



History 780
*Regionalism and
Nationalism in
Early America*

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In this graduate reading seminar we explore the tension between regionalism and nationalism in early America. We examine how Americans of the colonial and early national periods understood the relationship between their locality and the larger polity they were part of. We also discuss also how historians have understood and conceptualized American regions—New England, the Chesapeake, the South, the West, the backcountry, the frontier—and the (incipient) American nation from the colonial to the early national period. Is the story of America before the Civil War best understood in terms of national history or as a collection of regional histories?

Course objectives:

- Explain how the people of early American understood their own political and social identity
- Compare how historians have conceptualized American regions
- Compare how different historians have conceptualized the American nation and nationalism
- Identify historically significant regions
- Improve ability to grasp and assess a historian's argument
- Develop discussion-leading skills
- Identify, summarize, and analyze major historical works on a given topic

Assignment	Weight	Due
Participation In Discussions	20%	Every Week
Discussion Leading 1	10%	Before 3/29
Discussion Leading 2	10%	3/29 or after
Book Review 1 (Must Be of a Different Book from the One You Led a Discussion on)	15%	3/22
Book Review 2 (Must Be of a Different Book from the One You Led a Discussion on)	15%	5/10
Historiographical Essay	25%	5/24 (proposal due 3/29)
Posting Questions Online	5%	Every Week

See details regarding assignments below.

Course Calendar

2/8	Tate and Ammerman, eds. <i>Chesapeake in the 17th c.</i>
2/15	Kenneth Lockridge, <i>A New England Town</i>
2/22	Mary Beth Norton, <i>Founding Mothers and Fathers</i>
3/1	Rhys Isaac, <i>Transformation of Virginia</i>
3/8	Jon Butler, <i>Becoming America</i>
3/15	T.H. Breen, <i>Marketplace of Revolution</i>
3/22	Mary Beth Norton, <i>Liberty's Daughters</i> First book review due
3/29	Colin Calloway, <i>American Revolution in Indian Country</i> Turn in proposal for historiographical essay.
4/5	SPRING BREAK

4/12	Gordon Wood, <i>Radicalism of the American Revolution</i>
4/19	David Waldstreicher, <i>In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes</i>
4/26	Alan Taylor, <i>William Cooper's Town</i> , parts 1-2
5/3	Alan Taylor, <i>William Cooper's Town</i> , part 3
5/10	John Mack Faragher, <i>Sugar Creek</i> 2nd book review due
5/17	Christine Leigh Heyrman, <i>Southern Cross</i>
5/24	Final paper due

Assignments, Policies, and Notes

Participation: This seminar depends on the energetic participation—listening as well as speaking—of all involved. Please let me know if you feel shy about speaking up in class.

Posting questions online: Please post at least one discussion question regarding the week's reading online at the Blackboard website by 9:00 p.m. Tuesday before class.

Discussion-leading: Each student will help lead two discussions by reviewing online questions, consulting with co-leaders, and guiding the discussion. Each group of leaders should present a review of the week's reading and introduce major issues for discussion in *no more than 15 minutes* at the beginning of class. After the introduction, the discussion leaders should guide the discussion with questions and comments for about 45 minutes.

Historiographical Essay: The historiographical essay should be 14-16 pages long (12-point font, 1-inch margins). Choose a theme addressed by at least one of our common readings. Read *at least* 3 books or 6 articles in addition to the common readings and write an essay tracing how historians' views on your topic have changed over time. Think of this as a research paper in which you are researching historians' interpretations. Footnote style should follow Turabian, *A Guide for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Late work: All late work will be marked down a letter grade for every day it is late, up to 3 days after the due date. Work received 4-7 days after the due date will receive half credit. No work will be accepted more than a week late. Exceptions may be made if you speak to me well before the assignment is due.

Book reviews: Book reviews should be no more than 3 pages each (12-point font, 1-inch margins). Consult professional reviews in historical journals for models. All book reviews should address the following questions (not necessarily in this order):

- What is the book about?
- When was it written?
- By whom? Does the author's identity matter in interpreting the book?
- What seems to be the author's motivation for writing? What question is she or he attempting to address?
- What sources did the author use?
- What is the book's argument?
- How is the book organized?
- What kind of history is it?
- Did you find the account in the book persuasive? Why or why not?
- Do you have any other critical comments?

Some advice on how to read a book each week:

- 1) Read the cover, front matter, and conclusion of each book very carefully. Note what the author's argument is, who the audience of the book is, what sources it is based on, and what kind of history the author is engaged in. Think about potential challenges the author will have advancing the argument.
- 2) Read the introduction and conclusion of each chapter and each chapter section carefully.
- 3) Read the rest quickly, skimming when you can see where the author is going and slowing down for new information, complex arguments, or confusing sections.
- 4) Keep track of the structure of the argument as you read, and read to find out HOW the author makes his or her argument, not for WHAT the argument is, since you have already figured that out (in step 1 above).

Plagiarism: Plagiarism will, of course, not be tolerated and will be punished to the greatest extent possible under university guidelines.

Disabilities: Please let me know if you need accommodation for a disability.

Grading scale:

- 93-96: A
- 90-92: A-
- 87-89: B+
- etc.