

History 701-01

American History Colloquium to 1865

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Monday 6:30-9:20, MHRA 2208

Fall Semester 2007

Office hours: Monday 10am-12pm

Scope and Purposes of the Course: To introduce graduate students to historical scholarship and interpretation in American history through the Civil War and training in the writing of critical historiographical essays and reviews.

Required Reading:

David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder; Days of Judgment*

Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*

Charles Royster, *The Fabulous History of the Great Dismal Swamp Company*

Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*

Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*

Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It*

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun*

Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*

Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*

John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*

Course Schedule:

August 20 introduction to the course

August 27 The 17th Century: Religion; submit 750 word paper on Hall

September 3 no class

September 10 The 17th Century: Society; submit 750 word paper on Norton

September 17 The Atlantic World; submit 750 word paper on Royster

September 24 The Pre-Revolutionary Period; submit 750 word paper on Bailyn

October 1 The Revolution; submit 750 word paper on Wood

October 8 The Early Republic; submit 750 word paper on Ulrich

October 15 no class

October 22 Early American Politics; submit 750 paper on Hofstadter

October 29 Antebellum Reform; submit 750 word paper on Lerner

November 5 Antebellum Slavery and Slave Life; submit 750 word paper on Genovese

November 12 Antebellum Slavery and Plantation Resistance; submit 750 word paper on Franklin and Schweninger

Guidelines for Weekly Papers:

Students may approach the writing of papers on individual required books in any way they choose; however, in preparing each paper, students *must* situate the book historiographically: where did the book fit into scholarly interpretation; who did it challenge, who challenged it? How did wider forces in the academic world, in politics, and in culture shape the author's approach? Papers must, in some way, reflect historiography. Students should therefore read reviews of the book, essays by and about the author, excerpts from historiographically related books and articles.

This class will be based on weekly discussions of the secondary readings. Each week, students will be expected to write 750 word reaction essays and post them to the Blackboard site (by Saturday at 5 p.m. before the next Monday class). The quality of the reaction essays and the questions raised by them will heavily influence the class participation grade. The reaction essays are especially important as they will become the starting point for Monday's discussion. The dialogue will be largely self-generated. Attendance is, therefore, mandatory. Missing more than 2 classes will have drastic consequences on participation grade.

The "breakdown" for grades is quite simple: 40% based on the quality of your class participation/ 60% based on the quality of your final essay.

November 19 Just for fun, read quickly two presidential biographies and be prepared to discuss the state of the 2008 election in historical terms.

November 26 In the light of the class readings and discussions, each student should submit a 2-3 page proposal for a longer (1200) word paper on a cluster of five to ten related books in American history before 1865. Share the paper with three other class members. Each "jury" of evaluators should present criticism of the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal and each proposal writer should respond.

December 3 and 10 Presentation of longer papers.

December 15 Longer papers due.

Resources and Bibliography:

For models of longer book reviews see *Reviews in American History*, *William and Mary Quarterly*, and Jack P. Greene, *Interpreting Early America: Historiographical Essays*. For a cultural interpretation of American historiography over the past one hundred years, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. Current issues of *Reviews* and the *WMQ* are in the Serials Room, Jackson Library, recent issues available from the Serials Dept. desk, and bound volumes are in the stacks at E171 R480 and F221 W71 respectively.

"Historiographical Discipline":

Staying abreast of recent of recent scholarship and critical opinion in the field of History requires systematic attention. Historians develop a list of 5-10 quarterly journals to consult regularly. Read the reviews that interest you and use the publishers' ads as a shortlist of important new books. In American History such a list of journals should include the two

national journals, *American Historical Review* and the *Journal of American History*; next in importance are the *William and Mary Quarterly* for early American history and two regional journals, the *Journal of Southern History* and the *New England Quarterly*. Most American historians have a special interest in a particular state, and every state has its own historical journal, some published by the state historical agency and some by a privately endowed historical society. Pennsylvania has one of each as did New York for many years. Keeping a notebook on book reviews is an excellent way to prepare for graduate comprehensive and general examinations