

HISTORY 2111C -- THE UNITED STATES TO 1877

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Fall 2018
M, W, F, 9:05-9:55 a.m.
Office Hours:
MWF 10-11 a.m. or by
appointment

This course will focus on some of the most important events, issues, and individuals from the early exploration and settlement of North America through the Civil War and Reconstruction. The time span we are investigating is enormous--almost three hundred years! So instead of trying to do the impossible and "cover the ground" in just fifteen weeks, we will focus on four key periods: (1) the early colonial settlement of North America (the 1600s); (2) the American Revolution and its aftermath (1763-1815); (3) the dramatic expansion of the new American Republic (1800-1848); and (4) the rise of sectional conflicts between North and South that led to the Civil War and Reconstruction (1846-1877). As we look together at each period, we will try to relate the central issues of the past to our concerns of the present.

Two principal written sources of information will be used this course. The brief text by James Rourke, and others, The American Promise: A Concise History, Volume 1: To 1877, Sixth Edition, ISBN: 978-1-319-043273-8) provides a lively narrative overview of the period. Provocative essays on how historians have reconstructed controversial events in the past are presented in James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection, Volume 1, SIXTH EDITION ONLY. (ISBN: 978-0-729265-5)

Please note that ONLY the SIXTH EDITION of After the Fact can be used for this class, since it differs significantly from all earlier editions of the book.

In addition to the two principal texts for this course, important perspectives on key individuals are found in the four required biographical or autobiographical books, any edition of which will be fine.

Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop
Edmund S. Morgan, The Meaning of Independence: John Adams, George Washington,
and Thomas Jefferson
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave
Stephen B. Oates, Abraham Lincoln: The Man Behind the Myths

Evaluation in the course will be based on four exams given in the fifth, ninth, twelfth, and seventeenth weeks of the semester. The exams will be based on both the class lectures and the required readings. Regular class attendance is expected.

I welcome your lively participation in the class, as well as any suggestions you may have about topics of special interest. I would be happy to meet with any students who have questions or concerns about the class or who would like to know more about any of the topics we'll be exploring.

If you are confused or are having difficulty with the course, please talk with me after class, email me, or see me in my office in Room 121 Old CE so I can help you to do your best and get the most out of this class.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Class roll will be taken after the first week. More than six (6) unexcused class absences during the semester (the equivalent of a full 2 weeks of the course) may be grounds for lowering the student's final course grade by one full grade level (10 points).*

Throughout the course, all students will be expected to follow the Georgia Tech Honor Code.

IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL NOTE: *The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts supports the Georgia Institute of Technology's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in the broader society.*

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT:

I. Patterns of Colonial Settlement in the 1600s

We'll begin by briefly discussing recent discoveries about the origins of the American Indians, as well as the remarkable Spanish conquest of Mexico. Then our primary focus will turn to four divergent English settlement patterns during the 1600s found in (1) Virginia and Chesapeake colonies; (2) Massachusetts and the New England colonies; (3) Pennsylvania and the Middle colonies, and (4) South Carolina and the Lower South colonies. What kinds of backgrounds did the men and women who migrated to these colonies come from? What caused them to make the difficult journey to a new and uncertain world? What distinctive challenges and opportunities did they faced in their new settlements? To what extent were European social and cultural patterns transplanted to the New World and to what extent did the New World environment itself-- America's "first frontier"-- transform colonial styles of life and behavior.

II. The American Revolution and its Aftermath, 1763-1815

Between 1763, when the French relinquished their North American holdings, and 1789, when a new government under the Constitution of the United States went into effect under George Washington, Americans struggled with important issues that still impact our lives today. Americans came into increasing conflict with England, declared their independence from her, fought a long and difficult war for independence, and began to set up a government unique in its time, described by one sociologist as "the First New Nation." What contributed to the increasing tensions between the American colonists and the English? Why did those tensions lead to revolution? What were the underlying ideals of the American Revolution? How were those revolutionary ideals expressed in key documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution? In what ways was the American Revolution similar to or different from later movements for colonial independence or revolution throughout the world? How did the War of 1812, sometimes described as "the Second American War for Independence," bring the revolutionary period to a close?

III. Expansion and Growth of the New Republic, 1800-1848

During the five decades from 1800 to 1850, the young American Republic expanded dramatically. It tripled its geographic size, increased its population nearly five times, experienced early industrialization, and greatly expanded popular participation in politics by ordinary people. In addition, during this period the institution of African-American slavery grew dramatically and was transformed, while both pro- and anti-slavery arguments began to be put forward as part of larger efforts to achieve social reform. What accounts for the almost explosive growth and dynamism of the young American Republic during this period? How did such rapid growth impact individuals, both positively and negatively? In what ways did the dramatic changes during the first half of the nineteenth century contribute to the development of sectional tensions that eventually precipitated the Civil War?

IV. Sectional Conflict, Civil War, and Reconstruction, 1846-1877

The final section of the class will focus on three topics. The first is the development of increasing sectional tensions between the North and South after the Mexican-American War in 1846 that eventually precipitated the Civil War in 1861. The second is the devastating Civil War that brought brother into conflict with brother and led to 750,000 deaths, more than in all other wars in American history *combined*. Third is the complex and controversial American effort to reconstruct the divided nation after the Civil War. What accounts for the breakdown of the American political system that led to such a devastating the Civil War? Was it caused by just a handful of fanatical Northern abolitionists and equally fanatical Southern pro-slavery "fire eaters," or were there deeper reasons why such a destructive conflict became almost inevitable? What were the key conflicts during the Civil War, its major "turning points"? Why was period of Reconstruction after the Civil War so difficult? What larger significance did the Civil War and its corollary--the abolition of slavery--have in United States and world history?

Area E Approved Learning Outcome:

Student will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior.

Explain how the course satisfies the Area E approved learning outcome:

To demonstrate that they have met the Area E learning outcome, students will be able to *describe* the major social, political, and economic issues and events that contributed to the development of America from the time of initial European settlement through the Civil War and Reconstruction, *analyze* the interactions between individuals and groups and their larger social and political environment during each period, and *explain* how distinctive American ways of addressing complex social issues emerged during different historical periods.

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will *compare* the major types of settlement patterns that developed in the English colonies in North America before the Revolution.
2. Students will *describe* how and why the American colonies broke with England, waged a successful war for independence, and created a distinctive new government under the Constitution.
3. Students will *explain* why the United States expanded so rapidly across North America during the first half of the nineteenth century and how changes in transportation, agriculture, industry, and political participation transformed the United States during the period.
4. Students will *analyze* the complex factors that contributed to the outbreak of the Civil War, to the course and outcome of the Civil War, and to the difficult Reconstruction period of after the Civil War.
5. Students will *recognize* the different ways in which key events and periods in American history have been interpreted.

READING ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAM SCHEDULE:

NOTE: Students are expected, as a minimum, to start reading the assignments by the dates indicated below and to finish reading those assignments before the next class session. Students hoping to earn an "A" in the class should try to finish their reading in advance of the schedule below in order to allow sufficient time for proper review before the exams.

August 20--begin After the Fact, prologue
 22--begin After the Fact, chapter 1
 24--begin American Promise, chapter 1
 27--begin American Promise, chapter 2
 29--begin After the Fact, chapter 2
 31--begin American Promise, chapter 3

NO CLASS -- Monday, September 3--Labor Day Holiday

September 5--begin The Puritan Dilemma, chapters 1-5
 7--begin The Puritan Dilemma, chapters 6-10
 10--begin The Puritan Dilemma, chapters 11-13
 12--begin After the Fact, chapter 3
 14--begin American Promise, chapter 4
 17--begin American Promise, chapter 5
 19/21--review for Exam #1

EXAM #1 -- Monday, September 24

September 24/26--begin American Promise, chapter 6
 28--begin After the Fact, chapter 4

October 1--begin Meaning of Independence, chapter 1
 3--begin Meaning of Independence, chapters 2-3
 5--begin American Promise, chapter 7

NO CLASS--Mid-Fall Break--October 8

October 10--begin American Promise, chapter 8
 12--begin American Promise, chapter 9
 15--begin American Promise, chapter 10 (pages 264-283 only)
 17--Review for Exam #2

EXAM #2 -- Friday, October 19

October 22--begin American Promise, chapter 10 (pages 283-295) & chapter 11
 24--begin After the Fact, chapter 6
 26--begin American Promise, chapter 13

October 29/31--begin Douglass's Narrative (entire)
 November 2--begin After the Fact, chapter 8
 5--begin American Promise, chapter 12
 7--Review for Exam #3

EXAM #3 -- Friday, November 9

November 12--begin American Promise, chapter 14
 14--begin After the Fact, chapter 7
 16--begin American Promise, chapter 15
 19--begin Lincoln, part 1

NO CLASS--Thanksgiving Holiday--November 21-23

26--begin Lincoln, parts 2-3
 28--begin Lincoln, parts 4-5
 30--begin American Promise, chapter 16
 December 3--Review for Final Exam

FINAL EXAM -- Friday, December 7, 8:00-10:50 a.m.

A FINAL CARTOON PERSPECTIVE:

