

The United States to 1865: American History from the Bottom Up

HIS 211-02 (CRN: 80265): MHRA 2211

Instructor: Steven J. Peach

Fall 2013: Thursdays, 6-8:50 P.M.

Email: sjpeach@uncg.edu

Office Hours: By appointment.

Office:

I. Course Summary

This course will train you to become historical investigators and critical thinkers. You will develop a working knowledge of early American history (*historical information*) and begin to use the tools of history (*historical skill-set*) to think historically and to engage in critical thinking and problem solving. You will read and analyze primary and secondary sources in order to gain a deep understanding of some of the main themes in North American and, after 1776, United States history. These sources form the basis of the course's *historical information* and examine how the agency of ordinary Americans shaped the genesis and growth of the United States. Race, class, gender, and ethnicity conditioned the lives of those Americans whom we will glimpse in the sources. Furthermore, you will use this historical information to develop a four-pronged *historical skill-set*. This skill-set will both deepen your understanding of the information and sharpen your critical thinking skills. Ultimately this course is designed to help you to compete successfully in our university, in our nation, and in the twenty-first-century global marketplace.

II. Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Command a thorough knowledge of early American and U.S. history that encompasses divergent perspectives and complex events and processes.
2. Apply a skill-set both orally and in writing that includes:
 - 1) **Single-Source Analysis** – Analyze primary sources individually
 - 2) **Multiple-Source Analysis (Corroboration)** – Analyze multiple primary sources
 - 3) **Periodization** – Assess change and continuity over time in primary and secondary sources
 - 4) **Thesis** – Assess a historical argument in a secondary source / develop one's own historical argument using primary sources and a secondary source
3. Fulfill General Education requirements: **Historical Perspectives (GHP)**.

At the completion of this course, student should be able to:

- 1) Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize both primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives. (LG3)
- 2) Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally, and in writing. (LG1)

III. Required Course Readings

Johnson, Michael P. *Reading the American Past: Selected Historical Documents, Volume 1: To 1877*. 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.

Nash, Gary B. and Ronald **Schultz**. *Retracing the Past: Readings in the History of the American People, Volume 1: to 1877*. 6th ed. New York: Pearson Education, 2006.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.

IV. Course Requirements

1. **40%** of final grade: **four unit exams**. These assignments are designed to test your comprehension of the historical information and historical skill-set. They will vary in length and will be in-class open book. Included in this 40% are several non-graded journal assignments.

2. **50%** of final grade: **historical case study**. This capstone essay combines all four components of the historical skill-set. The historical case study is a research essay that employs primary sources and one secondary source to answer a research question that I will pose for you. I have created four "Research Topics," and you will choose one.

3. **10%** of final grade: **attendance & participation**. We meet for a total of only 14 class periods, so I expect you to attend each time, to participate both individually and in groups, and to participate when necessary both orally and in writing.

V. Evaluation of Final Grade

A = Student demonstrates a thorough comprehension of course material and *all four* components of the historical skill-set.

B = Student demonstrates a thorough comprehension of course material and *three* components of the historical skill-set.

C = Student demonstrates a satisfactory comprehension of course material and *two* components of the historical skill-set.

D/F = Student demonstrates a weak comprehension of course material and *one* component of the historical skill-set.

VI. Course Guidelines & Penalties

1. Please bring all three readings to every class.

2. Written Work. Must be composed in the following format: twelve-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, and one-inch margins. You must also save your documents as a PDF file

or as a .doc file. Your historical case study, however, must be uploaded to SafeAssign as a .doc file.

- 1) Additionally, *all* of your written work must contain *footnotes*. All of the assignments in this course ask you to read something and then to write about it. Thus, your written work must cite the page numbers from where you've gathered your information. This goes for any discipline; history is no different. For help with notes, please use the "Help" function of Microsoft Word and search for "footnotes." You will have to figure this out for yourself. Word has clear instructions for its users.

3. Assignment and Exam Deadlines. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due according to the dates and times on the syllabus.

- 1) You will post assignments to Blackboard by using "**Journals**," which is listed in the sidebar. All assignments are due by noon on the day of class (Thursdays).
- 2) I will use the "Comments"/"Feedback" function of the journals to furnish the appropriate feedback on assignments. I require you to read these comments, because I may ask you to redo an assignment if I think you did not adequately achieve the objective(s) for that week.
- 3) Finally, I require two printed copies of the assignment in class.

3B. Penalties:

- 1) I will grant you *one excused absence* (no grade penalty). If you miss *two* class periods, I will lower your final grade by **5%** (half of a letter grade). If you miss *three* class periods, I will lower your final grade by **10%** (a full letter grade). And so on. Further, because this course is not heavily lecture-based, I expect you to contribute to class with vocal and written comments and to be present for your several ungraded exams. Your performance during class discussion and group work will form the basis of participation.
- 2) I will deduct 15% from the assignment in question if you are tardy. If you miss a whole class period, you can submit the assignment but with a 30% penalty reduction by the following Friday afternoon. If you miss class but use your one excused absence you must make it up by the following day with no penalty.

Research Topics

1. Cultural Encounters in the Americas and Africa, 1492-1700

Primary Sources: Johnson, *Reading the American Past*, pp. 15-35.

Secondary Source: Nash and Schultz, *Retracing the Past*, Chapter 1, "Imagining the Other: First Encounters," by James Axtell, pp. 7-26.

Research Question: How did Europeans, Indians, and Africans understand and evaluate one another between 1492 and 1700?

2. Slavery and Freedom in the Americas, 1700-1813

Primary Sources: Johnson, *Reading the American Past*, pp. 90-97, 134-137 and 196-202.

Secondary Source: Nash and Schultz, *Retracing the Past*, Chapter 11, "Thomas Peters: Millwright and Deliverer," by Gary B. Nash, pp. 173-182.

Research Question: What was life like for Africans and African-Americans, both slave and free, in the Americas between 1700 and 1813?

3. Building the American Nation-State, 1787-1806

Primary Sources: Johnson, *Reading the American Past*, pp. 155-164, 174-177, 182-186 and 188-191.

Secondary Source: Nash and Schultz, *Retracing the Past*, Chapter 10, "The Constitution and the Competing Political Cultures of Late-Eighteenth-Century America," by Robert E. Shalhope, pp. 157-170.

Research Question: What major political, constitutional, or diplomatic questions shaped the development of America between 1787 and 1806?

4. The Civil War Era, 1845-1871

Primary Sources: Johnson, *Reading the American Past*, pp. 227-231, 261-265, 269-273, 286-289, 315-320 and 324-327.

Secondary Source: Nash and Schultz, *Retracing the Past*, Chapter 18, "Husbands and Wives: Southern Marriages During the Civil War," by Drew Gilpin Faust, pp. 272-280.

Research Question: What major debates and questions shaped America between 1845 and 1871?

Course Schedule

Thursday, 22 August: **Historical Thinking as Critical Thinking**

In-Class:

- Complete the form “Introduction & Assessment” on page 8 of this syllabus.
 - Introductions
 - Read Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*: 1-5, 111-112 (7b and 7b-1), 115 and 117-125 (7c-1 and 7c-3).
 - Raising the Bar: Employers’ Views on College Learning*
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Unit One: Single-Source Analysis

Thursday, 29 August: **Analysis of Primary Sources, Part 1**

- Discuss primary sources and historical context.

Thursday, 5 September: **Analysis of Primary Sources, Part 2**

- Unit One Exam.**
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Unit Two: Multiple-Source Analysis

Thursday, 12 September: **Multiple Sources in Historical Context, Part 1**

- Journal Assignment:** Read Nash and Schultz, *Retracing the Past*: 2-3 (“A Colonizing People”) and 100-101 (“A Revolutionary People”). Answer in two pages: What were some of the major events and processes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in “early America”?
- Understanding primary sources in historical context.

Thursday, 19 September: **Multiple Sources in Historical Context, Part 2**

- More corroboration

Thursday, 26 September: **Multiple Sources in Historical Context, Part 3**

- Unit Two Exam.**
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Unit Three: Periodization

Thursday, 3 October: **Change and Continuity in Primary Sources**

- Conceptualizing change and continuity over time.
- Read three sources over a long period of time.

Thursday, 10 October: **Change and Continuity in Primary and Secondary Sources, Part 1**

-Journal Assignment: Nash & Schultz: Calloway, “The Revolution in Indian Country.” Answer in two pages: How did Indian Country change and/or remain the same in the wake of the Revolution?

-Work with primary and secondary sources.

Thursday, 17 October: **Change and Continuity in Primary and Secondary Sources, Part 2**
-Unit Three Exam.

Unit Four: Thesis

Thursday, 24 October: **Reading a Secondary Source for Its Thesis**

-Journal Assignment: Rampolla, pp. 7-8, 16-19, and 24 (“thesis”). Answer in one page: What is a secondary source? What is a thesis? How does one identify a thesis?

-Thesis and topic sentences.

-Read Rampolla (98-104) on plagiarism. Discuss paraphrasing.

Thursday, 31 October: **Crafting Your Own Thesis from Primary and Secondary Sources, Part 1**

-Journal Assignment: Read Nash & Schultz: Rohrbough, “No Boy’s Play.” When was this particular essay published? What is his thesis? How does he develop and support it?

-More identification of thesis.

Thursday, 7 November: **Crafting Your Own Thesis from Primary and Secondary Sources, Part 2**

-Unit Four Exam.

Final Unit: Historical Case Study

Thursday, 14 November: **Your Research Topic / Skills for Research**

-Journal Assignment: Read your primary sources and secondary sources. Then, read Rampolla for a “working thesis” (93-95), outline (96), and organization (59-69). Finally, create a detailed outline of at least three pages.

-Form groups and trade outlines and thoughts.

Thursday, 21 November: **Rough Draft Due**

-Journal Assignment: Submit Rough Draft to SafeAssign.

--Bring two hard copies to class. You will trade copies with a partner.

Historical Case Study Due: 4 December at Noon

-Submit final draft to SafeAssign.

Introduction

Part I

Formal name & name you prefer to be called: _____

Year: _____

(Projected) Major/Minor: _____

Reason(s) for taking this course: _____

Reason (s) for going to college: _____

Sensitive information for me: _____

Part II—Answer to the best of your ability, without research. This is NOT graded.

In what ways is historical thinking like critical thinking? _____

Define and give an example of a primary and secondary source. _____

How do you analyze a primary source and a secondary source? _____

How do you critically assess a thesis? How do you develop your own thesis? _____
