

American History To 1865
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Course Objectives

The following course objectives introduce students to history as a subject and a methodology. In doing so, even simply reviewing this syllabus on the first day of class begins an ongoing examination of traditional questions, views, content, and assumptions. This syllabus suggests that the course will include not only new knowledge and ideas but also new theoretical models. The third objective suggests a key theme of the course that is particularly well suited to a multicultural approach to history: what does it mean to be an "American"?

This course is a survey of United States history with particular emphasis on social, political, cultural, and economic developments from colonization to the Civil War. The course has three major objectives.

The first is that students learn the basic chronology of events, familiarizing themselves with important trends and players in the political, economic, and social arenas.

The second is that students learn to think historically. Historians do not just verify facts; they argue with one another over what the facts are and what they mean. It is important that students know certain dates or names, but they are only engaged in historical study when they have the skills to argue about the meanings of those dates and the significance of those names. Through in-class and out-of-class written exercises and class discussion, students will practice analyzing pieces of historical evidence, such as autobiographies and other primary sources of evidence (found in the Wheeler and Becker text). The exams will test the students' success at learning the material and at mastering these historical skills. Through written exercises and class discussion, students will practice analyzing pieces of historical evidence, such as autobiographies and other primary sources of evidence.

The third objective is that students come to recognize historical variety in the American society: people of different races, ethnicities, and religions, of different classes and regions, and of both sexes. We will be looking at their struggles to define themselves and this country up to the Civil War.

Required Books

Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*

James C. Seaver, editor, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

William Wheeler and Susan Becker, *Discovering the American Past* (Vol.I)

Students are required to attend all classes and participate actively in discussions. The final grade will be lowered when a student exceeds three absences. Make-up or late work will not be accepted except in extreme circumstances. Should such circumstances arise, it is your responsibility to discuss the situation with me and work out an arrangement to make up the missed work. It is the student's responsibility to acquire lecture notes from fellow students for missed lectures. If you have a situation that needs special consideration, such as a physical challenge or a learning disability, you must bring documentation of it to me and discuss alternative arrangements to accommodate your needs ahead of time. Dates for dropping the course and registration rules are announced in the college catalog and should be followed closely. All graded work must be your own. Any incidents of academic misconduct will be defined and dealt with in accordance with the policies stated in the Student Code of Conduct.

This syllabus is subject to modification.

Grading

The assessments of student learning below indicate an appreciation for diverse learning styles as well as the importance of multiple methods of assessment. As a multicultural experience, this course attempts to involve the students' knowledge and experiences as an active part of both lectures and discussions. The methods for determining grades are also varied.

The student's grade for the course will be determined by:

1. Exam Results (3 Exams)

The written exams are designed to insure that students are learning the narrative of American history, but they do more than just this. The exams are also designed to encourage students to think historically. The identification questions include a discussion of the significance of each item – this gets the students to think analytically and begin connecting items with larger trends in American history.

- Exams will be essay in nature and will be written in a bluebook in class. Exam #1 is scheduled for September 30 and will cover Cultures in Contact, colonial Virginia, and New England Puritanism. It is worth 15 points. Exam #2 is scheduled for November 4 and will cover the American Revolution, the first party system, and the formation of an American nationality. It is worth 15 points. The student will be asked to answer shorter identification questions and a longer essay on the first two exams. The final exam will be given during Final Exam Week (December 9-14) and will be worth 30 points. The student will be asked to write shorter identification answers, a longer essay on the last third of the course, and a longer comprehensive essay. The exact nature of these exams will be discussed in more detail as the test dates approach.

The cumulative essay question noted above addresses the relationship between diversity and democracy by requiring students to analyze the basic values and principles of Americans as expressed in their key political documents. The question typically asked is: The Declaration of Independence declared that “all men are created equal [and] that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights [such as] life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” How successful were Americans, both before and after the Declaration of Independence, in living up to these ideals? In answering this question, focus on issues of socioeconomic, racial, and gender equality.

2. Two Formal Papers based on the assigned autobiographies

The essays provide students the opportunity to approach topics from angles that interest them. The essay assignments also encourage the students to think critically in terms of making arguments based on primary evidence.

- The paper based on Olaudah Equiano is due September 20. The paper based on Mary Jemison is due October 30. Each should be 3-4 pages in length.

- The title of each formal paper should be a question, and the question should meet the following two criteria: it should relate to a major theme in American history, and it should give you an opportunity to draw on material from the autobiographies in your effort to answer the question.

The first paragraph in each of your essays should answer the question in your title briefly. Do not hold back - be direct and give your answer at the outset.

In the body of the essay, explain yourself in detail and present evidence in support of your answer. In this part of the essay, cite the autobiography. Quote it briefly, or refer to facts contained in it, but in either case provide the page number. This part of your essay should be approximately three pages, with four or so paragraphs.

In your final paragraph, return to your thesis - the answer you gave to the question - and expand upon it, explaining why you think the issue you chose to discuss is important for the history of the United States.

- Grading Formula for the Formal Papers

Each paper will be graded according to the following 10-point scale. Partial credit will be available in each category.

- 1) FOUR points will be awarded to papers that present an insightful argument related to major themes in American history.
- 2) TWO points will be granted to papers that use evidence effectively and contain a close, careful examination of the assigned autobiographies, with citations.
- 3) TWO points will be awarded to papers that are well organized, with an opening paragraph setting forth a coherent thesis, and the remainder of the paper designed to support your claims.
- 4) TWO points will be granted to papers that are written grammatically, without spelling errors, run-on sentences or sentence fragments, and without other grammatical mistakes.

3. Discussion

The discussion assignments introduce students to a variety of topics in more detail by examining primary evidence. The students use the Wheeler and Becker text to examine primary documents and draw conclusions from them. For each discussion session, I begin with a brief writing assignment based on a question asked prior to class. After collecting the assignments, I usually begin with small group work that allows students to express themselves more freely (without worrying about my reaction or speaking in front of 30 students). The class then meets as a large group to share their ideas and conclusions. The discussion sessions are designed to allow the free sharing of power and ideas in open and frank participation.

- Over the course of the semester, 10 class sessions will be devoted to discussion. On these days, classes will begin with an "attendance ticket" -- a short written response to a question based on the primary evidence assigned for the day. The questions listed below with the dates of each discussion session will help prepare you for the question that will be asked. Your discussion grade will be based on attendance and your response to the question asked at the start of class. There are a total of 20 discussion points, or 2 points per session (based on attendance and attendance ticket).

- These questions below have three purposes: 1) to help focus your mind and to help you think historically as you do the reading, 2) to prepare you for the "attendance ticket," and 3) to prepare you to participate in discussions.

- The tentative calendar for discussion sessions is:

- September 4: Cortez and Montezuma (W&B, Chapter 1)
 - o Based on the evidence presented, how might mid-17th-century European have viewed Native Americans? Why?
- September 13: *Olaudah Equiano*
 - o Prepare three possible questions for your essay, which is due September 20. After each question, list the kinds of evidence you might use to answer the question, including page numbers.
- September 23: Anne Hutchinson (W&B, Chapter 2)
 - o Imagine you were present at the trial of Hutchinson. Write a letter to an imaginary friend in Europe describing the Hutchinson incident.
- October 7: The Boston Massacre (W&B, Chapter 4)
 - o Prepare a case for either the prosecution or the defense. Refer directly to key evidence and witnesses.
- October 18: The First American Party System (W&B, Chapter 5)
 - o Why did the 1794 Congressional election in Philadelphia turn out the way it did?
- October 25: *Mary Jemison*
 - o Prepare three possible questions for your essay, which is due October 30. After each question, list the kinds of evidence you might use to answer the question, including page numbers.

- November 11: Cherokee Removal (W&B, Chapter 6)
 - o Assess the alternatives to Cherokee removal available to Jackson. Could removal have been avoided?
- November 18: The Working Girls of Lowell (W&B, Chapter 7)
 - o Imagine that you are either a factory owner or a factory girl. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the system.
- November 26: Slaves' Stories (W&B, Chapter 8)
 - o How did slaves feel about slavery?
- December 6: African American Soldiers in the Civil War (W&B, Chapter 10)
 - o What were the general arguments in the North and the South about using African Americans as soldiers?

Grading Scale

92-100	=	A
90-92	=	A-
88-90	=	B+
82-88	=	B
80-82	=	B-
78-80	=	C+
72-78	=	C
70-72	=	C-
68-70	=	D+
62-68	=	D
60-62	=	D-
0-60	=	F

Tentative Calendar for Lectures

August 28: Cultures in Contact (Brinkley, 1-18, 22, 25)
 September 6: Colonial Virginia (Brinkley, 19-22, 27-38, 50-1, 54-5, 61-2, 66-73, 78-9)
 September 16: New England Puritanism (Brinkley, 41-9, 51-4, 62-5, 74-8, 79-82)
 September 25: The Origins of the American Revolution (Brinkley, 94-121)
 October 9: Rise of the American Party System (141-153, 155-169, 172-177)
 October 23: Formation of an American Nationality (Brinkley, 180-240)
 November 6: Jacksonian America (Brinkley, 242-270)
 November 13: The North and the South (Brinkley, 310-334, 356-362)
 November 22: And the War Came (Brinkley, 364-418)

Important Dates

See above for due dates on W&B papers.

September 20: Formal Paper, Olaudah Equiano
 September 30: Exam #1
 October 30: Formal Paper, Mary Jemison
 November 4: Exam #2
 December 9-14: Final Exam (TBA)

I include a sample outline of the first lecture I give in this course, "Cultures in Contact," which usually takes me about one-and-a-half weeks to cover. I have made suggestions in the outline on how to cover the topic from a multi-cultural perspective. I am also working on creating a file of visual documents to encourage student analysis throughout the lectures. The course incorporates a combination of lecture and discussion classes. Even during "lectures," the students are actively involved in the class as I ask them questions and they have the opportunity to make comments. In this format, any number of diversity issues are recognized and covered, always in a way that integrates the topics into the course instead of treating them as "add-ons."

Cultures in Contact

- I. Introduction: "The Age of Discovery"
 - a. Europe in 1492
 - b. Europe and the "Age of Discovery"
 - c. The New World and the "Age of Discovery"
 - d. New World Policies of Europeans

The first part of the lecture lends itself to self-identification. In studying the earliest interactions between different cultures in the New World during the so-called "Age of Discovery," students analyze how their perceptions of the world are shaped by experiences, attitudes, and cultures. Students also examine stereotypes and their influence. Third, students analyze how group membership contributes to identity and social power. Finally, students analyze behaviors that contribute to or diminish societal tensions.

- II. The Spanish in the New World
 - a. Christopher Columbus
 - b. The Conquistadors
 - c. Spanish Policy in the New World
 - d. The Spanish and the (present day) United States
- III. The French in the New World
 - a. Introduction
 - b. French Explorers
 - c. French Policy in the New World

The second and third sections of the lecture address the appreciation of diversity and its value. In doing so, students will recognize the contributions of different cultures to the history of America and the United States from the very beginning. Also, students will analyze how stereotypes, often based in misunderstanding, lead to fear and mistrust.

- IV. Early English Efforts to Colonize the New World
 - a. Incentives to Colonize
 - b. Early Attempts at Colonization

After the first lecture is finished, the first Wheeler and Becker assignment is due. The discussion is based on the question listed above and focuses on promoting a consciousness of the diversity that exists in society. During this discussion, students identify and discuss cultural diversity in the United States. They also discuss the ramifications for societies that are intolerant. Finally, the primary documents included for analysis in this assignment allow students examine the issue of privilege.