

HIST 112-003: HISTORY OF THE U.S. PRESENT
Hatred and Hope - Populism in America from the Colonies to Trump

11:30AM – 12:20PM MWF

Burnett Hall Room 120

Instructor Name(s): Andrew Varsanyi

Instructor Contact Information: OLDF 928 or online by Zoom

Hours of Availability: Office Hours are 10:30-11:20AM MWF at the Academic Grind on the main floor of Oldfather Hall or by Appointment

Course Prerequisites: None.

Course Description

This course traces the various forms of political populism that have been expressed throughout American history. Beginning with the colonial era and tracking various populist movements to the growth of the current populist moment, students will engage with primary and secondary sources to develop a deeper understanding of the political rhetoric and ideas of these movements and their role in American politics.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will learn to recognize populist political rhetoric
- Students will gain an understanding of the history of American populism, with an emphasis on the broad and varied ideological perspectives present in the various incarnations of populist politics in the country's history

This is an ACE 5 course. This course fulfills ACE Outcome 5: use knowledge, historical perspectives, analysis, interpretation, critical evaluation, and the standards of evidence appropriate to the humanities to address problems and issues. You will be asked to demonstrate knowledge of the economic, social, and political backgrounds to the emergence of populist politics at various points in American history. Mini essays and response essay assignments will be used to assess the ACE 5 Learning Outcome, using the rubric provided by the ACE program. On these assignments, you will be asked to engage critically with various historical and political actors, analyze their rhetoric, and describe how their messaging functioned as populist.

Requirements and grading:

The course is organized into two lectures and one class discussion per week. Doing well in this course requires regularly attending lectures, understanding lecture material, participating in discussions, and keeping up with the readings.

You will be graded on participation. A good grade on participation means attending class regularly AND participating in the class through active engagement and preparation.

The **mid-term exams** will be in-person at the DLC. The **final exam** will be in person at the DLC in Love Library.

Course Required Materials

- The textbook for this course is **free and open-source**.
Openstax: <https://openstax.org/details/books/us-history>
- Additional required readings will be assigned via Canvas in the Readings Module.

Course Expectations and Rules Specific to Course:

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. It is presumed that all students will act in a courteous, honest, and respectful way at all times. The responsibility for maintaining academic integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. Honest students are honest citizens. Academic integrity gives employers and the community confidence in your knowledge and skills. When students cheat, they cheat their educational experience and diminish their reputation as university graduates. In this course, you are expected to uphold high standards of integrity by doing your own work and collaborating according to policies I have set in this course.

Academic dishonesty in this course includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- copying or attempting to copy the work of another student;
- using or attempting to use any unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices for an academic test, examination, assessment, assignment, or exercise;
- engaging or attempting to engage the assistance of another individual in misrepresenting the academic performance of a student;
- communicating or distributing information when that information should not be shared (e.g. posting test questions on Chegg, recording class without permission, etc.);
- plagiarism;
- tampering with academic records and examinations;
- passing off AI-generated responses as your own;
- falsifying identity;
- aiding other students in academic dishonesty, and other behaviors in the student code of conduct;
- selling notes to this class without the written permission of the teacher
- falsifying excuses for missing work

The work that you submit for this class must be your own work, whether for exams, quizzes, or papers. Plagiarism – representing someone else’s work as your own – of any kind will not be tolerated under any circumstance. If you are found guilty of any kind of academic dishonesty, you will automatically fail the course and a letter will be sent to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. For more information, see the Student Code of Conduct: <https://studentconduct.unl.edu/student-code-conduct>.

Note on AI

AI can be used as a tool in this class for some assignments; we will discuss AI use throughout the semester. There will be zero tolerance for unauthorized use of AI in this class, particularly that used to write papers or to participate in discussions.

Inclement Weather

If in-person classes are canceled, you will be notified of the instructional continuity plan for this class by canvas email. Students are responsible for checking these notifications for instructional continuity assignments or virtual class meetings.

Student Services

In order to view official policies on the following concerns, please go to go.unl.edu/coursepolicies

- academic honesty policy
- services for students with disabilities
- mental health and well-being resources
- final exam schedule and 15th week policy
- on-campus emergency procedures
- diversity and inclusiveness statement
- Title IX policy
- other relevant university-wide policies as needed

Names and Pronouns

To ensure an environment of respect, I want to make sure that I refer to you by a name with which you are comfortable and that I am pronouncing your name correctly. I do not want to embarrass anyone, so please let me know your preferences in any way that you find comfortable. Also, I will gladly respond to your request to refer to you by the pronoun corresponding to your gender identity.

Professional Communications Etiquette

Students are sometimes unsure of the appropriate manner in which to email a professor. Emails have the most positive impact when they have a proper salutation (Dear Professor, Dear Dr.), and when they are signed with the writer's first and last name. **Take your time before sending an email and make sure that you are polite and calm in tone. You will always receive the same courtesy from me.**

University Attendance Policy

See UNL's absence policy, here: <https://registrar.unl.edu/academic-standards/policies/class-attendance/>

Digital Learning Center in Love Library

All testing for this course will be taken under electronic supervision at Digital Learning Center, which is located in the Adele Coryell Hall Learning Commons. All testing times are pre-scheduled and exams will be completed on a computer. Before you begin an exam, you must place your personal items in your pre-assigned locker and check-in with Digital Learning Center staff at the front desk. When you have completed your exam, you must check-out at the front desk. Guidelines:

- **All testing times are pre-scheduled by students.** All students are responsible for self-sign-up, and early sign-up is recommended. Time slots fill up quickly. <https://dlc-reserve.unl.edu/>

- All students are required to have their current N-Card to test. Other forms of ID will not be accepted as a substitute for N-Cards. DLC staff reserve the right to ask for a second ID if needed for identity verification.
- All students will receive two pieces of barcoded scratch paper for their exam. This paper will be scanned in to students upon check-in and scanned out upon check-out.
- Only permitted items are allowed at your computer station during testing, including your N-Card, DLC provided barcoded scratch paper, and writing utensils. Nothing else is allowed at your computer station unless your instructor has made prior arrangements with the DLC.
- All exams must be submitted for grading at the posted closing time. Students will not be given additional time to finish their exams past the posted closing time.
- To schedule your exam, please visit <http://dlc-reserve.unl.edu> . For more information about the Exam Commons location, operating hours and student guidelines, please visit <https://its.unl.edu/dlc/> .

Course Grading Policy:

Your grade will be based on the following:

1. Online discussion board and Perusall discussions (10%);
2. 2 response essays/campaign advertisements (30%);
3. Mid-term exam (30%);
4. Final exam (20%);
5. Class participation (10%)

Grading is figured as follows: A+ = 97.0 and above, A = 93.0-96.9, A- = 90.0-92.9, B+ = 87.0-89.9, B = 83.0-86.9, B- = 80.0-82.9, C+ = 77.0-79.9, C = 73.0-76.9, C- = 70.0-72.9, D+ = 67.0-69.9, D = 63.0-66.9, D- = 60.0-62.9, F = below 60. For students taking this course pass/fail, a C is the minimum passing grade. Graduating seniors are **not** exempt from the final exam.

Primary and secondary sources are listed and will form the basis of each week's discussion. Pages are given for sections of the textbooks that reinforce that week's learning. **Textbook reading is required to be successful in this class.** All other readings are either posted via Canvas (Readings module).

You are expected to have read the materials BEFORE the class discussion. Failure to do so will result in a zero for that week's participation grade.

Course Schedule:

Week #	Date	Topic	Reading(s)
Week One	Monday, August 25, 2025	What is Populism?	
Week One	Wednesday, August 27, 2025	The Colonies: Bacon's Rebellion	
Week One	Friday, August 29, 2025	Bacon's Manifesto	Bacon's Manifesto
Week Two	Monday, September 1, 2025	Labor Day - No class	
Week Two	Wednesday, September 3, 2025	The American Revolution	
Week Two	Friday, September 5, 2025	The Constitutional Debates & Anti-Federalism	A Pennsylvania Farmers' Letter
Week Three	Monday, September 8, 2025	Early Republic	
Week Three	Wednesday, September 10, 2025	Rebellions: Shay's and Whiskey	
Week Three	Friday, September 12, 2025	Washington's Speech	Washington's Speech after Whiskey Rebellion
Week Four	Monday, September 15, 2025	Andrew Jackson and End of Good Feelings	
Week Four	Wednesday, September 17, 2025	Jackson and the New Democracy	Section of <i>The First Populist</i>
Week Four	Friday, September 19, 2025	Midterm I Exam - No in-person class; book your time at the testing center	No reading
Week Five	Monday, September 22, 2025	The Know-Nothings, Free Soil, and Immigration	
Week Five	Wednesday, September 24, 2025	Abolitionism, "The Slave Power" and the Republican Party	
Week Five	Friday, September 26, 2025	Nativism	Section of Morse, Foreign conspiracy against the liberties of the United States
Week Six	Monday, September 29, 2025	Problems: Farmers' organizations and 1873	
Week Six	Wednesday, October 1, 2025	Reform Ideas, Christianity, and Progress	
Week Six	Friday, October 3, 2025	Fiction and Future	Section of Bellamy, <i>Looking Backward</i>
Week Seven	Monday, October 6, 2025	The People's Party	The Omaha Platform
Week Seven	Wednesday, October 8, 2025	The 1896 Election	
Week Seven	Friday, October 10, 2025	Reform Ideas and Progress II	Selected Campaign speeches, 1896 Election
Week Eight	Monday, October 13, 2025	Progressivism and Booming Twenties	
Week Eight	Wednesday, October 15, 2025	FDR and Huey Long	Response Essay I Due
Week Eight	Friday, October 17, 2025	Online class: FDR's speech	FDR's Second Inaugural; class is online as Prof. V in Albuquerque for Conference
Week Nine	Monday, October 20, 2025	Fall Break - No class	
Week Nine	Wednesday, October 22, 2025	Midterm Exam Review	Review of First Half of Course
Week Nine	Friday, October 24, 2025	Midterm II Exam - No in-person class; book your time at the testing center	
Week Ten	Monday, October 27, 2025	Anti-New Dealers and Anti-Communism	
Week Ten	Wednesday, October 29, 2025	Film: <i>Good Night and Good Luck</i>	
Week Ten	Friday, October 31, 2025	Film: <i>Good Night and Good Luck</i>	
Week Eleven	Monday, November 3, 2025	McCarthy to George Wallace	
Week Eleven	Wednesday, November 5, 2025	Nixon, Reagan, and the New Conservatism	
Week Eleven	Friday, November 7, 2025	Reagan's Speech	Reagan's First Inaugural
Week Twelve	Monday, November 10, 2025	Ross Perot and NAFTA	
Week Twelve	Wednesday, November 12, 2025	Clinton and Triangulation	
Week Twelve	Friday, November 14, 2025	9/11 and Wars on Terror	
Week Thirteen	Monday, November 17, 2025	The 2008 Financial Crisis & Obama	Response Essay II Due
Week Thirteen	Wednesday, November 19, 2025	Birthirism and the Way Too Online World	
Week Thirteen	Friday, November 21, 2025	Donald Trump and the 2016 Election	
Week Fourteen	Monday, November 24, 2025	Social Media Discussion	Your social media data
Week Fourteen	Wednesday, November 26, 2025	Thanksgiving Break; no class	
Week Fourteen	Friday, November 28, 2025	Thanksgiving Break; no class	
Week Fifteen	Monday, December 1, 2025	Trump's Speech	Trump's First Inaugural
Week Fifteen	Wednesday, December 3, 2025	President Trump 45	
Week Fifteen	Friday, December 5, 2025	The New Media	
Week Sixteen	Monday, December 8, 2025	President Trump 47	
Week Sixteen	Wednesday, December 10, 2025	What's Next in Populism	
Week Sixteen	Friday, December 12, 2025	Final Exam Review	
Final Exam	Thursday, December 18, 2025	10:00am - Noon	Final Exam

****The final exam is scheduled for 10:00 AM and 12:00 PM in our regular classroom, Burnett Hall 102. ****

Assignments:

1. Participation in online discussion sections/Perusall discussions (10%):

Each week, discussion questions or Perusall readings will be posted to Canvas. Students must participate actively in at least ten of the thirteen discussions (there are none in weeks 1, 14, or 16.) Grading will be based on the student's ability to engage critically and in reference to the week's lecture and reading content. **If you demonstrate that you have read and thought about the materials, even if you get some things wrong, you will receive full marks.**

2. 2 response essays/campaign advertisements (30%):

Twice during the semester, students will submit either a 500-word essay or a team audio/video submission that critically analyzes the primary audience targeted and the rhetoric used by an American populist movement.

3. Mid-term exams (30%):

There are two midterm exams, each is worth 15% of your final grade. In each exam, students will answer two of three questions in essay format. Answers must use lecture, primary source, and textbook materials in their answers to receive full grades.

4. Final exam (20%):

The final exam will consist of three long-answer questions. Students must select two to reply to in essay format. In their responses, students must utilize elements of the lectures and readings.

5. Participation (10%)

Class participation, questions, engagement, preparation. Students will receive a weekly grade for their participation in class each week. ****Note: any discussions of grade "bumping" will rely on the student having an A- or higher in this category.****

6. Optional Bonus Essay (up to 10%):

Students will complete an audio essay (recorded by Zoom) of up to 500 words comparing one of the populist movements studied in the semester and the populism of the present day. The focus should be on the primary sources we've discussed in class.

UNL Course Policies and Resources:

Students are responsible for knowing the university policies and resources found on this page (<https://go.unl.edu/coursepolicies>):

- University-wide Attendance Policy
- Academic Honesty Policy
- Services for Students with Disabilities
- Mental Health and Well-Being Resources

- Final Exam Schedule
- Fifteenth Week Policy
- Emergency Procedures
- Diversity & Inclusiveness
- Title IX Policy
- Other Relevant University-Wide Policies