

History 481. History of the Space Program¹

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"Any student of average intelligence, possessed of an enthusiastic and optimistic turn of mind, and with enough self-confidence to trust his own common sense, will not only do well in the course, but have a most pleasant year while he is doing it."

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1926

313 History

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Office hours Monday and Wednesday, 9:30-10 and 3.30-4, and by appointment

This course will explore the history of the four American space programs from the 1940's to the present from a variety of perspectives. Our major concerns will be the cultural, economic, social, military, and political factors shaping -- and shaped by -- humanity's first step to the stars. We definitely will not ignore the scientific and technological accomplishments, but place them in context, including the paths not taken. A major goal of this course will be to acquaint and equip you with the tools to do research, the historian's art and science.

Readings

William Burrows, [This New Ocean](#)

John Logsdon, et al., [Exploring the Unknown](#)

Howard McCurdy, [Space and the American Imagination](#)

[NASA Pocket Statistics](http://history.nasa.gov/pocketstats/index.html) (history.nasa.gov/pocketstats/index.html)

Grades

Your grade will be based on a weekly WebCT writing and class participation, 3-year launch analysis, topic, bibliography, draft and final research papers. Every item is worth 10% save the WebCT writing/participation and final paper, which are each worth 30%. Coherency, grammar, and spelling do count. For assistance in writing, take advantage of the Writing Center (uwc.tamu.edu).² I gladly discuss drafts and outlines and encourage you to discuss your work

¹ The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

²See also, www-personal.umich.edu/~rfrost/courses/reading.html.

with others. The work you turn in, however, is your own.³ All papers are due at the start of class and lose credit for lateness. The final paper is due by Tuesday, December 13 at 5 p.m.

I strongly encourage you to participate in class. Ask questions (the only foolish question is the one not asked). If you are curious about or do not understand something, ask (quite likely you are not alone and others will be grateful). If you have a learning disability or are encountering problems, let me know.⁴ I operate under the assumption that you are a mature, responsible adult. If you have a family emergency, contact me or the History office before you miss the class. More than one unexcused absence will adversely affect your grade by one-half a grade per absence.

WebCT and participation

By late Tuesday evening, you should post a short analysis of the week's reading and documents on WebCT and read your classmates' contributions (i.e., please post your thoughts with enough time for your colleagues to read them).

For Exploring the Unknown, focus on the significance of the documents and the perspective and concerns of its writer. What is the author trying to do? Who is the audience? How is the author trying to convince them? What is (not) being assumed?

You are expected to participate in the WebCT and class discussions and work in small groups on papers.

Three-year launch analysis

Work with two other students to analyze three years in three different decades (e.g., 1958, 1964, 1977) in the NASA Pocket Statistics for a 2-3-page, 5-minute presentation. What patterns, differences, and similarities can you find? What might account for them? How can you visually convey your conclusions (e.g., graphs and tables)? Please post the paper on WebCT and be prepared to present it in class.

³ As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor.

⁴The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, the legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 116B in Cain Hall or call 845-1637.

Research paper, topic and bibliography, and presentation

This paper, the heart of the course, should be approximately 15-20 typed, double-spaced pages (excluding bibliography) and based on primary and secondary sources. I will read at least one draft, as will your classmates and we will meet as a group to discuss it.

Your topic should be interesting and answer important questions. Two important parts of the research process are finding good sources and getting feedback. I encourage you to talk to me early and often. Expect your emphases and themes to change as you read more and fit hypotheses to data.

Your topic proposal should contain a short statement or outline setting out the question you are asking and how you expect to answer it. Your bibliography should discuss your sources. I highly recommend meeting with Joel Kitchens (jkitchen@lib-gw.tamu.edu) to discuss possible materials.

I strongly suggest you give me a second draft. If the class decides, we can meet the last full week to discuss these revised drafts. The first draft will accompany the final paper.

Week 1. August 29-31

Burrows, 1-5

Exploring ..., Prelude to the Space Age

Skim I, 7-8

Read one of I, 13-16

Week 2. September 5-7

Burrows, 6-9

Exploring ..., Origins,

II, 5 or 8; one of 18-21.

Wednesday: meet at Bush Library, 4.15

Week 3. September 12-14

Burrows, 10-13

Exploring ..., Evolution

III, one of 1-3

3-year analysis due

Week 4. September 19-21

Burrows, 14-17

Exploring ..., Organizing

III, one of 4-11 and 12

Monday: meet at Evans Library

Week 5. September 26-28
McCurdy

Week 6. October 3-5
research, topic due Thursday by 5

Week 7. October 10-12
research, bibliography due Thursday by 5

Week 8. October 17-19
research

Week 9. October 24-26
discuss drafts

Week 10. October 31-November 2
discuss drafts; no class Wednesday

Week 11. November 7-9
rewrite/research

Week 12. November 14-16
rewrite/research

Week 13. November 21-23
rewrite/research

Week 14. November 28-30
recommended 2nd draft
group meetings to discuss?

Week 15. December 6
rewrite

Dec. 13, **final paper** due at 5 p.m.