

HIST 2650 - CL History of American Democracy

Fall 2026 Syllabus, Section 07, CRN 43838,

Credit hours: 3

Instructor

Jonathan Lower

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Public Instructor Information

Instructor Title: Dr. Jonathan S. Lower

Instructor Professional Qualifications: PhD History State University of New York at Buffalo

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Course Description

2650. CL History of American Democracy. A one semester survey of the American past focusing on history and civic literacy. The emphasis will be on important developments in American political, economic, and social history; particularly on the emergence and evolution of the concepts of democracy and the American economic system. No prerequisite. Meets state "Civic Literacy" requirements. 3 s.h.

Course Readings

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Required	1. The Declaration of Independence	Thomas Jefferson	
Required	2. The Constitution of the United States	Constitutional Congress	
Required	3. Five of the Federalist Papers (No. 10, 39, 42, 51, 78)	James Madison and Alexander Hamilton	
Required	The Wealth of Nations	Adam Smith	
Required	5. The Emancipation Proclamation	Abraham Lincoln	
Required	6. The Gettysburg Address	Abraham Lincoln	
Required	7. Letter from Birmingham Jail	Martin Luther King Jr.	
Required	US. History	Open Stax	

No required purchases; all materials are open-access.

The course readings are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, research developments, current events, and/or to ensure better learning.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week of	Reading(s)	Proposed Topic	Due/To Prepare for Class
8/24	Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" 1680 Maryland's "Act of Religious Toleration" 1649 from Statues of Virginia 1667	1. Origins of the United States	Quiz - 26 August
8/31	from Haudenosaunee "Great Law of Peace" c. 1750 Declaration of Independence		Comparative Source Assignment - 31 August Primary Source Analysis - 4 September
9/7	Articles of Confederation 1777	2a Founding the Republic	Quiz - 9 September



9/14	Northwest Ordinance 1787 Constitution of the United States		Comparative Source Assignment - 14 September Primary Source Assignment - 18 September
9/21	The Federalist Papers No. 10: faction/ partisanship No. 39 Republicanism No. 42 powers of Congress and State No. 51 Federalism No. 78 Independent Judiciary	2b. Founding the Republic	Quiz - 21 September Comparative Source - 23 September Primary Source - 25 September
9/28	Smith, The Wealth of Nations 1776 Owen, "Discourses" 1825 from De Tocqueville, Democracy in America 1835	3: American Capital	Quiz - 30 September
10/5	"Declaration of Rights and Sentiments 1848 Dred Scott v. Sandford 1857		Comparative Source - 5 October Primary Source - 9 October
10/12	Stephens "Cornerstone Speech" 1861 Lincoln, The Emancipation Proclamation 1863 Lincoln, The Gettysburg Address 1863	4: Union and Liberty in Crisis	Quiz - 14 October
10/19	The Reconstruction Amendments 1870 Chief Joseph, "An Indian's view on Indian Affairs" 1879		Comparative Source - 19 October Primary Source - 22 October Primary Source - 23 October
10/26	from Riis "How the Other Half Lives" 1890 from Turner "The Sig. of the Frontier" 1893 DuBois "Returning Soldiers" 1919	5: Democracy at Home and Abroad	Quiz - 28 October
11/2	Roosevelt "The Four Freedoms" 1941 Nixon "The Kitchen Debate" 1959		Comparative Source - 4 November Primary Source - 6 November
11/9	Hernandez v. Texas 1954 The Port Huron Statement 1962 King "Letter from Birmingham Jail" 1963	6: Pursuit of the American Promise	Quiz - 10 November
11/16	from Friedan "The Feminine Mystique" 1963 selections of protest music (audio)		Comparative Source - 18 November Primary Source - 20 November
11/23	Schlaflly "What's wrong with Equal Rights for Women" 1972 Carter, "Crisis of Confidence" 1979 Reagan, First Inaugural Address 1981	7: Modern America	Pretest for the Final Exam - 23 November Quiz - 24 November
11/30	Buchanan, Address to the RNC 1992 Bush, State of the Union 2002		Comparative Source - 2 December Primary Source - 4 December
12/7		Final Exam	retest if necessary

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