Description
In this survey course we will explore change and continuity in the cultural, political, and economic life of early America, from the pre-Columbian period to the post-Civil War era of Reconstruction. We will turn our attention away from the names, dates, and facts of the period and towards its broader currents, patterns, and trends. Our focus will remain on the development and transformation of these phenomena and how they shaped the everyday experiences of people “on the ground.” By assessing history through the lenses of change and continuity, you will come to understand the American past as something immensely effectual rather than stagnant and irrelevant. Secondly, and in that vein, you will come to understand that history is not simply what happened before the present, but is a constantly evolving creation by human beings conditioned by their own historical moments. That is to say, history is also something analyzed, interpreted, and debated among professional historians, and society more generally, as fresh evidence is continually uncovered and historical subjects are approached from new angles and interpretive frameworks.

By the end of this course, you should also have sharpened your communication skills. This will be accomplished by writing clearly, concisely, and persuasively, by articulating an argument and supporting it with evidence, and by discussing class material courteously and constructively.

Method of Instruction
This course demands your active participation via in-class discussions. Lectures, assigned readings, audio-visual material, and primary source analyses will also comprise the framework with which you will advance your knowledge of the American past and the ways it is understood today. As a side note, if you need to miss class for any reason, be certain to contact a classmate for quality notes. It would behoove you to get contact information from someone early on in the semester.

Class Requirements
Attendance/Participation
Mondays and Wednesdays will be lecture periods, all of which you are expected to attend and prepare for by reviewing your notes from preceding lectures. You are encouraged to ask questions and/or offer comments during the lectures.

Fridays will be designated discussion periods giving you the opportunity to dissect that week’s assigned readings. To facilitate this exercise, you will be organized into small groups for the semester, though your discussion grades will be earned individually. Your discussion grade, moreover, will be determined by your small group peers as well as myself at the end of the semester. We will begin each discussion period in these small groups, but reconvene as a class mid-way through the hour. During discussion periods, I will circulate around the room, assisting with questions and noting your talking points. This is worth 20% of your final grade for the class.
Synthesis Papers
Two synthesis papers are assigned (6 pages each, double-spaced). Your goal in these assignments is to creatively synthesize our weekly article readings with our first two monographs (Section One readings with Anderson’s *Creatures of Empire*, and Section Two readings with Nissenbaum’s *The Battle for Christmas*). You should make the readings speak to one another in insightful and thought-provoking ways. In what ways, for example, can we think of certain authors as in dialogue with others? How does one historian’s work complicate or enrich another’s? Are their arguments compatible or incompatible? Be creative, but back up your ideas with the texts too. Papers are due in class on the dates listed in the schedule below. No late papers are accepted. Paper 1 is worth 15% of your course grade, and Paper 2 is worth 25%.

Examinations
Two in-class examinations are assigned. These will require you to synthesize class material, thereby demonstrating your grasp of the broad themes and trends in early America. Missed exams cannot be made up under any circumstances. If you have verifiable documentation of your absence during an exam, you will be given the opportunity to complete instead a comparable assignment or an entirely different, make-up version of the exam. The mid-term is worth 15% of your course grade, and the final is worth 25%.

Required Texts
Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (Vintage, 2009)

Academic Dishonesty
Please do your own work. Cheating on any written assignment will not be tolerated by either myself or the college. This includes plagiarism (using someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as your own.) You will not, for example, copy another student’s work, anything off the internet, or anything from a book while claiming it as your own and not using proper citation. If you have further questions about how this policy applies to a particular assignment, please consult either myself or the Oberlin College Honor Code.

Miscellaneous
The use of electronic devices during class periods is strictly prohibited. This includes cell phones, computers, ipads, etc. Violating this policy will result in the lowering of one letter grade for the course per instance. If extenuating circumstances require that you use a computer in class, you must discuss this with me during the first week of class.

If a pattern of tardiness develops, you will receive a verbal warning from me. If it continues past that point, your final grade will be deducted five percentage points each time you are late for class.

Grade Breakdown
A+ 97-100%; A 93-96%; A- 90-92%; B+ 87-89%; B 83-86%; B- 80-82%; C+ 77-79%; C 73-76%; C- 70-72%; D 60-69%; F 59% and below
Course Schedule

Section One

August 31 – September 4 – Introduction – Worlds Apart

September 7 – No Class – Labor Day

September 9 – September 11 – Transplantation

September 14 – September 18 – The Transformation of Colonial Society
  Randy Sparks, “The Two Princes of Calabar: An Atlantic Odyssey from Slavery to Freedom,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (July 2002), 555-584

September 21 – September 25 – From Colonies to Empire
  Linford D. Fisher, “‘It Prov’d But Temporary, & Short Lived’: Pequot Affiliation in the First Great Awakening,” *Ethnohistory* 59:3 (Summer 2012), 465-488

September 23 – No Class – Yom Kippur

September 28 – October 2 – Imperial Breakdown

  October 2 – Paper 1 due

Section Two

October 5 – October 9 – The War for Independence and the First Republic

October 12 – October 16 – A New Republic and the Rise of Parties
  October 14 – Mid-Term Exam
October 19 – October 23 – No Class – Fall Recess

October 26 – October 30 – Jacksonian America

November 2 – November 6 – The Market Revolution

November 9 – November 13 – Coming to Terms with Change – Social Reform

November 13 – Paper 2 due

Section Three

November 16 – November 20 – The Way West

November 23 – November 25 – Slavery and the Old South

November 27 – No Class – Thanksgiving Break

November 30 – December 4 – The Politics of Sectionalism

December 7 – December 11 – Civil War and Reconstruction
Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (Vintage, 2009)

Final Examination Period – TBD