

1 | Prompt

The telling of American history has become one of the focal points of conflicts over our national culture, particularly the relationship between ideas of American exceptionalism and stories of race and conquest in US history. What is the value of a shared national narrative and what dangers does crafting such a narrative present? Why does the telling of US history generate such controversy?

In a 2-3 page, double spaced essay, evaluate how the authors we've read so far approach the telling of American history and make an argument for what you see as the key considerations in constructing a narrative of early American history. Historical narratives, by their nature, are created through choices of what to include and what not, what to emphasize and what to relegate to the margins. In making your argument, include an explicit engagement with the sources we've worked with so far. You might, for example, engage with the controversy over the 1619 project, with Dunbar-Ortiz's criticism of multiculturalism or with Richter's geographical positioning of history.

2 | Outline

2.0.1 | Main idea

There isn't a clear consensus as to what (lens/approaches) topics to discuss among scholars in regards to early American history (before 1776). Some scholars write mainly about the economic aspect of pre-independence history, whereas others may write mainly about the culture of the many groups that inhabited early North America. . . many other approaches. However, the two topics are not mutually exclusive, and in fact are causal: economics influence culture, and culture influences economics. Despite this fact, many examples of historical literature focus on only one aspect out of the two intertwined topics. Many times this division is done for the sake of brevity, as there are only a certain number of pages that can go in a book until it becomes impractical. However, dividing these two topics can hinder our understanding of the complex relationships between them.

Socio-economic lens. The socio-economic lens is effective for the analysis of early American history because the cyclical relationship between a society's economics and social forces sheds light on the. . . American Paradox - value of looking at both economic and social forces (Author's approach) Facing East - "

2.0.2 | Outline (1st Draft)

1. Intro thing - present thesis
2. Flaws of some of the readings (i.e. they are incomplete)
 - (a) Pilgrims and Puritans
 - i. Author focuses on Pilgrim and Puritan culture and their differences
 - ii. Fails to address economic motivations
 - (b) 1619
 - i. Author focuses on cultural and social aspect of slavery
 - ii. Fails to address economic factors
 - (c) All in All
 - i. When looking at history through purely a cultural lens, it is impossible to understand the true cocktail of motivations that led to the many events
 - ii. It is impossible to be "right" about history without looking at history through both lenses

3. Good Analysis: Facing East from Indian Country and The American Paradox

(a) Facing East

- i. Talks mostly about how Europeans interacted with Indians
- ii. Economic => Cultural
 - A. Indians using European tools for ceremonies
- iii. Cultural => Economic
 - A. Furs perceived as being luxurious led to cooperation between Indians and Europeans and cash flow towards the Americas

(b) American Paradox

4. Conclusion: Why is this analysis style important?

- (a) More specifically, how does the "new view" of culture and economics being merged impact American history as a subject and how does that have an impact on current day politics/social dynamics/etc.?

2.0.3 | Outline (2nd Draft) + Notes

- The socio-economic lens is effective for the analysis of early American history because the cyclical relationship between a society's economics and social forces sheds light on the causes of the many events.
- Intro thing - present thesis
- Early North American Pre-independence History and Facing East
 - Social and Economic factors are able to be separated, but viewing the events through either lens will not give the full picture
 - Example: Native American–European Trading
 - * Fur Trading
 - Some Native American tribes prospered because of their geography and environment, whereas others were left broke. This created power balances. (economic impacts social)
 - * Metal blades
 - Very valuable to Native Americans due to their improved durability in comparison to Native American tools, and allowed for more efficient work (economic impacts social)
 - * Guns
 - Very powerful in inter-tribe warfare, were highly sought after (both economic impacts social and social impacts economic)
- Later North American Pre-independence History and American Paradox
 - Social and Economic factors cannot be separated; they are so intertwined that it is impossible to categorize events as being purely economic or social
 - Example: Master-Servant Dynamic + Slaves
 - * Civil unrest due to unemployment in Britain leads to import of workers (acting as servants) to America
 - * Fear of similar unrest in America from large worker immigration leads to slave imports and reliance, as well as more rights for former servants

3 | Essay (1st Draft)