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 but peering occasionally into the early nineteenth century. 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 ordinary 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 2-page summaries of these works each week. If we are reading articles, you need only write about two of them. The two lowest scores on your weekly papers will be dropped. Your summaries must:
  o Identify the thesis of the work;
  o Summarize the main points of the argument;
  o Identify and evaluate the nature of the evidence used to support the argument (what kinds of sources were used);
  o Discuss the place of this argument in the historical literature (how it is original);
  o Identify at least one strength and one weakness of the work;
  o Pose at least one question about the work or the topic.

• **Participation**: Since this is a discussion seminar and not a lecture class, participation in discussions will make up a significant part of your grade. Come to class prepared to discuss and/or ask questions about the assigned works. Grades will be based on the quality and not only the quantity of your comments. In addition to regularly engaging in class discussion, you will co-lead discussion with the professor once during the semester. You will receive a participation grade for each class, which will be marked on your weekly papers.

• **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 four 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 for each. 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:

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<td>Weekly papers</td>
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**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*
- Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*
- Davis, *The Gulf* (do not purchase – will be provided)
- Saunt, *West of the Revolution*
- Ekirch, *American Sanctuary*
- Duval, *Independence Lost*
- 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.

- **Late work**: Weekly papers are due at the beginning of class each week. I will not accept late papers, though you may turn them in early if you are unable to attend class. Historiography papers (and all their components) will be penalized one letter grade for each day they are late.

- **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. You must use your own words on all written assignments or use quotation marks when borrowing language from a source. Depending on the severity of the offense, students who plagiarize may receive an F in the course.

Other Things You May Need to Know

**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.

**Grade Appeals**
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at: [http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf).

**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. The last day to drop a class for the spring semester is April 10, 2020.

**Course Outline**
Please refer to the following outline for topics, assignments, and due dates. It is subject to change.

**Week 1:** January 23 – Introduction and discussion of themes
Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox”
Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography”

**Week 2:** January 30 – Frameworks
Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History”
Edmunds, Hoxie, and Salisbury, “American History Begins: Indian Peoples before the Advent of Europeans”
Davis, “How Africans Became Integral to New World History”
McNeil, “The Ecological Atlantic”

**Week 3:** February 6 – Methods
Barr, “There’s No Such Thing as ‘Pre-history’: What the Long Duree of Caddo and Pueblo History Tells Us about Colonial America”
Grandjean, “New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War”
Spear, “Race Matters in the Colonial South”

**Week 4:** February 13 – The Spanish Borderlands

**Week 5:** February 20 – Settling New England
Grandjean, *American Passage*

**Week 6:** February 27 – The Atlantic Slave Trade  
Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*  
*Proposal and bibliography for historiography paper due*

**Week 7:** March 5 – Religion and Race  
Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*  
*Spring Break -- March 12*

**Week 8:** March 19 – Narrating the Revolution  
Articles TBA

**Week 9:** March 26 – Native American Revolutions  
Saunt, *West of the Revolution*

**Week 10:** April 2 – New Directions in Environmental History  
Davis, *The Gulf*  

**Week 11:** April 9 – Borderlands Revolutions  
Duval, *Independence Lost*  
*Writing sample due*

**Week 12:** April 16 – American Identity  
Ekirch, *American Sanctuary*

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

**Week 14:** April 30 – Conferences

Monday, May 7 – Final papers due