

HIST 231-1 The Foundations of American Society: Beginnings to 1865

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Fall 2025, MW 2:30-3:45
Johnson Hall, Room 102

Office Location: Johnson Hall 213
Office Hours: Tues 1:00-3:00,
or by appointment

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description:

This course will introduce you to the history of the United States from the colonial era through the Civil War by paying particular attention to how historians do their work focusing on a variety of historical evidence and the many ways historians raise questions and analyze this evidence. As a survey course that concentrates on the foundations of American society, we will focus on what it means to be an American and how that changes over time with specific emphasis on leadership, migration, diversity, the concept of individual freedom, the creation and maintenance of the Union, and how that Union is threatened. We will learn about the political and economic development of the United States as well as the social history of the country. Special emphasis will be given to the Atlantic world, colonial experience, slavery, the American Revolution and its aftermath, social and cultural life in nineteenth-century America, the sectional crisis, and the Civil War.

Course Goals:

There are several objectives for this course. **First**, by gaining a factual knowledge of this historical period the course seeks to assist students in learning to think historically, or to become historically minded, by recognizing and criticizing evidence and using primary and secondary sources to reason inductively going from specifics to generalizations. **Second**, this course hopes to teach students to ask questions about the past to gain an awareness of the various dimensions of history—political, economic, social, and cultural and to incorporate aspects of ethnicity, gender, race, and class into the explanation of these various historical dimensions. **Third**, the course strives to help students discover, understand, and appreciate the interplay of forces that shape historical change in America's past including individuals and social groups as creators of history. **Fourth**, this course will help students develop reading, researching, and writing skills that will benefit them in upper-division classes.

Course Objectives:

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- Recognize a historical argument when they see one.
- Be able to interpret primary documents by placing them in their historical context.
- Understand the various perspectives historians have taken as they write about America's past.
- Be familiar with the most important people, ideas, and events of early American history, and realize their significance for today.

Requirements and Expectations:

Students are expected to attend all classes, to complete all reading assignments, and participate actively when we have class discussions. If there is an interruption due to circumstances that require a transition to online classes, your attendance via Zoom will be expected.

Required Readings: These books are available at the campus bookstore and on reserve at the library.

- Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1999.
- Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- William E. Gienapp, *Abraham Lincoln and Civil War America: A Biography*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Primary and secondary documents on the Canvas site for this class and via group e-mail through Outlook and Canvas.
- Primary documents and essays posted throughout the semester on Canvas and as email attachments.

Grading and Assignments:

- Short Essay Exam (10%) given on Wednesday, **October 1..**
- Midterm Essay Exam (20%) given on Monday **November 3.**
- **Two** responses to Dwelling Place (20%): 500-word, double-spaced typed response to Dwelling Place due at the beginning of class on, **November 10** (Slave Societies), **November 17** (Paternalism)
- Quizzes and reading responses from assigned reading material—including books as well as primary and secondary documents (10%)
- Participation and attendance (10%)
- Final essay exam (30%) given on **Monday, December 15 from 3:00-5:30 P.M.**

All assignments as well as your final course grade will be based on the +/- system. Study questions for all exams will be distributed at least one week prior to each exam.

Academic Honesty:

We are a community of scholars. Therefore, academic dishonesty is not tolerated. Your signature or name on any work submitted for credit in this course shall indicate you have neither given nor received unauthorized information or assistance on the work, nor have you condoned the giving or receiving of unauthorized information or assistance by others. **All work done for this course must be entirely your own. DO NOT USE ANY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM** (such as CHATGPT) for any work completed in this course. I will consider that a violation of the honor code, and a failing grade will be applied to the assignment when AI is used. As a student at Oxford College of Emory University you have agreed to abide by the honor pledge and have taken upon yourself the responsibility of upholding the Honor Code; you are encouraged to inquire of the Honor Council about any doubtful case at any time throughout the semester. For complete details on the Honor Code please see the Oxford College Catalog or the Oxford College Home Page on the web under the Current Student tab, Academic Resources.

Visiting me in my office:

I encourage you to visit me during my office hours or make an appointment with me if my office hours do not coincide with your schedule. If it feels too intimidating to see me in my office, I am happy to meet you somewhere else on campus like the dining hall or outside on the quad. One of the positive experiences you can have at Oxford College is getting to know your professors well. So, take advantage of that opportunity and come see me throughout the semester. My office is on the second floor of Johnson Hall, Office 213. I like talking about history and what we are studying together; please come see me if you would enjoy a conversation.

Attendance Policy:

Class begins at 2:30 and ends at 3:45. Regular attendance and active participation in class are essential parts of the learning process. Students are allowed two absences, and every absence after that will deduct points from the attendance/class participation portion of your final course grade. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain missed lecture notes and turn in all assignments on time. I expect you to be awake and focused on the material at hand in class. Do not study for another course while you are in this class. During discussions of reading material, you should prepare before class and actively participate with your classmates in the discussion. You must get my permission to use a laptop to take notes in class. Students perform better in this course if they take notes in class using a pen or pencil on paper or a stylus on a tablet. Studies have found that notetaking in this way reinforces what you are learning in a way that typing does not. See *Scientific American*: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-writing-by-hand-is-better-for-memory-and-learning/>

If you miss an examination, **only absences due to medical or family emergencies** (for example, you are in the hospital) are valid. You will need to present written evidence of your illness or family emergency to take a makeup exam. Students will only be allowed to make up missed work after presenting written proof of medical or family emergency. All make-up exams will be given on the last day of **class (December 8)** during my office hours. You cannot change the time of your final exam because of travel plans, vacation plans, job opportunities, or having more than one final exam on one day.

I am happy to accommodate your religious holidays during the semester. Please let me know within the first two weeks of the semester what religious holidays you plan to observe. If you need guidance negotiating your needs related to a religious holiday, the College Chaplain, Rev. Brent Huckaby is willing and available to help you. Please be aware that Rev. Huckaby is not tasked with excusing students from classes or writing excuses for students

to take to their professors. Emory's official list of religious holidays may be found at https://oxford.emory.edu/life/campus_life/religious.html

If you are disruptive during a class or other academic sessions associated with this class and I ask you to leave, your departure that day will affect your grade and/or count as an absence. In addition, the Advising Support Center will be informed of the incident, and the assistant Dean for Academic Affairs will meet with you within the week.

Turning in Assignments and Late Penalties:

If you miss the due date on a written assignment, a late penalty of **five points per day** (including weekends) will be deducted from your grade for that assignment. If you turn your written assignment in after the beginning of class but on the same day it is due you will be deducted **2.5 points** from your grade for that assignment. **I also do not accept written assignments via e-mail, such as your 500-word responses from Dwelling Place.** I only accept hard copies of written assignments. If you turn in your assignment after the beginning of class, slide it under my office door, Johnson Hall 213.

Accommodating Students with a Disability

If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, I encourage you to contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at oas_oxford@emory.edu.

If you are a student who is currently registered with OAS and have not requested or received a copy of your accommodation notification letter, please get in touch with OAS immediately. If you are a student who has an accommodation in place, I encourage you to meet with me so we can discuss your specific needs for the course as it relates to your approved accommodations. You need to do this during the first full week of classes. I cannot implement your accommodations until I have been given an accommodation letter and discussed the accommodation plan for this course face-to-face with you. *All discussions with OAS and faculty concerning the nature of your disability remain confidential.*

Class Etiquette for Digital Devices:

Mobile Phones: I do not accept phone calls during class, nor should you. Turn off your mobile phones before the beginning of class. If a ringing cell phone becomes a common occurrence, I will ask you to leave the class. If you receive a text message in class, do not read it or compose a response to it during class. If you send a text message during class, I will ask you to leave the class. Do not bring your mobile phone to class during any exam. I will ask you to leave your phone with me at the front of the class if you take it out during exam day.

Laptop Computers and Tablet Computers: You may use a laptop computer or tablet computer to take notes in class **only** with my permission. Computers may be used only on specific days to access primary documents found on Canvas. If you simply must use a computer to take notes you have to get my permission in advance. Recent research (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-writing-by-hand-is-better-for-memory-and-learning/>) reveals that students retain information better taking notes using a pen or a pencil on paper or on a tablet instead of typing on a keyboard. The act of taking notes on a computer actually interferes with your ability to remember information. Another study done by psychologists who conducted a study found that students on laptops mindlessly typed everything the professor said. Note taking by hand is a key step to learning because you must actively listen and decide what is important. This study also found that students who use laptops focus on the lecture or material at hand only 60% of the time; they use the other 40% of their time in class on the internet. Social science and common sense are clear here. If you want to learn something from a class or lecture—it is best to take notes using a pen and paper.

Electronic communication: We will have a class conference through a group e-mail on Outlook and a class conference on Canvas. I will post all assignments as well as other pertinent items to enhance class discussion. I will also post all PowerPoint presentations here as well as discussion questions, exam study questions, and links to films. When communicating with your fellow classmates or with me on my personal e-mail address do not post anything that you would not be comfortable saying to your classmate or to me in person.

Do not assume just because you *can* get in touch with me when you want to that I will be available to read your message. I rarely check e-mail once I leave campus, which is usually around 4:30, and I don't always check e-mail over the weekend. So, note that I read e-mail from 9:00-4:00 Monday through Friday. **I also do not accept written assignments via e-mail, such as your responses to Dwelling Place (unless something has interrupted**

the semester). I only accept hard copies of written assignments. If you do not turn your assignment in at the beginning of class you can place it **under** my office door, Johnson Hall 213.

Finally, remember that communication online is not a very private communication system. Your messages can be printed out, and they can also be forwarded to others. Any private message you send potentially can come under public scrutiny; therefore, you should not write anything that would case you or someone else embarrassment or trouble should your e-mail become public.

Title IX Reporting:

Every Emory employee who is informed about an allegation of sexual misconduct involving any student is required to notify a Title IX Coordinator either directly or through their relevant reporting structure. However, employees who serve in a professional role in which communications are afforded confidential status under the law (e.g., medical providers, therapists, and professional and pastoral counselors) are not bound by this requirement but may, consistent with their ethical and legal obligations, be required to report limited information about incidents without revealing the identities of the individuals involved, to a Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. All members of the Emory community are encouraged to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment and discrimination. For more information, visit:

<http://sexualmisconductresources.emory.edu/policies/index.html>

SCHEDULE

Reading Assignments found on the Canvas site for our class and on group e-mail in Outlook

Week 1

Aug 27

Syllabus, What Does It Mean to be an American?

Week 2

Sept 1

No class—Labor Day Holiday

Sept 3

Atlantic World—Jamestown, Virginia

Week 3

Sept 8

Quiz and Discussion of Revel readings

Sept 10

Quiz and Discussion of Eltis

Jennings, James Revel

Eltis: “Atlantic History in Global Perspective”

Week 4

Sept 15

Colonial New England

“God in America” Episode 1 “A New Adam”
(first 33 minutes only)

Sept 17

Quiz and Discussion of Ulrich

Ulrich, Chapter One: “An Indian Basket”
(pp.41-74).

Week 5

Sept 22

Colonial Society—Religion

“God in America” Episode 1 “A New Adam”
(begin at 33 minutes to end)

Sept 24

Colonial Society—Class

Wood, “Becoming a Gentleman”, Lepore, Jane
Franklin “Prodigal Daughter” & *New Yorker*
Outloud

Quiz and discussion of Wood and Lepore

Week 6

Sept 29

Imperial Crisis

Oct 1

Essay Exam—includes readings and lecture notes from Aug 27 through Sept 24; bring pen or pencil to exam

Week 7

Oct 6

Imperial Crisis

Young, p. vii-51, “John Adams” Part 1 Join or Die

Oct 8

Imperial Crisis

Young, pp 52-66

Quiz and Discussion of Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, pp vii-66.

Week 8

Oct 13

No Class Fall Break

Oct 15

American Revolution

Week 9

Oct 20

American Revolution

Oct 22

American Revolution

Week 10

Oct 27

Discussion New Nation: U.S. Constitution and First Ten Amendments, David Souter, Harvard Commencement Address

Oct 29

Jacksonian America (last day to drop the course without penalty)

Week 11

Nov 3

Second Essay Exam covering Imperial Crisis through Federal Constitution and Bill of Rights, CR readings, Young, lectures through Oct 27. Bring pen or pencil

Nov 5

Jacksonian America and Native American Removal: “We Shall Remain: Trail of Tears”

<u>Week 12</u>		
Nov 10	Antebellum Slavery	Clark, Preface-11
	Discussion of Clark, Chapters 1-11, 500-word response on Slave Societies due at <i>the beginning of class.</i>	
Nov 12	Antebellum Reform and the Second Great Awakening “God in America” Ep 2, “New Eden” (begin at 19:38 end at 38:40)	
<u>Week 13</u>		
Nov 17	Discussion of Clark, Chapters 12-21, 500-word Response on Paternalism due at <i>the beginning of Class</i>	
Nov 19	Sectional Conflict 1840s and 1850s	Gienapp, Chap 1-3, Clark, Chap 25-28
<u>Week 14</u>		
Nov 24	Quiz and discussion of Gienapp Chap 1-3 and Clark Chap 25-28	
Nov 26	No Class Thanksgiving Break	
<u>Week 15</u>		
Dec 1	Sectional Conflict— <i>Dred Scott</i> to Lincoln	Gienapp, Chap 4-6, Lincoln 1 st Inaugural Address
Dec 3	Civil War	Gienapp, Chap 7-8, Lincoln Gettysburg Address, and 2 nd Inaugural Address
<u>Week 16</u>		
Dec 8	The Meaning of the War— Quiz and Discussion of Gienapp Chap 4-8	
Dec 10	Reading Day	
Dec 15	Final Essay Exam, 3:30-5:30, bring pen or pencil	

Course Reserves:
Documents on Canvas and Group E-Mail through Outlook

Week 3

- John Melville Jennings, “James Revel, ‘The Poor Unhappy Transported Felon’s Sorrowful Account of His Fourteen Years Transportation at Virginia in America,’ c. 1680,” The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol 56, No. 2 (Apr. 1948), pp. 180-194, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4245544>
- The Diary of William Byrd II of Virginia, 17-9-1712 “Selections,” The National Humanities Center, 2009, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/economies/text5/williambyrddiary.pdf>
- David Eltis, “Atlantic History in Global Perspective,” in Francis G. Couvares, et. al, *Interpretations of America History*, Vol One, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s press, 2009), pp. 115-126.

Week 4

- “God in America” episode 1 “A New Adam” (first 33 minutes only),
<http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/>
- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*, “Chapter 1: An Indian Basket, Providence, Rhode Island, 1676,” (New York: Vintage Press, 2001), pp. 41-75.

Week 5

- “God in American” episode 1 “A New Adam” (begin at 33 minutes to end).
<http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/> Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*, “Chapter 1: Becoming a Gentleman,” (New York:Penguin Press, 2004), pp. 17-60.
- Lepore, Jill, “The Prodigal Daughter,” *The New Yorker*, July 1, 2013,
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/07/08/the-prodigal-daughter>
- *The New Yorker* “out loud” podcast, Jill Lepore and Judith Thurman on Jane Franklin, begin at 3:59 <https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/out-loud/jill-lepore-and-judith-thurman-on-jane-franklin>

Week 7

- “John Adams” Part One: “Join or Die,” HBO Films, Tom Hooper Director, 2008.

Week 9

- “God in America” Episode 2 “A New Eden” (first 20 minutes only)
<http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/>
- Gordon S. Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*, “Chapter One: The Greatness of George Washington,” (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), pp. 31-63.

Week 10

- The U. S. Constitution, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>
- First Ten Amendments to the U. S. Constitution also known as the Bill of Rights,
<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>
- Justice David H Souter, Harvard Commencement Address, May 27, 2010, Harvard Gazette,
<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2010/05/text-of-justice-david-souters-speech/>
- “God in America” Episode 2: “A New Eden” (beginning at 20:00) <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/>

Week 11

- “We Shall Remain: Trail of Tears”

Week 12

- “God in America” Episode 2: “A New Eden” (begin at 19:38 end at 38:40)
<http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/>
- James B. Finley, Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley or, Pioneer Life in the West, 1854, Chapter VIII.

- Frederick Douglass, “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” speech given at Rochester, NY, July 5, 1852, http://masshumanities.org/files/programs/douglass/speech_complete.pdf
- Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Massachusetts, June 28, 1837. Sarah Grimke’s Reflections on “The Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts,” 1837.

Week 15

- Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861.
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln1.asp
- Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863.
<https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>
- Gary Wills, “The Gettysburg Address, 1. Spoken Text, 2. Final Text,” in *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 261-263.
- Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865.
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln2.asp