

## The United States in the Twentieth Century

*“Americans suffer from an ignorance that is not only colossal, but sacred.”*  
—James Baldwin

***The United States in the Twentieth Century*** is a thematic lecture course on the United States since 1900. The main focus of the lectures will be politics, broadly-defined. The readings consist of novels and non-fiction writing, with a scattering of primary sources.

**Assignments:** Students will write three short papers, each worth 25% of the final grade. Students will also attend and participate in Friday section meetings, which will be worth the remaining 25%.

The following books are required and available for purchase at the Seminary Coop:

Jane Dailey, *Building the American Republic: A Narrative History From 1877*  
available at [www.buildingtheamericanrepublic.org](http://www.buildingtheamericanrepublic.org)

Sinclair Lewis, [\*Babbitt\*](#)

Kurt Vonnegut, [\*Slaughterhouse-Five\*](#)

Phillip Roth, [\*Indignation\*](#)

Rachel Carson, [\*Silent Spring\*](#)

James Baldwin, [\*The Fire Next Time\*](#)

David Remnick, [\*King of the World\*](#)

Hunter Thompson, [\*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas\*](#)

Gail Collins, [\*When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present\*](#)

Atif Aman and Amir Sufi, [\*House of Debt: How They \(and You\) Caused the Great Recession, and How We Can Prevent It from Happening Again\*](#)

### Class Schedule

#### Week 1:      **Interconnected (1900–1914)**

Jan. 4           Introduction

Jan. 6           *BTAR* chs. 1 & 2

Jan. 8           Section discussion

**Week 2: Vertigo (1914–1928)**Jan. 11 Lewis, *Babbitt*Jan. 13 *BTAR* chs. 3 & 4

Jan. 15 Discussion section

**Week 3: Depression (1928–1938)**Jan. 18: **MLK Day: No class** *BTAR*. Ch. 5

Jan. 20: Franklin Roosevelt, “Commonwealth Club Address”

Jan. 22: Huey P. Long, “Sharing the Wealth;” discussion section

**Week 4: Assertion (1938–1946)**Jan. 25: Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse 5*; **Paper #1 due**Jan. 27: *BTAR* ch. 6

Jan. 29: Discussion section

**Week 5: Containment (1946–1953)**Feb. 1: *BTAR* ch. 7Feb. 3: *Indignation*

Feb. 5: Discussion section

**Week 6: At Odds (1954–1965)**Feb. 8: *BTAR* ch. 8Feb. 10: *Silent Spring*Feb. 12: **College Break: no class; Paper #2 due****Week 7: Riven (1965–1968)**Feb. 15: *BTAR* ch. 9

Feb. 17: *King of the World*

Feb. 19: Discussion section

**Week 8: Breakdown (1968–1974)**

Feb. 22: *BTAR* ch. 10

Feb. 24: Thompson, *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas*

Feb. 26: Discussion section

**Week 9: Right (1974–1989)**

Feb. 29: *BTAR* ch. 11

Mar. 2: *When Everything Changed*

Mar. 4: Discussion section

**Week 10: Vulnerable (1989–2010)**

Mar. 7: *BTAR* chs. 12 & 13; *House of Debt*

Mar. 9: Discussion section

***Paper #3 due March 11***