

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
 - 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)
 - /"Among the northern Algonquian hunter-gatherers...commercial hunting was likely to crowd out almost all other economic pursuits, and to make communities almost entirely dependent on European trading partners for nearly all their supplies."/ (Facing East 51)
 - /"Wherever the beaver were found, and for hunter-gatherers and agricultural peoples alike, the vast explosion of material wealth profoundly reshaped patterns of social interaction and political authority."/ (Facing East 51)
 - /"Formerly weak villages that may have owed tribute to larger and more powerful neighbors could be transformed into dominant powers by their geographical proximity or political ties to European trading partners."/ (Facing East 52)
 - /"Traditional forms of economic and political behavior remained intact even as traditional patterns of status and authority eroded."/ (Facing East 53) /*
 - * Metal blades
 - Impacted inter-tribe warfare due to their improved efficiency
 - *"Hatchets and war clubs embedded with iron blades made hand-to-hand combat far deadlier than stone and wood alone."* (Facing East 49)
 - *"Arrows tipped with brass were significantly more lethal than those with flint heads."* (Facing East 49)
 - These all lead into the next quote:

- /"Within two decades, however, the proliferation of European settlements had introduced enough metal into North America to promote a rough balance of power among the surviving participants in this first arms race."/ (Facing East 49) => "Survived" implies that the importing of metals and the subsequent arms race led to a radically different inter-tribal status quo.
- * Guns
 - Very powerful in inter-tribe warfare, were highly sought after (both economic impacts social and social impacts economic)
 - /"But for the most part it was precisely the same qualities that made muskets inferior hunting weapons that made them so desirable in human combat: their frightful noise and confusing smoke, their unpredictable inaccuracy, their awful ability to smash flesh and bone."/ (Facing East 49)
 - /"Despite official policies in all colonies designed to preserve a European monopoly of force, the incentives on both sides of the trading relationship were so great that well-placed Native people inevitably acquired firearms sooner rather than later"/ (Facing East 50) => Shows that an economic motive was responsible for introducing guns to Native Americans, which lead to social consequences */
- Later North American Pre-independence History and American Paradox
 - Example: Master-Servant Dynamic + Slaves
 - * Civil unrest due to unemployment in Britain lead to import of workers (acting as servants) to America
 - *"Alarming numbers of idle and hungry men drifted about [England] looking for work or plunder."* (American Paradox 14) => Shows that
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 - * Fear of similar unrest in America from large worker immigration leads to slave imports and reliance, as well as more rights for former servants
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3 | Essay (1st Draft)

It is impossible to analyze any event of history without the use of a lens. A lens, or framework, is a... Within the context of pre-independence American history, the most effective lens is that which focuses on... Although socioeconomics is a very helpful lens, in many cases it is more effective to take a step further... One particular subtopic of early American history which an economic lens is particularly helpful in analyzing is... Native American relations. Early European-Native American relations primarily revolved around trade; European goods... Arguably the most valuable and important item Europeans were able to trade with Native Americans for was... The demand for beaver pelts and the introduction of European goods impacted indigenous intertribal politics... In these ways, trading between Europeans and Native Americans in early American history ultimately led to... Native American relations, economic incentives, in particular that of obtaining beaver pelts, have had a... A common theme across many educational resources on pre-independent American history meant for children...