

HISTORY 118

Dickinson College // Fall 2026

Tue / Thu 9am

Classroom: Denny 317

URL: <http://blogs.dickinson.edu/hist-118pinsker>

US Since 1877

Matthew Pinsker

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Hours: Wed. 9am to 12pm

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Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles.
--Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus" (1883)

Required Texts (B&N or library reserves)

- H.W. Brands, *American Dreams: The United States Since 1945* (Penguin, 2010)
- Manisha Sinha, *Rise and Fall of the Second American Republic* (Liverlight, 2024)

Additional Readings

- History 118 Oral History Projects –Clara Blackwell // Long Bui // Sarah Cayouette-Gluckman // Matthew Ferry // Martin Vatanka
- Sarah Goldberg / Matthew Pinsker, Prince of Emancipation, Google Arts, 2018 [WEB]
- Joseph Locke and Ben Wright, eds., *American Yawp*, Updated Edition (2026), [WEB]

Course Policies

For details on course policies, especially those regarding attendance, participation, accommodations for disabilities, plagiarism, artificial intelligence (AI), and learning objectives, please consult the course website: <http://blogs.dickinson.edu/hist-118pinsker/course-policies>

First Essay – Second Republic

By **Monday, October 12**, students will submit a 3-5 page typed, double-spaced essay answering this question about *The Rise and Fall of the Second American Republic*: What was one of the greatest historical triumphs detailed in Manisha Sinha's book on the long Reconstruction period, and what was one of the most disappointing tragedies? Students should explain their answers within a clear narrative context, covering the period from 1865 to 1920. All essays must include material from Sinha's book properly cited with Chicago-style footnotes. Outside research is allowed but not required. Additional information will be available on the annotated assignment guidelines at the course site. Essays will be graded on depth of analysis, use of evidence, and quality of prose. Late essays will be penalized up to 5 points each day.

Second Essay –Global America

By **Monday, Nov. 9**, students will submit a 3-5 page typed, double-spaced essay explaining what they consider to be some of the most significant ways that American national security policy changed between World War I and the Cold War. All essays must include material from sources on the syllabus (such as the *American Yawp*) cited with Chicago-style footnotes. Outside research is allowed but not required. Additional information will be available on the annotated assignment guidelines at the course site. Essays will be graded on depth of analysis, use of evidence, and quality of prose. Late essays will be penalized up to 5 points each day.

Oral History Project

The highlight of this semester will be a multi-media oral history project that students will undertake to illustrate an important episode or trend covered in H.W. Brands' *American Dreams*. By **Monday, November 30**, students should post an annotated transcript (at least 500 words) from their initial interview(s) at the course website, including a list of a half a dozen other sources for further research. These transcripts and bibliographies will receive comments but not grades. By **Monday, December 14**, students should post a full oral history essay that successfully incorporates quoted material from their interview(s) while also putting them into thoughtful historical context using not only *American Dreams*, but also other relevant primary and secondary sources. Essays should cover about 4-6 pages (1200-1500 words) and should include Chicago-style footnotes. All essay posts should include at least 3 to 4 images, properly credited and captioned. Students must also embed a short video documentary (about 1 to 2 minutes) incorporating either audio or video clips from (or about) their oral history interviews. Additional information will be available on the annotated assignment guidelines at the course site. Projects will be graded on depth of analysis, research and design effort, and quality of prose. Submissions after December 14 typically will not be accepted.

Grade Distribution

Class Participation	20 percent
Essay 1 –Second Republic	25 percent
Essay 2 –Global America	25 percent
Oral history project	30 percent

Day	Date	Discussion Topic	Reading Assignment
Tuesday	9/1	Methods & Expectations	---
Thursday	9/3	Reconstruction	Yawp, chap. 14
Tuesday	9/8	Prince of Emancipation	Goldberg / Pinsker exhibit
Thursday	9/10	NO CLASS	
Monday	9/14	Constitution Day: Jane Calvert	ATS, 7pm [REFLECTION DUE]
Tuesday	9/15	Abolition Democracy	Sinha, Intro + chap. 3
Thursday	9/17	NO CLASS	
Tuesday	9/22	Women's Rights	Sinha, chap. 6
Thursday	9/24	Election of 1876	Sinha, chap. 8
Tuesday	9/29	Struggle Over the West	Sinha, chap. 9
Thursday	10/1	Labor and Capital	Sinha, chap. 10
Tuesday	10/6	American Empire	Sinha, chap. 11
Thursday	10/8	Nineteenth Amendment	Sinha, chap. 12
Monday	10/12	Second Republic essay due	By 5pm via email
Tuesday	10/13	World War I	Yawp, chap. 19
Thursday	10/15	Great Depression	Yawp, chap. 21
Tuesday	10/20	NO CLASS (Fall Break)	
Thursday	10/22	Coming of WWII	Yawp, chap. 22 (Sec. I – IV)
Tuesday	10/27	World War II	Yawp, chap. 24 (Sec. V – X)
Thursday	10/29	1940s	Brands, chap. 1-2
Tuesday	11/3	Early 1950s –Cold War	Brands, chap. 3
Thursday	11/5	Late 1950s –Suburbs	Brands, chap. 4
Monday	11/9	Global America essay due	By 5pm, via email
Tuesday	11/10	Early 1960s –Civil Rights	Brands, chap. 5 + Ferry
Thursday	11/12	Late 1960s –Vietnam War	Brands, chap. 6 + Bui
Tuesday	11/17	Early 1970s –Time of Change	Brands, chap. 7 + Cayouette
Thursday	11/19	Late 1970s –Global Energy Crisis	Brands, chap. 8 + Vatanka
Tuesday	11/24	1980s –Reagan Realignment	Brands, chap. 9 + Blackwell
Thursday	11/26	NO CLASS –Thanksgiving	
Monday	11/30	Oral history interviews due	By 5pm via post at course site
Tuesday	12/1	1980s / 90s – End of Cold War	Brands, chap. 10-11
Thursday	12/3	1990s –Polarization	Brands, chaps. 12-13
Tuesday	12/8	2000s –9/11 and beyond	Brands, chaps. 14-15
Thursday	12/10	Lessons & Legacies	
Monday	12/14	Oral history projects due	By 5pm via post at course site