HISTORY 5333.001 – SPRING 2018
SEMINAR: EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY
M 7:00-9:30 - BH 202

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Course Description

This is a reading intensive seminar designed to familiarize students with recent works, themes, and issues in early American history. For the most part our chronology encompasses the three centuries from contact through 1800, focusing particularly on the colonial period and peering occasionally into the antebellum years. We will examine the historiographical trends of the last thirty years, but our readings are nearly all drawn from the last ten, giving us a good taste of the most recent scholarship – scholarship that remains among the most exciting and innovative in American historical studies.

Early America was a messy place, a “mix’d medley,” in the words of one contemporary, of racial, ethnic, national, and religious groups scattered over a continent. Imperial and later national boundaries were constantly shifting and contested. As a result early America defies easy generalizations and resists efforts to mold it into a coherent whole or master narrative. We shall not attempt to do so here; rather, we will embrace early America in all its messy glory and complexity, with a couple of caveats. First, we will focus primarily on social history -- that is, the stories of historically marginalized people and the categories of gender, class, race, and sexuality that framed power relationships. Second, we will regularly visit three methodological or interpretive frameworks/concepts: the Atlantic World, borderlands, and narrative.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this class will:

- Identify the thesis and argument of historical works and how these works connect to a larger literature, evaluate historians’ use of evidence, and understand the methods historians use in a variety of subfields. Measure: weekly papers.
- Develop oral communication skills, both as engaged seminar participants and discussion facilitators. Measures: discussion participation and facilitation.
- Demonstrate mastery of the historical literature on a narrow topic related to early American history. Measure: historiographical essay.
- Demonstrate advanced writing skills by crafting critical, creative, and nicely organized research papers. Measures: historiographical essay.

Graded Assignments

Grades will be based on informal weekly papers, participation in class discussions, and a final historiography essay.

- Weekly papers: Each week we will read one or more works, either a book or a collection of articles. To help you digest the readings and prepare for class, you
will write 1-2 page summaries of these works in a prescribed format. See the separate handout for writing guidelines.

- **Participation:** Since this is a discussion seminar and not a lecture class, participation in discussions will make up a major part of your grade. In addition to regularly engaging in class discussion, you will co-lead discussion with the professor once during the semester.

- **Historiography essay:** You will write a 15-page essay exploring the historical literature on a specific topic of your choice. You are required to read at least five books and five articles for this paper. This assignment has three graded components -- a proposal/bibliography, writing sample, and final paper -- with separate due dates. See the paper guidelines for full details.

I use a standard grading scale: A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=59 or below. Grades will be determined as follows:

- Weekly papers: one-third
- Participation: one-third
- Historiography: one-third

**Texts**

The following books are required and can be found in the University Bookstore:

- Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*
- Grandjean, *American Passage*
- Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*
- Goetz, *Baptism of Early Virginia*
- Bolster, *Mortal Sea*
- Saunt, *West of the Revolution*
- Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders*
- Gordon-Reed and Onuf, *Most Blessed of Patriarchs*
- Cleves, *Charity and Sylvia*

In addition, a number of articles/book chapters are required and are available on Blackboard.

**General Policies**

- **Attendance:** You are expected to attend every class. Absences will be excused only in cases of sickness or personal/family emergency. Students must notify the professor as soon as possible regarding an absence.

- **Academic honesty:** Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious offenses and will be treated as such. I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism in my graduate courses. Depending on the severity of the offense, students who plagiarize may receive an F in the course.
Other Things You May Need to Know

Grade Appeals
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

Disabilities Accommodations
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Academic Advising
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information, please call 361-825-3466.

Dropping a Class
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. April 6th, 2018 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.
Course Outline
Please refer to the following outline for topics, assignments, and due dates:

Week 1: January 22 – Introduction and discussion of themes
1-2 articles TBA

Week 2: January 29 – Frameworks
4 articles TBA

Week 3: February 5 -- Methods
Articles TBA

Week 4: February 12 – The Spanish Borderlands
Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*

Week 5: February 19 – Settling New England
Grandjean, *American Passage*

Week 6: February 26 – The Atlantic Slave Trade
Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*

Week 7: March 5 – Religion and Race
Goetz, *Baptism of Early Virginia*

*Spring Break -- March 12*

Week 8: March 19 – New Directions in Environmental History
Bolster, *The Mortal Sea*

Week 9: March 26 – Narrating the Revolution
Articles TBA

Week 10: April 2 -- Native American Revolutions
Saunt, *West of the Revolution*

Week 11: April 9 – Atlantic Revolutions
Polansky, *Revolutions without Borders*

Week 12: April 16 – Founders Chic?
Gordon-Reed and Onuf, *Most Blessed of the Patriarchs*

Week 13: April 23 – Sexuality in Early America
Cleves, *Charity & Sylvia*

Week 14: April 30 – Conferences

Monday, May 7 – Final papers due