

American History to 1870
HSTAA 521 – Fall 2018

Instructor: Josh Reid

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-3:00; Wednesdays, 2:30-3:30; and by appointment

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Overview

Recently, scholars of US History from the colonial era through the Civil War have applied a range of new interpretations to the period. This work highlights exciting new ways of thinking about topics critical to understanding the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. The course begins with the early colonial period before moving into the American Revolution and its immediate aftermath when the nation grappled with the legacy of independence from Great Britain. Then we will move into the Early Republic, paying close attention to the ways that race, class, and gender intersected as people sought to make sense of the new opportunities and challenges brought on by forging an expanding nation based on republican principles. We will next examine the institution of slavery and its connections to American freedom, to the growth of this nation's economy, and to American Indian nations and families. Tensions over slavery and expansion culminated in the Civil War, and we will analyze ways that Americans in the third quarter of the nineteenth century—and today—tried to make sense of the bloody conflict.

With an eye toward historiography, this course introduces topics that will be relevant to your exams and for your own studies of US History. Each week, we will read and discuss as a group a variety of important books that illustrate major themes in this field and expose you to some of the ongoing historical debates. We will also engage with several state-of-the-field essays that will help you place these monographs into the larger historiography of this nation. You will be assessed on several short writing exercises, participation in the seminar, and a final project in which you will craft a polished historiographical paper analyzing the important works on a topic of your choice within this period of US History.

In this course, students will understand:

- How colonists from different nationalities shared common attitudes and behaviors yet differed in their reactions to, and actions toward, Indigenous peoples.
- The strategies that Indigenous nations, families, and individuals used to make the best of colonial and US expansion across their homelands and waters.
- The range of experiences of captivity, servitude, and slavery that complicates the traditional narrative of unfree labor in North America.
- How the legacy of the American Revolution shaped US History, especially in the antebellum era.
- The ways that race, class, and gender intersected as people sought to make sense of the new opportunities and challenges brought on by forging an expanding nation based on republican principles.

- How slavery, the unfinished business of the American Revolution, supported republican freedom and the growth of the US economy in the antebellum era.
- How tensions over slavery and expansion culminated in the Civil War, which left a legacy that shaped the post-bellum years and still resonates today.

Course Readings

You may purchase required books at the university bookstore or any number of local and online retailers. Additionally, I will place copies of each book on reserve at the library. The required books are:

- Hyde, Anne. *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.
- Karp, Matthew. *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Lipman, Andrew. *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.
- Lyons, Clare A. *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.
- Manning, Chandra. *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War*. New York: Vintage Books, 2007.
- Masur, Kate. *An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Saunt, Claudio. *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2014.
- Snyder, Christina. *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Rockman, Seth. *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.
- Taylor, Alan. *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2013.

Class Format & Expectations

This course will be run in a seminar format and will meet Wednesdays from 11:30 AM to 2:20 PM. At each meeting, you will be asked to discuss in detail the assigned readings for that week. We will examine both the content the authors present as well as the evidence on which they base their arguments. Moreover, we will discuss how each work engages with the ongoing historical debates about the topic.

Bear in mind the following questions when you read a work:

- What is the problem/issue/questions that the author sets out to solve/address/answer?
- What is the author's central argument?
- What evidence does the author employ?
- What methods does the author use to seek and to analyze that evidence?
- Does the author employ the most appropriate evidence and methods to address the central problem/issue/question?
- What issues, if any, are left unresolved by the author's approach and argument?

- How does the work fit into the general scholarly trends within US history through Reconstruction?

These questions should inform your reading and are not a mandatory outline for your written exercises.

This course is designed to familiarize you with some of the main historiographical topics in US history up to 1870. In order to begin doing this, we will also read several state-of-the-field pieces. I have not added these to the reading schedule yet because we will do an activity selecting these readings during the first day of class. I will update the reading schedule as soon as we've got these determined.

I have structured this course so that it meets a variety of student needs. All of the required texts are important interventions in the historiography of what is commonly thought of as the first “half” of US history, so these readings should help to prepare for your exams. They also cover a range of key topics on which you may someday find yourself lecturing—these books, therefore, could be helpful texts for building lectures. Additionally, for those of you researching and writing about US history, both the assigned readings and those you will do for the historiography paper should help to get some of the critical literature under your belt in preparation for this work. Finally, you will get substantial practice on improving your critical reading and writing skills.

Because participation is fundamental toward the seminar's success, I expect each of you to come to class having digested the readings. Be prepared to contribute questions and comments. Everyone should make several significant contributions to each week's discussion and listen critically to his or her peers. If you feel uncomfortable participating in class, please discuss the matter with me, and we can work out a strategy to help you improve this situation. You will also be expected to be open about your ideas and to respond constructively to the ideas of others. While freedom of expression is essential to any meaningful discussion, you should also be prepared to defend your opinions.

Please note that class attendance and participation is mandatory. Students missing more than one session without an approved excuse will not receive a passing grade for the course.

Canvas

Although this is not an online course, having reliable and regular access to a computer and the Internet will be necessary. All assignments will be uploaded to Canvas, which will allow me to leave detailed comments helping you to improve your writing and analytical skills. If this is going to be a problem for you, please bring this to my attention immediately so I can figure out how to support you. Handouts, instructions, and other helpful material will be distributed through Canvas; if, for some reason, you are unable to open or access these, please notify me immediately. I will use PDFs for material disbursed online, so having *Adobe Acrobat Reader* or *Preview* (Mac) installed on your computer will be critical.

Assignments & Evaluation

Each student earns his or her own grade. My job as the instructor is to assess the work along clearly articulated guidelines and expectations. I also value and reward improvement. It is

therefore critical that you do all the assignments, attend all the class sessions, and participate in the discussions.

Your final grade will be determined by:

- Three précis 15%
 - Lipman, *Saltwater Frontier* (due Oct. 5)
 - Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble* (due Oct. 19)
 - Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire* (due Nov. 21)
- Two short essays focused on a specific topic (see instructions) 30%
- Historiography paper (due Dec. 13) 45%
- Participation in sessions 10%

In order to earn a passing grade for this course, you must complete all written assignments.

Précis

To help improve your analytical writing ability, three times throughout the quarter you will be required to write a brief précis (500-550 words, double-spaced, 12 point) for the book assigned that week. Much like a book review, a précis should identify the work's main thesis, discuss the supporting evidence, and evaluate the author's overall success in making his or her argument. They should also be well written and free from grammatical errors. All précis are due online by 10 PM, and late papers will be penalized 10% per day.

Short Essay

Students usually find it helpful to write something longer than the précis before submitting their historiography paper. Several of our books can be grouped together around a topic. For this assignment, write a 1,000- to 1,500-word essay on each topic, engaging with the two or three related books. Drawing on what you learned from these books, frame an argument about the topic and address it in the short essay. We will talk more about this assignment in class.

I have designed this assignment to give students some flexibility in their schedule. Choose two of the three topics you want to address in the short essays; the deadline depends on the chosen topic:

- North American West (Saunt & Hyde) Nov. 4
- Servitude, Slavery, and Race (Snyder, Taylor, & Rockman) Nov. 18
- Legacy of the Civil War (Manning & Masur) Dec. 7

All short essays are due online by 10 PM on the deadline, and late papers will be penalized 10% per day. Please choose your topic by the end of our discussion session addressing those books.

Historiography Paper

This assignment seeks to give you practice at conducting a historiographical investigation into a topic relevant to nineteenth-century US History. **Due online by 10 PM Dec. 13,** your completed historiography paper will be from 5,000 to 6,500 words in length (double-spaced, 12 point font). In this paper, you will pose an exam-style question that you will answer by **drawing upon six to eight scholarly secondary works,** at least five of which must be single-authored monographs. You may include works from our required and supplemental readings; however, this essay will require you to incorporate additional readings beyond what appears on the syllabus. Additionally, your paper will engage with the chosen works in a historiographical manner by

highlighting differences in arguments and approaches and by identifying how historians' understanding of the topic has changed over time.

Each student must settle on a topic and list of texts for his or her historiography paper by **Oct. 26** (the end of the fifth week of the quarter). I expect you to consult with me about possible topics and texts prior to making your final decision. I will review your potential list of secondary sources, making some recommendations, as needed. You may choose any subject relative to US History up to 1870. You could focus in more depth on a particular course topic (the American Revolution), on a specific region (the Deep South), on a historical period (antebellum America), or another topic/theme (slave life), for example. I am open to nearly all topics, as long as they allow you to meet the requirements of the paper. I encourage students to explore topics that will help them tackle a portion of their exam/field lists or provide some necessary background for a research topic.

In addition to the content, I will evaluate papers for both style and grammar. Therefore, I expect all papers to be well written and free from any grammatical errors. Later in the quarter, I will provide handouts detailing my expectations regarding style and grammar. My feedback on your précis and the short essay will also clarify my expectations.

Grading Scale

4.0	980-1,000 pts.	2.8	830-839 pts.	1.6	710-719 pts.
3.9	960-979 pts.	2.7	820-829 pts.	1.5	700-709 pts.
3.8	950-959 pts.	2.6	810-819 pts.	1.4	690-699 pts.
3.7	930-949 pts.	2.5	800-809 pts.	1.3	680-689 pts.
3.6	910-929 pts.	2.4	790-799 pts.	1.2	670-679 pts.
3.5	900-909 pts.	2.3	780-789 pts.	1.1	660-669 pts.
3.4	890-899 pts.	2.2	770-779 pts.	1.0	650-659 pts.
3.3	880-889 pts.	2.1	760-769 pts.	0.9	640-649 pts.
3.2	870-879 pts.	2.0	750-759 pts.	0.8	630-639 pts.
3.1	860-869 pts.	1.9	740-749 pts.	0.7	600-629 pts.
3.0	850-859 pts.	1.8	730-739 pts.	0.0	0-599 pts.
2.9	840-849 pts.	1.7	720-729 pts.		

Emergencies

In the event of illness, a death in your family, or other catastrophic, personal crisis, I will be sympathetic and flexible, provided that you alert your me as soon as possible and preferably in advance of an assignment's due date. Belated excuses will not account for poorly done or late work. You will need to support any medical excuses with the appropriate, written documentation.

Communication

Meeting in person with me during office hours is the best way to communicate. If you have more immediate needs, feel free to ask me at the end of a seminar session or to contact me via email.

At the beginning of each week, I send out a class announcement via Canvas. This reminds everyone what they should be working on, including readings and assignments. Additionally, I will remind/notify people if there is a change of venue for the class or if there are any changes to

the schedule. Please be sure to set up your Canvas preferences so that you receive course announcement through your email.

Seminar Schedule

Below is the schedule for the quarter. I expect you to complete all readings before class begins.

Week 1 (Sept. 26): Introductions

Week 2 (Oct. 3): Colonial Encounters

- Lipman, *Saltwater Frontier*

Week 3 (Oct. 10): Colonial Captivity & Slavery

- Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*

Week 4 (Oct. 17): Revolutionary Era 1 – (no class this week)

- Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble* – (we'll discuss it the following week)

Week 5 (Oct. 24): Revolutionary Era 2

- Saunt, *West of the Revolution*

Week 6 (Oct. 31): Early North American West

- Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*

Week 7 (Nov. 7): Antebellum Slavery

- Taylor, *Internal Enemy*

Week 8 (Nov. 14): Antebellum Labor

- Rockman, *Scraping By*

Week 9 (Nov. 21): Antebellum South

- Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*

Week 10 (Nov. 28): Civil War

- Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*

Week 11 (Dec. 5): Emancipation

- Masur, *An Example for All the Land*

I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO EMEND THESE POLICIES AND SCHEDULE AT MY DISCRETION AND WILL GIVE ADEQUATE NOTICE OF ANY CHANGES.