investigates more recent history. Still, there is always more to learn. For those students wanting an expansive view of the last thirty years, I highly recommend George Packer's *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America*. The book is less about specific political events and more about the mood and changing beliefs of the nation. At the end of the semester, an optional extra credit assignment is available for those who read this book.

**Reading in a College History Course:** In this course, 40-50 pages of reading a week is common. For many people, that amount will be a lot. So, how do you as a student deal with that?

First, there are some basic reading tips that will help: 1) read in a distraction-free environment, especially one without a smartphone nearby; 2) as you read, take notes or make notations on the page to engage better with the reading; 3) read at a time of day when your brain wants to read.

Second, you may need to fine tune your goals for reading history. The *Voices of Freedom* book requires a *close read* where you think carefully about the author's choice of words. These readings are, fortunately, short. *The Who Built America?* textbook readings are longer but do not require the same, time-consuming close read. Pay close attention to passages containing key words from my study guide or that fill in a gap in your own understanding. Read the rest of the assigned pages but not with the expectation that you will have to repeat every detail back on an exam.

Finally, budget your time. Schedule four or five hours a week to read for this course. University guidelines say two hours outside class should be spent preparing for one hour in class. Actually schedule those hours into your week.

**Course Structure:** In brief, here's the layout of the course (further details are throughout this syllabus).

**Units:** The course has three units, each ending with an exam. The units are divided into weeks, each of which has one guiding question that we will attempt to answer via the week's lectures, readings, and in-class discussions.

**Guiding Questions:** These questions are listed on the schedule. At the end of each week there will be a short quiz associated with the weekly question. These weekly questions *also* become the basis for the unit exam.

**Quizzes:** Most weeks will end with a quiz that checks our knowledge and understanding of the week's material. Immediately after the quiz, the correct answers will be given and discussed. Quizzes will be handed in and graded for completion.

**Exams:** The three exams comprise the bulk of your semester grade. For the first two, you may correct answers for partial credit.

**Extra Credit:** Five extra credit points are available at the end of the semester for successful completion of a paper regarding George Packer's *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America*.

### Tips from Previous Students in My U.S. History Courses:

"Come to class with an open mind. It's not the same class you took in high school."

"Take your own notes with your own thoughts, so you aren't just copying down the slideshow."

"Show up to class every day because it's really fun and you could learn a lot."

"Keep up on your reading."

"Take notes on the chapter and try to relate each section of the chapter to the question each week."

"Read the chapters ahead of lecture because it makes the lectures more interesting and you will have a better understanding of the material."

"Take the reading seriously."

"Read, Read, Read! But don't try to capture every detail. Look for evidence to help with your argument."

### Grade Formula and Scale:

Unit 1: Building the American Dream Exam (20 points)  
Unit 2: The American Century Exam (30 points)  
Unit 3: Culture War Exam (30 points)  
+ Weekly Question Quiz (2 points x 10 quizzes = 20 points)  
**100 points**

+ 5 possible extra credit points  
**105 possible points**

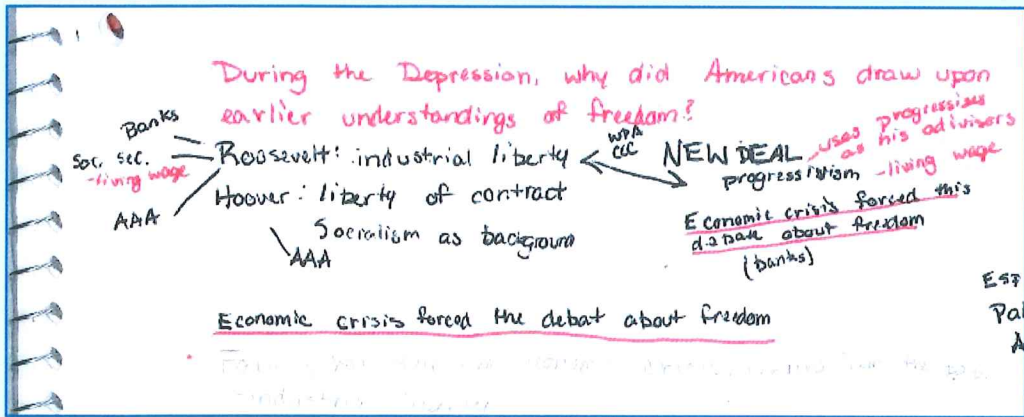
Simply add up your points and then match the score to the letter grade below.

A 93-100	B+ 87-89.99	C+ 77-79.99	D+ 67-69.99	F 59.99 and below
A- 90-92.99	B 83-86.99	C 73-76.99	D 60-66.99	
	B- 80-82.99	C- 70-72.99		



**Notetaking:** Some wonderful tips for exam studying are available at UWSP's Learning and Tutoring Center <http://www.uwsp.edu/tlc/> and online via the University of North Carolina <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/essay-exams.html>

For notetaking, consider using the Cornell Method: <http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html>



Examples of student notes are available on D2L.

**Extra Credit:** For five possible extra credit points, students may read *The Unwinding* and write a paper following the guidelines here.

In 1500-2000 words, answer the following question: How has our country changed in the last thirty years? Papers must be typed in 12 point, Times New Roman font with normal Microsoft Word margins and settings. Papers may be turned in as either .docx or .pdf documents only. When discussing a passage from *The Unwinding* or any other book, a citation must be made (any citation style is fine).

Your response should consider to what degree the following course themes played a role: labor movement, free enterprise, changing gender roles, government regulation, and government as a social safety net. An easy way to outline your essay is to dedicate one paragraph to each of the five themes above, then add another one or two for the introduction and another one or two for a conclusion. To take notes as you read and that will then become useful in writing the paper, consider keeping track of where you see each theme appear in the book. Some will be there much more often than others.

Papers will be assessed according to their persuasiveness, clarity, fairness to the reading, and demonstrated understanding of course themes.

The assignment is especially aimed at students who have worked hard all semester but for one reason or another have not scored as high on the exams as they expected or would have liked. Since the paper requires students to apply what they have learned, the paper is an opportunity to display that knowledge. And because it demands an analytical approach to writing—as opposed to a mere summary of events—the paper forces higher level thinking that warrants a higher semester grade.

Due at the end of our final exam time period.



**Life Happens:** I understand that life might make it difficult to complete some assignments, attend class, or simply to do well. I do my best to be flexible because I know those circumstances are out of your control and my control. I'm on your team. I also know that some real learning has to take place in this class. You will have more opportunity in life if you understand history, read critically, and write well. This class has to be one of your priorities. I do my best to be flexible, but I have to adhere to some standards. If something comes up, let's talk.

**Office Hours:** *You are welcome to visit me during office hours.* I set aside office hours so that I have the chance to talk with students one-on-one. TWR 2-3pm, Library Second Floor

**Course Policies:** During the class, **laptops, cell phones and other electronic devices are prohibited.** If you are a parent or are otherwise obligated to be available to your family via cell phone, then please discuss that situation with me, so I know that you have a good reason for keeping your phone turned on.

The prohibition of electronics also extends to laptop computers (unless approved by the Disability Services Office). While laptops are great aides in studying, the focus in class is on class, not the computer screen. Further, the ability to take notes longhand is actually an important skill to develop, one that will be useful in any career you choose. If you do prefer to have your notes in a computer file, you will find that typing them from your handwritten notes will aid you greatly in digesting the material.

For information on plagiarism, consult <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights>. See Chapter 14, *Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures*, pages 5 -10, for the disciplinary possibilities if you are caught cheating. As an instructor deeply concerned with fairness in the classroom, I pursue each and every case of plagiarism and cheating. Please note that turnitin.com is used for typed assignments.

**Equity of Educational Access:** If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability Services office with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Disability Services Office, 103 Student Services Center, Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>.



*The 1970s saw an economic slump that marked the beginning of the end for many manufacturing businesses. A conservative turn in American politics promised not only "family values," but also a revival of the economy. The arrival of the digital economy aided growth, but failed to create the same living wage jobs for Americans that had made manufacturing so beloved a generation before.*



**Schedule** Readings from *Who Built America?* should be completed by Friday, although sooner is better. Voices of Freedom readings should be completed before class on Wednesday.

**Week 1**

**Introduction**

Sept 5  
Sept 7

- “Introduction to Recent American History,” PDF available on D2L.

**After the abolition of slavery, why did African Americans still have to struggle for freedom?**

**Week 2**

Sept 10 Lecture  
Sept 12 Discuss VF  
Sept 14 Quiz

- “Reconstruction,” PDF available on D2L.
- *Who Built America?*, “Reconstruction,” 4-14.
- *Voices of Freedom (VF)*, “Petition of Committee on Behalf of Freedmen...”

**Why did industrialization lead to new ideas of liberty (and what were they)?**

**Week 3**

Sept 17 Lecture  
Sept 19 Discuss VF  
Sept 21 Quiz

- *Who Built America?*, “The Industrialization of America,” 26-40; “Power and Profit,” 41-48; “The Workingman’s Hour,” 91-105; “Labor Politics and Conflict,” 106-120; “The Populist Moment,” 134-144; “Territorial and Economic Expansion,” 157-170; “Progressivism and Politics,” 255-269.
- VF “Social Darwinism,” “Living Wage,” and “Populist Party Platform”

**During the Depression, how did liberals and conservatives differ in their attempts to bring back prosperity?**

**Week 4**

Sept 24 Lecture  
Sept 26 Discuss VF  
Sept 28 Quiz

- *Who Built America?*, “Hard Times,” 394-403; “President Hoover’s Response to the Crisis,” 404-415; “The Promise of a New Deal,” 416-428; “The Revival of Organized Labor,” 429-434; “The Counteroffensives Against the New Deal,” 435-438; “The Second New Deal,” 445-454; “Backlash Against Labor and the New Deal,” 480-488.
- VF “Franklin Roosevelt” and “Herbert Hoover”

**Why did Americans use “freedom” to explain their reasons for fighting World War II?**

**Week 5**

Oct 1 Lecture  
Oct 3 Discuss VF  
Oct 5 Quiz

- *Who Built America?*, “Origins of the Second World War,” 497-505; “Fighting the War,” 506-516; “Mobilizing the Home Front,” 517-522; “Economic Citizenship for All?” 523-535; “The End of the War,” 536-547.
- VF “WWII and Mexican Americans,” “African Americans and the Four Freedoms,” and “Korematsu v. United States”

**Week 6**

Oct 8 Buffer  
Oct 10 Review  
Oct 12 Exam

**EXAM FRIDAY - OCTOBER 12<sup>TH</sup>**

**During the postwar era, what did liberals view as necessary for freedom to exist?**

**Week 7**

Oct 15 Lecture  
Oct 17 Discuss VF  
Oct 19 Quiz

- “Cold War in Global Context,” 556-567; “Affluent Society and Its Discontents,” 580-605; “The Liberal Hour,” 626-636.
- VF “NSC 68,” “Clark Kerr on Industrialism,” “Lyndon Johnson Commencement Address,” “National Organization for Women,” and “Port Huron Statement”

**How did the civil rights movement define freedom?**

**Week 8**

Oct 22 Lecture  
Oct 24 Discuss VF  
Oct 26 Quiz

- *Who Built America?*, “The Civil Rights Movement,” 616-625
- VF “President’s Commission on Civil Rights,” “MLK and Montgomery Bus Boycott,” “James Baldwin and Student Radicals,” “Chavez’s Letter from Delano”

**In the postwar era, how did conservatives build support for their ideas about freedom?**

**Week 9**

Oct 29 Lecture

- *Who Built America?*, pages 567-580 “The New Deal Under Attack”



Oct 31 Discuss VF Nov 2 Quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VF “Nixon’s What Freedom Means to Us,” “Southern Manifesto,” “Milton Friedman’s Capitalism and Freedom,” and “Sharon Statement”</li> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>
<u>Week 10</u> Nov 5 Buffer Nov 7 Review Nov 9 Exam	<b>EXAM FRIDAY – NOVEMBER 9TH</b>
<b>In the 1970s, how did the conservative message of “free enterprise” gain a stronger following?</b>	
<u>Week 11</u> Nov 12 Lecture Nov 14 Discuss VF Nov 16 Quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Who Built America?</i>, “Shifting World Economy,” 684-694; “Nation Moves to the Right,” 695-699; “Reagan Revolution and Economic Disparity,” 707-717; “Struggling Against the Conservative Tide,” 718-726.</li> <li>• VF “Ronald Reagan Inaugural Address,” and “Bill Clinton’s Speech on Signing NAFTA”</li> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>
<u>Week 12</u> Nov 19 Nov 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>
<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	
<b>In the 1970s and 1980s, what disagreements did Americans have about gender and sexuality?</b>	
<u>Week 13</u> Nov 26 Lecture Nov 28 Discuss VF Nov 30 Quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Who Built America?</i> “Extending and Ending the Long Sixties,” 661-667; “Nation Moves to the Right,” 700-707.</li> <li>• VF “Phyllis Schlafly’s Fraud of Equal Rights”</li> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>
<b>How did evangelical Christianity transform American politics in the 1970s, 1980s, and beyond?</b>	
<u>Week 14</u> Dec 3 Lecture Dec 5 Discuss VF Dec 7 Quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 12, “Go Ye into All the World: God, Family, and Country in the Fourth Great Awakening,” <i>All in the Family</i></li> <li>• VF “Jerry Falwell’s Listen America!”</li> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>
<u>Week 15</u> Dec 10 Buffer Dec 12 Review Dec 14 Exam	<b>EXAM FRIDAY – DECEMBER 14TH</b>
Final Exam Week	<b>Extra credit due at the end of the final exam time.</b>

*Note: The syllabus is a general plan for the course. Deviations announced in class may be necessary.*