

Issues in American Culture and History

GENA2122 | Term 2 (Spring), 2021-2022

Tuesdays 10:30AM - 12:15PM | UCC III (T.C. Cheng Building, United College, 1/F)

Instructors

Ms. Kelly TRAN (she/her/hers)

kellytran@cuhk.edu.hk

Mr. Kento TANAKA (he/him/his)

kentotanaka@cuhk.edu.hk

Office location: Room 314, 3/F, Fung King Hey Building (or Zoom, if necessary)

Office hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course offers a survey of important topics and themes in the history of the United States. In the first four weeks, instructors will guide students through a brisk, chronological overview of the country's development over time. In each of the latter eleven weeks, we will work together to explore a particular theme significant to American history, culture, and society. The course will cover material from all eras of American history (including from before the founding of the United States). Students will leave the course with a fuller understanding of the country's past and present and develop the skills to critically analyze the U.S. and its history from political, economic, social, and cultural perspectives.

Students should note that the scope of this course is ambitious and the length of the term limited. This means that we will move through material quite quickly, with many topics appearing in one lecture and not necessarily reappearing as we advance through the course. Although you will each have the chance to explore a topic of your choice through the final project, we also encourage you to email us at any time if you have any questions about the course or want to learn more about a particular topic.

Course Objectives

- Explore various themes in U.S. history and their intersections.
- Identify historical trends and transitions over time.
- Deconstruct and critique popular historical and cultural narratives.
- Analyze a variety of primary sources, ranging across different media and periods of time.
- Write analytical essays of varying length, constructing historical arguments and using primary sources to support them.
- Participate in open discussions by clearly communicating ideas, actively listening, and critically responding to others.
- Relate the course contents to your everyday lives, developing the skills to analyze your own society with a critical lens.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Instructor(s)	Milestones
1	11 Jan.	Course introduction & Chronology I	Kento & Kelly	

2	18 Jan.	Chronology II	Kelly	Start-of-term survey due Response paragraphs assigned
3	25 Jan.	Chronology III	Kelly	
4	1 Feb.	<i>No class—Happy Lunar New Year!</i>	–	
5	8 Feb.	Chronology IV	Kelly	
6	15 Feb.	Race I	Kento	Response paragraph 1 due
7	22 Feb.	Race II	Kento	
8	1 Mar.	Race III	Kento	
9	8 Mar.	Inequality	Kelly	Response paragraph 2 due Midterm essay assigned
10	15 Mar.	Race and Immigration	Kento	
11	22 Mar.	Indigeneity	Kento	
12	29 Mar.	American Empire and Hawai'i	Kento	Midterm essay due Final project assigned
13	5 Apr.	<i>No class—Reading Week</i>	–	
14	12 Apr.	Gender and Sexuality	Kelly	Final project meetings
15	19 Apr.	Democracy & Course synthesis	Kento & Kelly	Final project meetings (cont.) Final project due early May (TBD)

Class Structure

Each class meeting will generally be structured as follows. Note that this framework is flexible and subject to change depending on the needs of the class. During Weeks 1-5 (Chronology unit), we may place a greater emphasis on lecture rather than discussion/activity, and will adjust class time accordingly.

10:30AM - 11:25AM Interactive lecture on theme of the week
11:25AM - 11:30AM Short break
11:30AM - 12:15PM Discussion and/or activity

Online class contingency plan: If the University deems it necessary that we revert to online learning, class meetings will be conducted over Zoom (<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/94334003184>). More details about the online class structure will be provided if necessary.

Assessment Scheme

Attendance and participation	20%
Two response paragraphs (200-300 words each)	20% (10% each)
Midterm essay (700-900 words)	20%
Final project (1400-1600 words if essay)	40%

Attendance and participation: Students are expected to attend class punctually, complete the assigned readings on time, and participate proactively in class discussions with substantive comments.

Two response paragraphs: Each student will need to submit two brief paragraphs (200-300 words each) responding to the assigned primary sources. These response paragraphs are intended to develop your analytical skills and give you a chance to personally reflect on the sources before we discuss them as a class. In your response paragraphs, you should draw upon details of the primary sources and other relevant historical details to support your interpretations. More details will be provided during Week 3.

The first response paragraph should be submitted during Week 5 (Chronology IV) or Week 6 (Race I) in response to the theme of that week. The second response paragraph should be submitted during Week 7 (Race II), Week 8 (Race III), or Week 9 (Inequality) in response to the theme of that week. Both response paragraphs should be submitted to Blackboard by 10:30AM on Tuesday *before* the start of that week's class. For example, if you choose to write a response paragraph for Week 5 (Chronology IV), you should submit it to Blackboard by 10:30AM on Tuesday, 8 February.

Midterm essay: We will distribute the midterm essay prompts at the end of class on **Tuesday, 8 March**. Students will have until the start of class three weeks later (**Tuesday, 29 March at 10:30AM**) to answer *one* of the three provided essay prompts and submit their completed essay (700-900 words) via Blackboard with a signed and dated VeriGuide statement. The essay is intended to build on the primary source analysis skills developed through the response paragraphs. Additionally, students will be asked to synthesize a newly-provided primary source with prior course content in order to make a historical argument. This assignment is open book; outside research is *not* expected or encouraged. Specific guidelines will be provided when the essay prompts are distributed.

Final project: At the end of the term, each student will be required to submit a final project exploring a topic in American history of their choice. This project can take many forms: a traditional research paper (1400-1600 words); a podcast or video; a primary source collage; an interactive website; a visual or performing arts piece; and so on. Different project forms may have slightly different expectations and requirements, but each student must draw connections between their topic and at least two different themes covered in class, as well as explore intersections between these themes. Students are required to sign up for a mandatory meeting during Weeks 14 or 15 with at least one of the instructors before finalizing their project topic and format. We will distribute further details about the final project after the midterm essay.

Class Policies

Attendance: If you will be absent or late to class with a legitimate excuse (e.g., sickness, family emergency, essential appointment), please email both instructors as soon as possible, ideally at least 24 hours *before* the class you expect to miss. Unexcused absences and tardiness will drag down your attendance and participation grade. If you do miss all or part of a class, you are responsible for the course materials you have missed.

We understand that the COVID-19 pandemic may cause extraordinary difficulties in addition to those listed above. If this is the case, please email both instructors; we will facilitate a discussion to work through these difficulties on a case-by-case basis.

Late submission: Late submission of assignments without an authorized extension will be penalized 5% for each day late. If you require an extension, please email both instructors as soon as possible, ideally at least 24 hours *before* the due date of the assignment. Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Electronics: In order to maintain a classroom environment conducive to student engagement, please refrain from using electronics during class other than to access course materials and take notes.

Accommodations: As instructors, one of our goals is to support students' learning as much as possible. If you need accommodations for any reason (including but not limited to disabilities, mental health, and medical issues), please reach out to us and we will work with you to find a solution.

Academic honesty: The University places very high importance on honesty in academic work and follows a policy of zero tolerance toward academic dishonesty. You may review its policies [here](#). Students will be required to submit midterm essays and final projects* to VeriGuide and include signed and dated VeriGuide statements with their submissions. We will report plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty to the relevant bodies as necessary.

*Those who choose an alternative format for the final project (i.e., not the essay) will still be required to submit the written portion of their final project to VeriGuide.

Respect: Everyone deserves to learn in an environment where they feel safe and respected. We do not tolerate disrespect of any kind in our classroom. Lively conversations and robust disagreements about the course content, however, are warmly encouraged.

Feedback for evaluation: Students will be asked to complete course evaluations for GENA2122 at the end of the term. Comments and suggestions about the course content, teaching methods, and learning tasks are most welcome at any time during the term.

Enrichment Sessions

Over the course of the term, we will organize 3-4 optional enrichment sessions exploring topics not covered during regular class meetings. These sessions will also provide us an opportunity to engage with each other in an informal setting (possibly with food!). Enrichment sessions will

usually involve a short lecture to start things off, but the bulk of the time will be spent informally discussing the topic. The topics, dates, and times of the sessions will be finalized based on student input from the start-of-term survey. Attendance and participation in enrichment sessions will not impact your grade, but we highly encourage you to attend and develop an even richer understanding of American history and culture.