

HSTAA 345: MAKING MODERN AMERICA: BUSINESS & POLITICS

Instructor

Margaret O'Mara

Course Overview & Format

Welcome!

Website

<https://www.margaretomara.com>

This is a class on the history of American politics, American business, and the interconnections between the two from the 1920s to today. How has American capitalism changed over the century, and who has been responsible for making those changes? How has democratic governance expanded, contracted, and shaped the nature of individual and collective economic opportunity? How have the two major parties changed over time, and how has their relationship to the business community changed over time? Centering these questions, course explores key moments, movements, and people making this history and shaping the world we live in today.

Email

momara@uw.edu

Office Hours

<https://calendly.com/margaretomara/students>

This is a 5-credit online class a mix of synchronous and asynchronous class work. We will meet every week for a one-hour synchronous discussion/work session. This will be immediately followed by 30-40 minutes of open office hours where students can choose to stay online to continue discussion with the professor. On some but not all weeks, you will have small-group work meetings of an hour. Recognizing that remote learners may have geographic and other life constraints, synchronous sessions are optional, although strongly encouraged. Plan to spend 3.5-5 hours per week in "class" (synchronous sessions and watching lectures and other media on your own time) and another 5 hours per week reading, writing, posting, etc.

Class time and location

Spring 2021, TBD

Auditors are welcome, but synchronous sessions and online discussions are for registered undergraduate students only.

Learning Goals

A refined understanding of how governments, markets, and individuals and groups have functioned as agents of historical change;

Understanding the causes and contingencies behind America's transition from an agrarian nation to an industrial and post-industrial superpower;

Sharpened critical thinking and writing about history, including ability to distinguish different types of sources (primary, secondary) and analyze their context and meaning;

An ability to apply this historical awareness to understanding present-day political, economic, and social structures; and

Knowing sources and methods for discerning truth and separating fact from fiction.

Course Materials

We will read work by historians and other scholars of politics, news articles and political cartoons, letters and government documents, and the words of the presidents themselves. We'll also watch documentary films, listen to podcasts, experience music and art. Expect to read about 75-100 pages per week. All materials are available on the course Canvas page to registered students and auditors.

Course Schedule

Week	Subject	Assignments
Week 1	Auto moguls, efficiency experts, and the "Roaring" 1920s	[Discussion board posting of online projects and class engagement are ongoing through all weeks of the term]
Week 2	The crisis of capitalism, and what the New Deal did	Essay #1 due 5PM Friday 1/15
Week 3	The war economy	
Week 4	"People's Capitalism" and Cold War democracy	Essay #2 due 5PM Friday 1/29
Week 5	The business of suburban growth	
Week 6	The space race and the birth of Silicon Valley	Essay #3 due 5PM Friday 2/12
Week 7	The revolution will be televised: upheavals of the 1960s	
Week 8	Crises of confidence	Group Video Project due 5PM Friday 2/26
Week 9	Reagan Revolution and financial transformation	
Week 10	Bridge to the twenty-first century	Essay #4 due 5pm Friday 3/12

Readings for each week can be found on Canvas on the module for that week.

Assignments

Four essays (15% each x 4 = 60% of final grade): short, footnoted papers of 1000-1500 words (or 4-6 double-spaced pages) that consider reading and lecture content and respond to the professor's prompts. They are due at the end of Week 2, Week 4, Week 6, and Week 10. **If you are dissatisfied**

with your grade on any of the first three essays, you may rewrite and resubmit for the same or potentially higher grade. *This course is W optional; if you'd like a W credit for this course, you can expand one of the first three essays into a 12-15 page paper, incorporating instructor feedback, and submit it to the professor via email by Friday of exam week at 5PM.*

One group video project (10%) presenting a major theme in modern American history with a popular audience in mind, due at the end of Week 8. The grade for this will be a combination of self-evaluation, peer evaluation by your fellow group members, and the professor's assessment of the final product.

Weekly discussion posts (20%) are ungraded research-based and primary-source analysis assignments posted weekly, with suggested due dates of Thursdays 5pm PT.

Class engagement (10%) is also ongoing and is measured by consistent engagement throughout the quarter in full-class and small-group discussion online and during synchronous discussion sessions. Come to each synchronous class session with 1) one "talking point" and 2) one question about the reading for that session, ready to add them to the class chat and to speak to those points among a small group or in the full class. If you cannot be in the synchronous session, you may email these questions and talking points to the instructor by 2:30 PT the day of the class.

[There are no midterm or final examinations in this course.]

Grading approach

I am adopting a new approach to grading this year, prompted by the constraints and opportunities of the current moment and my desire for you to have an engaging intellectual experience. While you are expected to keep up with your work, some deadlines are flexible and all grades are interim until the end of the quarter.

You have suggested due dates for your four papers. When you submit at the suggested time, you will receive an interim grade and some feedback from the course's graduate grader. There are no penalties for late assignments, although we will not be able to provide narrative feedback on assignments submitted after the suggested due date. If you are dissatisfied with your interim grade on the first three papers, you may use feedback to revise and resubmit at the end of the quarter; you will either receive the same or better grade for the assignment. (If you're happy with what you got, you don't need to do anything, and your interim grade will become a final one automatically.)

Your discussion posts have suggested due dates of Thursday 5pm the week they are assigned, but you also may add them late. These are ungraded assignments and there are not penalties for late posting, although it may be most interesting and lively for you to be posting in the week when others are in conversation on the string as well.

The one hard deadline is the group video project.

While this schedule is designed to give you maximum flexibility and discretion over how and where you do your work, keep in mind that the assignments have been designed to be completed over the full quarter. It is up to you to keep up so that you are able to complete them to your satisfaction by the quarter's end. Success in this class will also depend on staying engaged with discussion, chats, and group work throughout the term.

If you have any concerns about your work or progress (e.g., “c’mon, prof, what’s my grade, really?”), make an online appointment with me so we can chat more about your situation 1-1. Bottom line: I want you to engage with and enjoy this class, leave with lasting, useful knowledge, and make a positive contribution to your academic and preprofessional goals. Let’s work together to make that happen.

Additional Information

I am delighted to have all of you in this class with me, and I’m looking forward not only to sharing what I know of this subject but for you to become as engaged and excited about the study of history as I am. My intent is to work with you, wherever you might be in your learning curve, to make this a productive and information-rich experience that leaves you with new knowledge and skills that translate into multiple academic and professional environments. Assignments are designed with these goals in mind, as are the policies I have developed to guide our collective classroom experience.

Writing Guidelines and Resources

I have a number of handouts and links available at <https://margaretomara.com/resources>. Some of these are by me, others are by other professors and university centers. Please read and refer to these as needed, and feel free to share with others as long as you note where you found it.

Fair Use

A number of the things I ask my students to do in class involve pulling digital materials from other places online. When repurposing this content, especially when using for a graded class assignment and *especially* when you plan to also publish online, do so with copyright law and fair use guidelines in mind. The UW Libraries has a useful and comprehensive guide for this:

https://guides.lib.uw.edu/research/copyright/fair_use.

Academic Integrity

In all assignments you are expected to adhere to the standards of academic integrity outlined by the University of Washington Student Conduct Code. In an age of internet-based research and writing, the standards for plagiarism and academic dishonesty can become unclear, and I strongly encourage all students to read UW statements and guidelines that outline acceptable practices and procedures: <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/for-students/student-code-of-conduct/>.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Your experience in this class is important to me. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or uwdrs@uw.edu or disability.uw.edu. DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

Religious Accommodations

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available [here](#). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](#).

Meeting with Me

I am available in a number of ways to connect with you 1-1. You can reach me via Canvas mail or regular email and we can converse that way. You also can sign up for my office hours on Zoom (see page 1 for the URL to book an appointment). Come see me to talk about questions you have about class content or assignments, or because you'd like an opportunity to talk further about the topics of this class. You do not have to have a problem or question to schedule a meeting, and you also are welcome to bring a friend if you'd like to talk to me together.

Grade Scale

Each assignment is worth a certain percentage, totaling 100%. I convert the total into a four-point scale at the end of the quarter following this rubric:

≥ 95% = 4.0	88 = 3.3	81 = 2.6	74 = 1.9	67 = 1.2
94 = 3.9	87 = 3.2	80 = 2.5	73 = 1.8	66 = 1.1
93 = 3.8	86 = 3.1	79 = 2.4	72 = 1.7	65 = 1.0
92 = 3.7	85 = 3.0	78 = 2.3	71 = 1.6	64 = 0.9
91 = 3.6	84 = 2.9	77 = 2.2	70 = 1.5	63 = 0.8
90 = 3.5	83 = 2.8	76 = 2.1	69 = 1.4	62 = 0.7
89 = 3.4	82 = 2.7	75 = 2.0	68 = 1.3	61 ≥ no credit