

History 780: Culture and Society in Early America

Fall Semester 2007. Tuesdays 4:10-6:55 pm

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Office hours: by appointment

During the past four decades, the field of Early American History has been transformed as scholars have adopted new methods, asked fresh questions, and explored previously neglected themes. Early Americanists have produced some of the most influential work in the new social history. Few areas of historical study have undergone such extensive or exciting changes. This course will explore the history of colonial America by examining the most important recent historiographical debates. We will investigate the relationship among slavery, race, and class in the development of the colonial societies. We will engage with works that use social science methods of demographic reconstruction to reinterpret the colonies' social development. We will explore the dynamic interplay among religion, politics, and society. We will study the role of gender in defining people's identities and social careers. Related to gender, but distinct from it as a subject of historical inquiry, we will look at the varied experiences of women in the colonial societies. Historical geography will enable us to trace the emergence of interconnected but distinctive sociocultural regions and political communities. It will also provide the conceptual tools to analyze the problems of empire-building, imperial expansion, and the historical processes by which imperialism and colonialism may beget nationalism. The objective of this course is not only to understand the history of the colonial era, but also to reflect critically on how historians do their work.

Requirements:

Essays: Each student will write three critical historiographical essays based on the readings. Each essay will be 10 typewritten pages in length. Each week individual students or pairs of students will lead the discussion.

Grading: Each essay will count for 25% of the course grade. Leadership in class discussions will count for the other 25% of the course grade.

Readings:

Beeman, Richard R. **The Varieties of Political Experience in Eighteenth-Century America.** Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Berkin, Carol. **First Generations: Women in Colonial America.** New York: Hill and Wang, 1996.

Berlin, Ira. **Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America.** Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Bonomi, Patricia U. **Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion and Politics in Colonial America.** New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, updated edition 2003.

Bushman, Richard L. **The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities.** New York: Random House, 1993.

Hall, David, **Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgement: Popular Religion in Early New England.** Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Lockridge, Kenneth A. **A New England Town: The First Hundred Years, Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736.** New York: W. W. Norton, 1970.

Lombard, Anne S. **Making Manhood: Growing Up Male in Colonial New England.** Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

May, Henry F. **The Enlightenment in America.** New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Meinig, D. W. **The Shaping of America. Volume I: 1492-1800.** New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

Morgan, Edmund. **American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia.** New York: W. W. Norton, 1975.

Nash, Gary B. **The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution.** Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

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Richter, Daniel K. **Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America**. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Essays: (on reserve – password: pilgrim):

Galenson, David. “Settlement and Growth of the Colonies: Population, Labor, and Economic Development.” In Stanley L. Engerman and Robert Gallman, eds. **The Cambridge Economic History of the United States: The Colonial Era. Volume 1** (New York: Cambridge University Press), 135-208.

Greene, Jack P. “‘A Posture of Hostility’: A Reconsideration of Some Aspects of the Origins of the American Revolution.” **American Antiquarian Society Proceedings**, 87, Part I (1977): 27-68..

Greene, Jack P. “An Uneasy Connection, an Analysis of the Preconditions of the American Revolution.” In Stephen Kurtz and James Hutson, eds. **Essays on the American Revolution** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 32-80.

Longmore, Paul K. “‘they . . . speak better English than the English do’: Colonialism and the Origins of National Linguistic Standardization in America,” **Early American Literature** 40, no 2 (Summer 2005): 279-314.

Nash, Gary B. “The Social Development of Colonial America.” In Jack P. Greene and J.R. Pole, eds. **Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era** (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

Richards, Eric. “Scotland and the Uses of the Atlantic Empire,” and A. G. Roeber, “‘The Origin of Whatever Is Not English among Us’: The Dutch-speaking and the German-speaking Peoples of Colonial British America,” both in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds, **Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1991), 67-114, 220-83.

Vaughan, Alden. “The Origins Debate: Slavery and Racism in 17th Century Virginia.” **Virginia Magazine of History and Biography** 97 (July 1989): 311-354; and **Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience**. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Schedule

WEEK 1: August 28. **Introduction**

WEEK 2: September 4. **Building Empires: Cultural Conflict, Cultural Negotiation**

Meinig, **Shaping of America**, pp. 1-250

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WEEK 3: September 11. Slavery, Class, and Racism

Morgan, **American Slavery, American Freedom**; Vaughan, “The Origins Debate”

WEEK 4: September 18. Forced Labor, Communities of Resistance: the African-American Experience

Berlin, **Many Thousands Gone**

WEEK 5: September 25. Errand into the Wilderness

Hall, **World of Wonders, Days of Judgement**

WEEK 6: October 2 Limitation or Liberation? Colonial Women’s Experience

Berkin, **First Generations**

FIRST ESSAY DUE

WEEK 7: October 9. Fathers and Sons

Lombard, Anne S. **Making Manhood**

WEEK 8: October 16. Frontiers of American Empire

Richter, Daniel K. **Facing East from Indian Country**

WEEK 9: October 23. Community and Localism

Lockridge, **A New England Town**

WEEK 10: October 30. The Developing Colonial Societies

Galenson, “Settlement and Growth”; Longmore, “they . . . speak better English than the English do”; Nash, “Social Development”; Richards, “Scotland and the Uses of the Atlantic Empire”; Roeber, “The Origin of Whatever Is Not English among Us”

SECOND ESSAY DUE

WEEK 11: November 6. Material Life and American Identities

Bushman, **The Refinement of America**

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WEEK 12: November 13. **The Emergence of an American Religious System**

Bonomi, **Under the Cope of Heaven**

WEEK 13: November 20. **THANKSGIVING WEEK**. No Class

WEEK 14: November 27. **The Maturation of the Colonies: Economy, Politics, and Society**

Nash, **The Urban Crucible**

WEEK 15: December 4. **The Emergence of American Political Systems**

Beeman, **Varieties of Political Experience**

WEEK 16: December 11. **The Art of Deconstructing an Empire**

Greene, "A Posture of Hostility"

Greene, "An Uneasy Connection"; Meinig, **Shaping of America**, pp. 251-454

December 18. **THIRD ESSAY DUE**