143-1S U.S. History I (on-line)

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I. Course Objectives

This course is designed to introduce students to some of the most important economic, political, cultural, and intellectual issues in American history to 1865. The course is also designed to promote habits of critical thinking, reading, writing, and speaking. Since the assigned texts are central to the course it is particularly important that students keep up with the reading. **It will be difficult to do well in this course without careful and timely reading.**

The course also serves to acquaint students with "history" as a field of inquiry. History is centrally concerned with change over time. Historians describe and, as fully as possible, explain how things change over time. A major concern of historians, therefore, is cause and effect. Historians prefer multi-causal, rather than mono-causal explanations because we believe things are generally more complex than they might superficially appear. Indeed, a major benefit of historical study is a greater appreciation of complexity and ambiguity. Many historians also prefer historical descriptions and explanations that emphasize active agents rather than impersonal historical forces because they believe women and men play a significant role in making their own history.

Historical inquiry is dependent upon good questions about change over time and logical arguments about cause and effect. History is something very different than "the past," which is only a chaotic jumble of everything that has ever happened. In contrast, history is an analytical
interpretation of selected aspects of the past. To guide our way through the maze of details and events in the past, we need good questions that clarify what it is we want to know and that, therefore, help us select what is important to our inquiry. To answer our questions, which generally do not have single, simple or obvious answers, we construct arguments that marshal as much evidence and logic as possible to develop convincing explanations of change over time. Everything in this course will involve questions and arguments concerning change over time.

II. Student Learning Outcomes: Students who read the texts, participate in the activities, and complete the assignments in this course will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the contrasting interests, values, and policies that shaped the history of the United States to 1865
2. Analyze and assess the significance of key social conflicts (esp. race, religion, class, ethnicity, and gender) in the history of the United States to 1865
3. Explain the role of environmental factors in the economic, social, political, and cultural history of the United States to 1865
4. Understand and interpret historical texts, images, and artifacts
5. Construct and evaluate arguments about change over time
6. Recognize and evaluate the relevance of early American historical precedents to current day issues
7. Distinguish between popular and academic historical writing and evaluate their respective contributions to historical understanding

III. Texts

Please purchase of a copy of Alan Taylor, American Colonies (Penguin). You may also find it convenient to purchase Francis Cogliano, Revolutionary America, 1763-1815 (Routledge), although you will have digital access to this book. All other readings are either direct links or on e-reserves. The e-reserves password is hist143 and the link follows: http://library.xu.edu/eres/courses.aspx?return=toolkit.aspx&page=pm&cid=3001

IV. Assignments and Assessment: The course is graded on a 1000 point scale while each individual assignment is graded on a 100 point scale. The weight of each assignment is noted below. All assignments must be submitted via the appropriate links on the Canvas site.
A. **Postings:** There are discussion groups on Canvas for each of these postings (the due dates are listed in the course schedule – all assignments are due by 11:59PM on the due date). **Post #1.** Initial introductory posting to the group (ungraded but required). Please post a short message introducing yourself to the group (on the discussion board provided on Canvas). Your post should tell us a little something about yourself, why you took the course, for example, and/or your major. Please also review the posts from the other members of the class. **Posts #2-4.** In each of the first three modules, there is a discussion board based on a primary document. Post two or three sentences in response to the questions posed. **Posts #5-7.** Post a response that suggests a way to improve or extend or amend someone else’s post. Be constructive and respectful. (100 points total).

Please note the following rules in postings. Your postings should be specific and supported with facts and examples. In responding to the posts, no initial post can have more than 3 people respond. If you see that a post already has 3 response posts, you must respond to a different post. Your responses to posts should reflect your understanding of the post. If you think a classmate’s post is unclear or incorrect, say so and state the reason for your position. If you think a post is correct, also support your reason for saying so. Be respectful. Please re-read your posts to assess your “tone” so that you don’t offend someone unintentionally.

***the following assignments are all to be submitted to turnitin.com, accessible from the Canvas site under the “Assignments” tab.

B. **Quizzes and homework assignments:** For each of the first two modules, there are three quizzes. You should read the assigned material first before taking the quizzes which are timed (thirty minutes, which should be ample time). For each of the last two modules, there are five homework questions. You should answer each in approximately 125 words. The homework questions cover the readings and narrated presentations. This assignment develops and provides an assessment of student learning outcomes 1-5, 7. (100 points for each set of quizzes/homework questions, total of 400 points)

C. **Four short essays** (no more than 750-1250 words each), one for each of the major sections of the course. The essay should analyze, interpret, and synthesize the various readings and presentations to develop a well-supported argument in response to the question posed. Students have the option of posting a paragraph from their short essays for modules #1-2 to get suggestions for improvement. This assignment develops and provides an assessment of student learning outcomes 1-5, 7 and especially 6. (100 points for each of the short essays, total of 400 points).

D. **Analysis of the Differences Between Professional and Popular History:** Choose an historical period or event that we have studied and explore the range of venues and media sources that examine or discuss that period or event (web sites, movies, documentaries, TV shows). Then develop a presentation (using powerpoint, keynote, google docs, camtasia or other presentation software) that discusses the differences, and the strengths
and weaknesses, of these more popular historical accounts in contrast with the professional and academic history you have been reading/viewing in the rest of the course. The presentation should include approximately 1000 words and 10 images. Some students may want to use a voice narration on the presentation, but this is not required. If you prefer, you may create the presentation using a word processing program. This assignment develops and provides an assessment of student learning outcome 7. (100 points)

****Late assignments will be penalized at the discretion of the instructor. As a general policy, and in fairness to those who get their work in on time, the penalty for lateness is 5% off per day.


***Specific grading rubrics for the various assignments can be found on the Canvas site under course content.

Please note the following policy from page 52 of the Xavier University Catalog (the History department and your instructors take this seriously.

****if you are uncertain what constitutes plagiarism, please see the XU library tutorial: http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism/index.cfm

“The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation.”

“All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.”

“Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an “F” in the course, and expulsion from the University.”

The course proceeds through four modules (American Colonies, Revolution and Republic, Market Revolution, and Disunion and Civil War). These modules are best followed on the Canvas website.