

**Oberlin College  
Department of History**

HIST 103: American History to 1877  
Fall 2013  
MWF – 10:00-10:50am  
King Building 321

Instructor: Matthew R. Bahar  
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Office Hours: W – 1:00-2:30, F – 11:00-12:30, & by appt.

Description

In this survey course we will examine various facets of American history from the pre-Columbian era to the post-Civil War period of Reconstruction. Unlike prior history classes you may have experienced, this course will not center on the rote memorization of random facts (i.e. people, dates, events) and their regurgitation in assignments. Instead, we will be focusing on the dominant social, intellectual, political, and economic trends and changes in early America, how these phenomena developed over time, and how they shaped the human experience. By assessing history through the lenses of continuity and transformation, 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. 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 in a clear, concise, and cogent prose and by discussing class material during discussion periods.

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

Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford University Press, 2004)  
Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (Vintage, 2009)  
Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas: A Cultural History of America's Most Cherished Holiday* (Vintage, 1997)

### 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.

### 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

#### **September 4 – September 6 – Introduction – Worlds Apart**

Richard J. Chacon and Rubén G. Mendoza, eds., *North American Indigenous Warfare and Ritual Violence* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2007), pp. 129-148, 160-181, 202-221, 222-232 [Blackboard]

#### **September 9 – September 13 – Transplantation, 1600-1685**

Alfred W. Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 33 (1976), 289-299

Paul Kelton, "Avoiding the Smallpox Spirits: Colonial Epidemics and Southeastern Indian Survival," *Ethnohistory* 51 (2004), 45-71

#### **September 16 – September 20 – The Transformation of Colonial Society**

Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53:2 (April 1996), 251-288

Randy Sparks, "The Two Princes of Calabar: An Atlantic Odyssey from Slavery to Freedom," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (July 2002), 555-584

#### **September 23 – September 27 – From Colonies to Empire**

Jon Butler, "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction," *Journal of American History* 69:2 (September 1982), 305-325

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 30 – October 4 – Imperial Breakdown, 1763-1774**

Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford University Press, 2004)

October 4 – Paper 1 due

### Section Two

#### **October 7 – October 11 – The War for Independence and the First Republic, 1774-1789**

Benjamin L. Carp, "Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58 (2001), 781-818

T.H. Breen, "Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community on the Eve of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 50 (1993), 471-501

#### **October 14 – October 18 – A New Republic and the Rise of Parties, 1789-1800**

October 14 – Mid-Term Exam

Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," in Richard Beeman, et. al., eds., *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 69-109 [Blackboard]

Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (1987), 689-721

October 21 – October 25 – No Class – Fall Recess

**October 28 – November 1 – Jacksonian America**

Francis Paul Prucha, “Andrew Jackson’s Indian Policy: A Reassessment,” *Journal of American History* 56 (December, 1969), 527-539

Mary Young, “The Cherokee Nation: Mirror of the Republic,” *American Quarterly* 33 (Winter, 1981), 502-524

**November 4 – November 8 – The Market Revolution**

James A. Henretta, “Families and Farms: Mentalité in Pre-Industrial America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (1978), 3-32

David Jaffee, “Peddlers of Progress and the Transformation of the Rural North, 1760-1860,” *Journal of American History* 78:2 (September 1991), 511-535

**November 11 – November 15 – Coming to Terms with Change – Social Reform**

Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas: A Cultural History of America’s Most Cherished Holiday* (Vintage, 1997)

November 15 – Paper 2 due

**Section Three**

**November 18 – November 22 – The Way West**

Brian DeLay, “Independent Indians and the U.S.-Mexican War,” *American Historical Review* 112 (2007), 35-68

John C. Pinheiro, “‘Religion Without Restriction’: Anti-Catholicism, All Mexico, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23:1 (Spring 2003), 69-96

**November 25 – November 27 – Slavery and the Old South**

Stephanie M.H. Camp, “The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, 1830-1861,” *Journal of Southern History* 68:3 (August 2002), 533-572

Jeff Forret, “Conflict and the ‘Slave Community’: Violence among Slaves in Upcountry South Carolina,” *Journal of Southern History* 70:3 (August 2008), 783-824 [Blackboard]

November 29 – No Class – Thanksgiving Break

**December 2 – December 6 – The Politics of Sectionalism**

Stephanie McCurry, “The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina,” *Journal of American History* 78:4 (March 1992), 1245-1264

Michael E. Woods, “‘The Indignation of Freedom-Loving People’: The Caning of Charles Sumner and Emotion in Antebellum Politics,” *Journal of Social History* 44:3 (Spring 2011), 689-705 [Blackboard]

**December 9 – 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**