History 7500
Graduate Proseminar in Early American History
Fall 2019

Professor Eric Hinderaker
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Course Description: This proseminar is the first in a two-semester sequence intended to introduce you to the graduate-level study of American history. We will cover a series of key topics in early American history, with an emphasis on the methods, ideas, and disagreements that structure the scholarship. We will emphasize the importance of critical reading and writing; we will also focus on the question of how to translate each week’s material into an undergraduate classroom setting.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of this semester, students should:

- know the survey narrative of Anglo-American history from 1600-1865;
- understand the principal historiographical trends affecting the topics covered in the class;
- be able to craft an effective 500-word book review;
- have started to create an annotated syllabus for either a survey class or an upper-division class;
- have started to create an annotated bibliography in the field of American history;
- know how to write an effective historiographical essay;
- be adept at participating effectively in a scholarly discussion of assigned readings;
- understand the broad range of disciplinary learning outcomes as outlined on the History Department’s web page.

Format: The principal component of each class meeting will be a detailed discussion of the assigned reading, which consists each week of a book in the field and one or more contextualizing essays. You should come to class well prepared to discuss the content, strengths, and weaknesses of the readings and the theoretical, methodological, and historiographical orientations of their authors. All books are available for purchase in the University Bookstore and on 2-hour reserve at Marriott Library. The additional readings are available through JSTOR or another library database (in the case of journal articles), or on Canvas (in the case of book chapters).

Course Requirements: Everyone enrolled in this class must fulfill the following requirements:

- complete the assigned readings every week and participate actively in discussions;
- write four 500-600 word (2 pages, double-spaced) book reviews, on any of the assigned books on the syllabus, to be turned in on the day we discuss the book in class;
- help to lead a discussion on the assigned readings;
- begin work on an annotated syllabus (for an example, see here);
• begin work on an annotated bibliography (for an example, see here);
• write one 12 to 15-page historiographical essay on a topic of particular interest to you. This paper is due Wednesday, December 11.

**Overarching Questions and Themes:** In this course, we will explore innumerable details and consider historians’ arguments on many topics. At the same time, you should not lose sight of the big picture. The following questions address central themes in the course with major interpretive significance. They are worth considering and reconsidering throughout the semester:

1. The colonization of the Americas was fundamentally shaped by natural forces like climate, ecology, and resource endowments (the presence or absence of precious metals, for example). What place should these constraints and opportunities have in histories of the Americas? Focusing on coastal North America, how did the natural world enable some forms of colonization while foreclosing others?
2. What were the essential attributes of early modern empires? Considering Britain’s North American/Caribbean empire as a system, describe its principal attributes—administrative, economic, social, and cultural—and identify its sources of strength. What worked especially well in this imperial system? What elements remained relatively underdeveloped?
3. If race is primarily a social construction, then the period covered by this course is the era in which modern conceptions of race first took shape. How did colonization contribute to racial formation? In what ways were European experiences with Native Americans and Africans different, perhaps even contradictory, with respect to the formation of racial concepts, and in what ways were they congruent? How did Native Americans and African Americans come to understand racial difference in this same period? How did their ideas contradict those of Euroamericans, and in what ways were they congruent?
4. Gender, like race, is a social construction. Many people assume that patterns of gender difference are constant, but in fact conceptions of gender—of the essential attributes of masculinity and femininity—are subject to historical change. Some readings on the syllabus address gender directly; in others, it is not a primary category of analysis but gendered values and identities are implicit in the material. How did categories of gender difference change from the early seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth? How did the processes of colonization contribute to that change?
5. Is the American Revolution, as it is most commonly called, aptly named, or would we be better served by labeling it the American War for Independence? If you think it is best called a revolution, how would you make a case for its revolutionary effects? Consider developments in politics and governance, the social order, and cultural norms in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. If you think it is best understood as a war for independence, how would you argue for the essential continuity of political, social, and cultural forms from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century?
6. The historian Walter Nugent has argued that “the United States has created three empires during its history,” the first being the “continental” empire acquired
between the end of the American Revolution and the mid-nineteenth century. Do you agree or disagree with the characterization of American expansion in the early national period, beginning with the acquisition and settlement of Transappalachia and culminating with the US-Mexican War, as empire building? Why or why not?

7. What, in your view, was the primary cause of the Civil War? Was it most essentially a failure of the political system, or was it the result of a fundamental incompatibility of Northern and Southern social and economic orders? Map out the social, economic, and political developments of the antebellum period, paying attention to economic structures, social orders, value systems, and political conflicts, and think about how these developments might be deployed in making your case.

**Attendance**: All students are expected to attend every class meeting. Remember that missing one class meeting means missing one week of class. If an unavoidable conflict arises, speak with me ahead of time. You will be expected to complete additional written work to make up for missed class time. For reference, the University’s attendance policy is available in the Student Code at Policy 6-100III-O.

**Grading and Incompletes**: Your grade in class will be based on both your written work and the extent and quality of your participation in class discussions. Do not underestimate the importance of talking in class. I do not give incompletes except in cases of unusually dire need. Your grade will be calculated as follows:

- class participation: 35%
- book reviews: 30%
- historiographical essay: 35%

**Academic Misconduct**: Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct, misrepresenting one’s work, and inappropriately collaborating. Definitions can be found in the Student Code at Policy 6-4001-B2. If you are suspected of academic misconduct, I will proceed according to the policies of the History Department, the College of Humanities, and the University, which are outlined on the Department’s web page.

**Students with Disabilities**: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability and Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDA will work with you and the instructor to arrange for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability and Access.

**University Safety**: The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information
regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit
https://safeu.utah.edu/.

**Addressing Sexual Misconduct.** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment
based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender
identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability
and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such
as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s
status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or
assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of
Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the
Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and
confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-
7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-
2677(COPS).

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**Schedule of Topics and Assignments**

**Week 1: Aug. 21.** Introduction; the problem of scale in early American history.

*Readings:*


**Week 2: Aug. 28.** Climate and colonization.

*Readings:*

Sam White, *A Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe’s Encounter with North America* (Harvard, 2017);


**Week 3: Sept. 4.** Cattle, swine, and colonization.

*Readings:*

Virginia Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford, 2006);


**Week 4: Sept. 11. The Native New World.**

**Readings:** Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Penn, 2013);


**Week 5: Sept. 18. Family and household labor.**

**Readings:** Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850* (UNC Press, 1994);


**Week 6: Sept. 25. Christianity, race, and slavery.**

**Readings:** Rebecca Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Hopkins, 2016);


**Week 7: Oct. 2. Slaves and masters.**


Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Penn, 2004), 107-143;

Week 8: Oct. 9. Fall Break; no class.

Readings: Zara Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World* (Yale, 2017);


Week 12: Nov. 6. Gender and the new republic
Readings: Clare A. Lyons, Sex Among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia 1730-1830 (UNC Press, 2006); JER 32:3 (Fall 2012): special issue on poor women in early America. Scan the six articles in this issue with an eye toward sources and analytical questions. In Project Muse: http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.lib.utah.edu/journals/journal_of_the_early_republic/toc/jer.32.3.html

Week 13: Nov. 13. Cotton, capitalism, and slavery

Week 14: Nov. 20. The path to abolition

Week 15: Nov. 27. War for the West.
Core Reading: Brian DeLay, War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the US-Mexican War (Yale, 2008);

Week 16: Dec. 4. The Civil War.
Core Reading: Drew Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Vintage, 2009).


Your final essay is due by 5:00 on Wednesday, December 11.