2013

HIST 143-01-21 Understanding America Historically I: 1400-1865: Environmental Focus

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1. Course overview

When Columbus arrived in the Caribbean, he unwittingly brought millennia of hemispheric isolation to an end. The result in the Americas was a “new world” for both natives and newcomers.

Europeans projected an array of hopes and dreams on to the American landscape, and strove to make these become realities. Whether their goals were morally pure societies, highly lucrative ones, or both, they established patterns within which American culture developed, and which continue to exert an influence on American culture today.

Native Americans were confronted by unknown diseases and land-hungry Europeans, but also with opportunities to gain power through trade and alliance with the newcomers. Africans found themselves in harsh circumstances in an unfamiliar land, and struggled to create coherent lives for themselves and their families. By challenging Europeans plans that marginalized them those peoples were able to alter the patterns of early American life in significant ways.

We will study how and why Euro-American colonists articulated an expanded vision of personal liberty that was unprecedented in their traditions, and the role of this vision in their fight for independence from Great Britain. Paradoxically, however, the American Revolution took place against a backdrop of slavery. Liberty and slavery were closely entwined. This paradox stalked the young United States as it expanded through the first six decades of the nineteenth century, and then propelled the nation into a civil war. The course closes with this bloody conflict and the mix of trauma and liberation it brought to Americans.

Throughout the course, we will pay particular attention to ecological factors in the spread of European societies and the rise of the United States.
2. Readings (in order of appearance):

Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* [=AC]
William Cronon, *Changes in the Land* [=CitL]
Elizabeth Fenn, *Pox Americana* (excerpt) [=Pox]
Richard Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men* (excerpt) [=Plain]
Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers* (excerpt) [=Founding Bros]
Daniel Vickers, ‘Those Damned Shad’ [=Shad]
Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free* [=HSHF]
Nicole Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (excerpt) [=1812W]
James McPherson, *What They Fought For* [=WTFF]
Robert Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History* [=DTE]

Primary source readings will be available on Blackboard.

Videos will be available via the library website.

3. Evaluation

- Participation 20%
- Short papers (2 x 4 pages) 20%
- Examinations (3) 60%
5. Course schedule (subject to revision)

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<td>10.21</td>
<td>The Critical Period</td>
<td>Pox 80-104</td>
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10.23 Framing the Constitution  BE457-69
10.25 Ratifying the Constitution  Plain 369-85  Federalist 10
10.28 Life in the Early Republic  Founding Brothers
10.30 Life in the Early Republic  Shad  Cooper
11.01 Life in the Early Republic  Midwife's Tale (video)
11.04 Life in the Early Republic  HSHF3-45
11.06 Examination Two
11.08 The War of 1812  HSHF46-70, 1812WL-35
11.11 Transformation of the North  HSHF71-94
11.13 Transformation of the North  DTE55-62  Lowell
11.15 The South  HSHF95-120
11.18 Southern Slavery  DTE71-88  Slave Narratives
11.20 Jacksonian America  HSHF120-59
11.22 Westward Expansion  HSHF160-98
11.25 Westward Expansion  HSHF199-224
12.02 The Mexican War  Mexican War
12.04 Toward Separation  HSHF225-55, DTE118-24
12.06 The Civil War  WTFF1-46
12.09 The Civil War  WTFF47-70, DTE89-98
12.11 Emancipation & Union Victory  University of Battle (vid) Civil War diaries
12.16 Examination Three
12.18 Examination Three
ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students may miss a maximum of three meetings. Students must explain all absences and have documentation when necessary. Students should contact the instructor to make arrangements to make up material they have missed.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Violations of academic honesty will result in failure of the course. Violations of academic honesty include plagiarism. Students with questions about plagiarism can contact the professor for clarification, and/or consult the following video: http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism/index.cfm

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: Core Curriculum Goals for this course

GOAL 1: Students will be effective communicators in writing and orally
1. Students will organize and express their ideas in writing and orally
2. Students will formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources
3. Students will utilize an effective writing process guided by audience, purpose, cultural context, and disciplinary standards

GOAL 2: Students will be critical thinkers
1. Students will analyze and interpret texts, images, objects, artifacts, and quantitative and qualitative data
2. Students will describe the historical, cultural, mythological, and social contexts of texts, works of art, and theories
3. Students will evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence
4. Students will discuss fundamental questions that arise from the human condition, such as questions about the grounds of morality, the nature of justice, the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, the nature of beauty, or the reasonableness of religious faith
5. Students will evaluate the use of science and mathematics in society and everyday life in an informed manner

GOAL 4: Students will be able to understand and appreciate the arts, humanities and science disciplines, and reflect on connections among these studies
1. Students will engage in critical, theological reflection by the method developed in Jesuit and Catholic practice, using human experience and religious traditions as resources to address issues or questions arising in today's world
2. Students will articulate and engage with great ideas in the history of Western thought through the writings of great philosophers
3. Students will think historically in order to understand the past on its own terms and to understand how societies have changed over time
4. Students will recognize and interpret artistic and literary expression
5. Students will apply social science methodology to relevant social issues

GOAL 6: Students will be aware global citizens
1. Students will recognize relationships between diversity, inequality, and social, economic, and political power both in the United States and globally
2. Students will describe contributions made by individuals from diverse and/or underrepresented groups to local, national, and global communities
3. Students will consider perspectives of diverse groups when making decisions
4. Students will interact with sensitivity as members of society and as professionals with people who have ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are different from their own