

Fall 2012 | University of North Carolina, Greensboro  
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., and Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

## **HIS 316: Interpreting American History Course Syllabus**

Covering more than four centuries, this course explores a broad swath of American history. Through an in-depth examination of several key episodes, the course will familiarize students with the analytical skills employed in the study of history. By contextualizing these transformative moments, the course will introduce students to the controversies, trends, events, and actors that shaped America's past.

**Course Requirements:** The requirements for this course include assigned readings for each class, periodic in-class and take-home assignments on the assigned readings, five papers, and a final exam.

**Assigned Readings:** There are five required books assigned for this class: Edward Countryman, *What Did The Constitution Mean To Early Americans?* (1999); Ernesto Chavez, *The U. S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents* (2007); Brook Thomas, *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents* (1997); Jo Ann E. Argersinger, *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents* (2009); and Meg Jacobs and Julian E. Zelizer, *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989: A Brief History with Documents* (2011). The books can be purchased at the University Bookstore. Additional assigned readings are on Blackboard and the internet. These readings will be listed under Course Documents on Blackboard as they become available. The assigned reading list may undergo minor changes, including the addition of primary source readings; students should be sure to consult the most current version of the syllabus on Blackboard under Course Information.

In addition to the required readings, there is a recommended textbook for this course, *American Passages: A History of the United States* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2009). If you choose not to purchase the book, you are *strongly* encouraged to obtain a copy of a textbook with an equally broad scope and recent publication date.

**Electronic Devices:** The use of laptops, tablets, cellular phones, or any other type of electronic device is prohibited during class.

**Attendance and Late Policy:** You are allowed two unexcused absences. After two unexcused absences, you will receive a zero for participation for that day. The instructor will excuse absences with a doctor's note or legitimate documentation of other emergencies. In addition, students will be dropped from the class for excessive absences. Papers and assignments submitted in class are due at the beginning of the class period. Students who submit papers or assignments after the deadline will be penalized with a

grade deduction based on the lateness of the paper or assignment. No papers or assignments will be accepted one week after the due date. Students may not submit any late papers or assignments if they have attended a discussion related to that paper or assignment. All papers and assignments must be submitted in hard copy.

**Plagiarism Policy:** The University defines plagiarism as "intentionally or knowingly representing the words of another, as one's own in any academic exercise."<sup>1</sup> (See the University's [Academic Integrity Policies](#) for further information.) All sources (books, articles, documents, internet sites, etc.) used in any paper or assignment must be properly cited or will be considered plagiarism. Any instance of plagiarism will receive a zero and will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for appropriate action, including suspension or expulsion from the University.

### **Final Grade Composition**

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|--------------------------------------|-----|
| ▪ Participation                      | 10% |
| ▪ In-Class and Take Home Assignments | 20% |
| ▪ Papers                             | 55% |
| ▪ Final Exam                         | 15% |

**Participation:** Participation in discussion is mandatory. **Students should be prepared to discuss the readings on the day that they are assigned.** Attendance alone is not sufficient for full participation credit.

**In-Class and Take-Home Assignments:** Students will be given brief in-class assignments based on the assigned readings. Students will also be periodically quizzed on readings and lectures.

**Papers:** Students will complete five papers, which will vary in length from three to five pages, based on assigned readings. All sources in the papers should be properly cited according to the guidelines laid out in [The Chicago Manual of Style](#), which is available on-line.

**Final Exam:** Students will take a final exam on Saturday, December 8.

## **Class Schedule**

### **Week 1 (August 21, 23)**

Tuesday: Introduction

Thursday: Native America  
Readings:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity/violation/plagiarism/>

- Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America*, pp. 3-22 on blackboard; Jules R. Benjamin, “How to Take Notes in Class,” in *A Student’s Guide to History*, pp. 37-43 on blackboard; Jules R. Benjamin, “How Historians Work,” in *A Student’s Guide to History*, pp. 10-16 on blackboard

## Week 2 (August 28, 30)

Tuesday: Creating the Atlantic World

Readings:

- Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2002), pp. 24-37, 51-66 on [blackboard](#).
- Documents: Christopher Columbus, *The Diario of Christopher Columbus’s First Voyage to America*, (1492-1493), on [blackboard](#); Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain*, (1632), on [blackboard](#); *Mexican Accounts of Conquest from the Florentine Codex*, (c. 1547), on [blackboard](#); Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, (1542), on [blackboard](#); “Two Views on Columbus Day,” (1991 and 2005) on [blackboard](#)

Thursday: The Atlantic Slave Trade

Readings:

- “Why Were Africans Enslaved?” in David Northrup, ed., *The Atlantic Slave Trade, Second Edition* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), pp. 1-29 on [blackboard](#)
- Documents: John Hawkins, “An Alliance to Raid for Slaves” (1568), Willem Bosman, “Trading on the Slave Coast” (1700), Olaudah Equiano, “Kidnapped, Enslaved, and Sold Away” (c. 1756) on [blackboard](#)

## Week 3 (September 4, 6)

Tuesday: Encounter

Readings:

- Kathleen Brown, “The Anglo-Algonquian Gender Frontier,” in *Negotiators of Change Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 26-48 on [blackboard](#)
- Documents: John Winthrop, “But What Warrant Have We To Take That Land” (1629) on blackboard; John Smith, “Description of Virginia” on [blackboard](#); Father Paul LeJeune, “Encounter with the Indians” on [blackboard](#)

Thursday: Colonial Slavery

Readings:

- Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877*, pp. 28-62 on blackboard
- Browse “The Geography of Slavery in Virginia”

**\*Take-Home Assignment on “The Geography of Slavery in Virginia” Website due before class begins.\***

## Week 4 (September 11, 13)

Tuesday: The American Revolution and the War of Independence

Readings:

- Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, "Sailors and Slaves in the Revolution," in *The Social Fabric*, ed. Thomas L. Hartshorne (New York: Longman, 2006), pp. 131-49 on [blackboard](#)
- Documents: "New Jersey Land Riots" (1746 and 1748) on [blackboard](#); William Livingtons, "The Vanity of Birth and Titles; with the Absurdity of Claiming Respect without Merit" (1753) on [blackboard](#); Paxton Boys, "Manifesto" (1764) on [blackboard](#); North Carolina Regulators, "Shew Yourselves to be Freemen" (1769) on [internet](#); J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, "What is an American?" (1770) on [blackboard](#)

Thursday: Constructing the Constitution

Reading:

- Edward Countryman, *What Did The Constitution Mean To Early Americans?*, pp. 3-29, 69-88

## Week 5 (September 18, 20)

Tuesday: Riots and Rebellions

Reading:

- Edward Countryman, *What Did The Constitution Mean To Early Americans?*, pp. 89-140

Thursday: Constitutional Legacies

Readings:

- Edward Countryman, *What Did The Constitution Mean To Early Americans?*, pp. 141-163; Kate Zernike, "On Day Devoted to Constitution, a Fight Over It," *New York Times*, 16 September 2011 on [internet](#)

**\*Paper due before class begins.\***

## Week 6 (September 25, 27)

Tuesday: Indian Removal

Reading:

- Ernesto Chavez, *The U. S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 1-10, 35-63

Thursday: Manifest Destiny

Reading:

- Ernesto Chavez, *The U. S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 10-19, 64-80

## Week 7 (October 2, 4)

Tuesday: The Mexican American War

Reading:

- Ernesto Chavez, *The U. S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 19-34, 80-145

**\*Paper due before class begins.\***

Thursday: Slavery and the Politics of Expansion

Reading:

- Browse “Secession Era Editorials Project”

**\*Take-Home Assignment on “Secession Era Editorials Project” Website due before class begins.\***

## Week 8 (October 9, 11)

Tuesday: Secession and the Descent to War

Readings:

- Edward Ayers, *What Caused the Civil War?: Reflections on the South and Southern History*, pp. 131-144 on blackboard; James M. McPherson, “What Caused the Civil War?” *North and South: The Magazine of Civil War Conflict*, pp. 12-22 on blackboard

Thursday: From a War for Union to a War for Freedom

Readings:

- Ira Berlin, “Who Freed the Slaves?: Emancipation and Its Meaning,” *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era*, pp. 105-121 on blackboard; James M. McPherson, “Who Freed the Slaves?,” *Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War*, pp. 192-207 on blackboard

## Week 9 (October 16, 18)

Tuesday: Class Canceled – Fall Break

Thursday: The Rise and Fall of Reconstruction

Reading:

- Martha Hodes, “The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War,” in *American Sexual Politics: Sex, Gender, and Race since the Civil War*, pp. 59-74 on [blackboard](#)

## Week 10 (October 23, 25)

Tuesday: Making the South Jim Crow

Reading:

- Brook Thomas, *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 1-23, 61-126

Thursday: Separate But (Un)equal

Reading:

- Brook Thomas, *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 23-30, 41-60

### **Week 11 (October 30, November 1)**

Tuesday: Responses and Resistance to *Plessy*

Reading:

- Brook Thomas, *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 127-160, 169-176

**\*Paper due before class begins.\***

Thursday: Immigration and Industrialization

Reading:

- Jo Ann E. Argersinger, *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 1-11, 39-57

### **Week 12 (November 6, 8)**

Tuesday: (Re)Birth of the Labor Movement

Reading:

- Jo Ann E. Argersinger, *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 11-26, 58-107

Thursday: Reformers and Progressivism

Reading:

- Jo Ann E. Argersinger, *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 26-36, 108-121

**\*Paper due before class begins.\***

### **Week 13 (November 13, 15)**

Tuesday: Expanding Rights and Enlarging Government

Reading:

- Steven F. Lawson, *To Secure These Rights: The Report of President Harry S. Truman's Committee on Civil Rights*, pp. 126-185 on blackboard

Thursday: The Rise of the Right

Reading:

- Meg Jacobs and Julian E. Zelizer, *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989*, pp. 1-19, 67-88

### **Week 14 (November 20, 22)**

Tuesday: Mo(u)rning in America

Reading:

- Meg Jacobs and Julian E. Zelizer, *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989*, pp. 20-40, 89-140

Thursday: Class Cancelled – Thanksgiving Holiday

**Week 15 (November 27, 29)**

Tuesday: Fighting the “Evil Empire”

Reading:

- Meg Jacobs and Julian E. Zelizer, *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989*, pp. 41-66, 141-217

Thursday: Reagan’s Legacy

Reading:

- Meg Jacobs and Julian E. Zelizer, *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989*, pp. 218-236

**\*Paper due before class begins.\***

**Final Exam: Saturday, December 8, 3:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.**