

HIS 457
MICHIGAN HISTORY
Winter 2005
T/R 9:55-11:10
Briggs 10

Prof. Sumner
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Over the coming weeks in this course we will survey the history of Michigan, a Great Lakes region of enormous strategic and economic importance that has been a crossroads for many cultures over recent years, decades and centuries. We will begin by considering the native societies—among them the Ottawa, Chippewa and Potawatomi tribes—that inhabited the area before its “discovery” and settlement by Europeans. Then, after 1620, came French explorers, missionaries and entrepreneurs, who developed the fur trade that was Michigan’s first important commercial activity. In the 1700s came the British, and later, after much dispute, the flag of the young United States flew over Detroit and other territorial towns and outposts as lucrative enterprises in agriculture, mining and lumbering came to predominate. Michigan achieved statehood in 1837, then was embroiled in national conflicts over the next years—first as a center of antislavery and abolitionist activity, then as a participant in the Civil War, in which thousands of its sons sacrificed their lives to preserve the union. By the turn of the twentieth century, Henry Ford and other pioneers helped to transform Michigan into an industrial powerhouse, the center of the nation’s burgeoning automobile industry. As the “Arsenal of Democracy,” contributing mightily to winning two world wars with its productive capacity, Detroit (and other cities) attracted large numbers of southern whites, African-Americans and foreign immigrants seeking economic opportunity—producing a culture of unprecedented diversity, creativity, “boom-and-bust” volatility, and conflict. We will conclude our journey by considering the problems as well as the unique promise of the state and region as we move forward into the “globalized” environment of the Twenty-First Century, mindful of the rich legacy of the past, aware of the sacrifices of those who came before us, and committed to leaving a better life to those who come after.

Texts. Students should purchase the following texts, available at the McNichols Student Bookstore:

Michigan: A History of the Great Lakes State, by Bruce A. Rubenstein and Lawrence E. Ziewacz

Rivethead, by Ben Hamper

Grades. Your grade for the course will be based upon three components: Two in-class examinations, featuring a mixture of objective and essay questions that will test your understanding of the course readings; and a term paper in which you will explore some specific aspect of Michigan history, due at the end of the semester.

Together these will add up this way:

Quizzes/class contribution	15%
Midterm exam:	30% (February 17)
Final exam:	35% (April during finals week)
Term Paper:	20% (due at the last regular class)

	100%

Note. The readings are essential, in fact the bedrock, of our course in these coming weeks, which will move quickly. Establish good habits from the start, keep up with weekly assignments and read the texts *actively*. Class discussions will be aimed at probing deeper and helping you to understand the texts. Establish a “buddy system,” exchanging phone numbers and email addresses with at least two fellow students, to get notes and assignments in the event you have to miss a class. Keeping current and prepared is *your* responsibility. *Communicate* as soon as possible with the instructor if you have any problems keeping these commitments for any reason.

Make-up exams are available in the event of a documented medical problem, or, at the discretion of the instructor, in the case of other serious conflicts. Quizzes will be given at the start of class periods and cannot be made up. Your lowest quiz score will automatically be dropped in calculating that portion of your grade. “Class contribution” is also important, and will be helped by regular, on-time attendance, respectful classroom behavior, and active, engaged participation in class discussions. In contrast, patterns of irregular attendance, disrespectful or distracting behavior, and tardiness will damage your grade, and will be subject to other sanctions.

Additional readings and assignments, in the form of handouts, will be assigned as the semester moves along. Good luck!

