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Office Hours: M 2:30 – 4:30, and by appointment

History 210A
Fall 2019
ROOM TBA
MR 1-2:30

History of the United States to the Civil War **Subject to change**

Description

This course will trace the coming of age of the United States, from multiple beginnings through the end of the Civil War, which gave rise to the modern nation. The course's central themes are conquest, slavery, and liberty. American historians have struggled over the question of how to balance these themes in their narratives of the nation's history. In this course we will be reading two historians who answer this question in very different ways: Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Jill Lepore. In your reading responses and in class, you will compare and contrast their approaches to formulate your own assessments about the meaning of American history. We will also be reading firsthand accounts of slavery to supplement the historical narratives. The goals of this course are to convey a basic knowledge of early American history, to provide historical context for understanding the United States today, and to develop your understanding of history as a method of thought, not simply a collation of facts.

Required Books*

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* (Beacon, 2013)

Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States* (W.W. Norton, 2018)

* Editions of both texts are available on reserve at McPherson library.

And either:

Frederick Douglass, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

or

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

* You can download from <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/index.html> or purchase any inexpensive complete edition

Additional Readings:

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, chapters 1-3 [\[WEB\]](#)

National Humanities Center, “We Was Free. Just Like That, We Was Free.” [\[WEB\]](#)

Manisha Sinha, “What Those Monuments Stand For,” *NY Daily News* 8/18/17 [\[WEB\]](#)

Eric Foner, “Confederate Statues and ‘Our’ History,” *New York Times* 8/20/17 [\[WEB\]](#)

Brent Staples, “So the South’s White Terror Will Never Be Forgotten,” *New York Times* 4/25/18 [\[WEB\]](#)

Grading

Many years of teaching in the University have made me dubious about the connection between grading and learning. My goal is to create a course framework that encourages students to get engaged in learning history without the carrot & stick approach of traditional assignments. In my experience, students learn the most from class when they do the readings, attend class, and engage in discussions during class. I think it’s also vital for students to have an opportunity to explore their historical interests in depth, and to receive constructive feedback from their professors. With these goals in mind I have simplified the grading with the hopes that any student who engages the class with integrity will do well.

THE SPECIFICS:

- 1) Students are required to **attend** class. I ask all students to send me an “introduction” email in the first couple weeks of class that includes a digital photograph plus a few get-to-know-you details like hobbies, history interests, surprising facts, etc. If there is a preferred name you would like me to call you, please let me know in this email. Feel free to share anything else that you think is important. You may miss three classes during the semester for any reason without penalty to your grade. If you need to exceed this number, please alert me in advance and let me know the reason.
- 2) Students are required to submit typed **reading responses** about the assigned chapters in the required texts at the beginning of each class period to the TA. Assignments submitted after class begins will be marked late and will have a negative impact on your final grade.
 - a. **Format:** Responses should be a minimum of 300 words. There is no maximum length. Please use a standard 12-point font, and double space your responses (they may be printed on both sides of the page). Each response should be numbered and dated, and should identify the reading in the title. Use parenthetical page number citations [ex: (34)] to cite quotations. If you do outside research, cite your sources. Include your word count at the end.

- b. **Content:** Responses should lead with a summary of the chapter, follow with analysis, and finally isolate a detail from the reading that you find particularly interesting, compelling, or surprising. These responses will not be graded. If you fulfill this minimum requirement you will receive a B-range grade **in the course** (70-79). You may miss up to three classes/responses for either personal days or sick days with no effect on your grade. The reading responses will not be returned, but if I or the T.A. feel like your responses are not engaging the readings rigorously enough, we'll let you know and give you feedback to do better. You may check in with me or the T.A. at any time for feedback. If you miss more than three classes and reading responses, your **overall course grade** will sink below a 70. If you are experiencing challenges (physical or mental health concerns, housing or family crises, etc.) that interfere with getting the reading done and getting to class, let me know and I will try to work with you to help you succeed in the course. If you don't let me know, I can't help you. It should go without saying that repeatedly coming to class late or leaving early or not engaging while you're in class will have a negative impact on your grade. **To reiterate:** if you want at least a B in the course, you have to do the readings, hand in responses, show up to class on time, and engage during class time.
- 3) I encourage all students who would like to engage on a deeper level with the material to complete a final assignment as well. I will give constructive feedback on this assignment, and a sense of my opinion of its overall quality, but not a traditional grade. This assignment is not required. Students who have attended class, handed in reading responses, *and* who complete a final assignment that shows thoughtful engagement with historical research will receive an A-range grade (80–100) **in the course**. You may not substitute a final project for engagement throughout the semester (i.e. you may not hand in only a few reading responses then make up the grade with a final project). Students have many choices for this final assignment.
- a. Anyone who wants to continue on with history as a major may want to write a traditional **research paper**. In this case, I would prefer that you work with primary sources as well as secondary sources. It can be on a topic of your choosing as long as it fits within course themes. It should make a historical argument. The paper should be a minimum of 1,700 words. It should also use the History Department's style guide for citations and bibliography. I am happy to discuss possible paper topics and sources with you at any point in the semester.
 - b. Students may also submit an "**un-paper**." The un-paper is a project that engages with the historical material we've tackled during the semester and draws on supplementary research in an innovative fashion: for example, by constructing a 3-D map of a historical event, or creating a musical composition, or an object like a quilt, or a short video. The possibilities are limitless. If you choose to submit an unpaper, you should discuss your ideas with me at least a month before the end of term. I'm

happy to give feedback and advice. Along with your unpaper, please also submit a brief reflection (2 pages) explaining why you chose this approach, what you learned, and what the connections to the course themes are.

4) Self-Assessment

On the last day of class, please hand in a self-assessment of how you feel you did during the semester. Discuss your engagement, what you learned, what you found valuable, and what could be improved. You can assign yourself a number grade following the guidelines above. I will take your self-assessment into account when arriving at your final numerical course grade. My determination of your final grade will be shaped by how much effort I think you put in, and consideration of what you achieved in class and in assignments.

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please come to see me during office hours.

I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate gender pronoun. Please advise me of appropriate pronouns early in the semester so that I may take note. My pronouns are she/her.

Academic Misconduct & Plagiarism

The penalty for academic misconduct or plagiarism in this course will be an F for the assignment and possibly for the class. Please consult the History Department's Policy on Academic Integrity, attached at the end of the syllabus, to review the definition of plagiarism and academic misconduct.

DATE	TOPIC	READING
Th Sept 5	Class Introduction: What is American History?	Review the syllabus
M Sept 9	Turtle Island	DO Intro & Chap 1
Th Sept 12	The Atlantic World: Conquest & Slavery	JL Chap 1
M Sept 16	New England: From Puritan to Yankee	DO Chap 2
Th Sept 19	The Chesapeake: From Servitude to Slavery	JL Chap 2
M Sept 23	The Middle Colonies: The Peaceable Kingdom	DO Chap 3
Th Sept 26	The Eighteenth Century: Becoming America	Equiano
M Sept 30	The French and Indian War: Turning Point in History?	DO Chap 4
Th Oct 3	The American Revolution: War for Home Rule	JL Chap 3
M Oct 7	The American Revolution: War for Rule at Home	DO Chap 5
Th Oct 10	The Constitution: Document of Freedom or Slavery?	JL Chap 4
M Oct 14	THANKSGIVING	
Th Oct 17	The Early American Republic: Independent in the Atlantic World	JL Chap 5
M Oct 21	Market Revolution: New Opportunity or Wage Slavery?	JL Chap 6
Th Oct 24	Jacksonian Politics: White Men's Democracy	DO Chap 6

M Oct 28	Urbanization & Immigration: Sex & Violence in the City	Begin Douglass or Jacobs EMAIL FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL TO PROF
Th Oct 31	Cotton Kingdom: Labour, Culture, Resistance	Douglass or Jacobs
M Nov 4	The Age of Reform: From Antislavery to Abolitionism	Douglass or Jacobs
Th Nov 7	Discussion	finish Douglass or Jacobs
M Nov 11	READING BREAK	
Th Nov 14	Expansion: From Sea to Shining Sea	DO Chap 7
M Nov 18	Sectional Crisis: A House Divided	JL Chap 7
Th Nov 21	Civil War: An Irrepressible Conflict?	JL Chap 8
M Nov 25	Civil War: A New Birth of Freedom?	NHC "We Was Free."
Th Nov 28	Discussion: American Slavery in History and Memory	Sinha "Monuments"; Foner "Confederate Statues";
M Dec 2	optional presentations of final projects	FINAL PROJECT DUE SELF-ASSESSMENT DUE