History
145
Early America
 to 1783

MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m.
Gavett 208
Office: Rush Rhees 455
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-3:00 pm or by appointment

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Course Description: This course examines European expansion into the Americas from Columbus’s first voyage through the aftermath of the American Revolution. Throughout this period, we will consider the making of a multi-national and multi-ethnic Atlantic world that included Africa, Europe, and America in order to provide a broader context for situating the development of colonial British America and the infant United States. We will regionally survey the expansion of different European nations into the Americas through the 1680s and then focus more closely on British America through 1750, emphasizing how timing, environmental factors, economic strategies, and the scale and nature of migration produced differences within colonial societies. We will also topically examine Anglo-Indian contact, slavery and the emergence of African-American culture, gender, science, religion, and the changing contours of daily life in order to appreciate the diversity of experiences of colonial Americans. We conclude by examining the political and ideological crises of the American Revolution, the war’s impact on a diverse American population, and struggles within the new United States to forge a politically and culturally cohesive republic in the 1780s.

While providing a broad introductory overview to our current understanding of early American history, this course also introduces students to the practices of doing history through close reading, analysis, and discussion of primary documents. Through viewing films and documentaries and visiting historic sites, we will also consider how the present uses the past for various cultural purposes and appreciate “history” more as an ongoing argument between multiple contending interpretations than as a static script of facts and events to memorize and recite.

Evaluation: Your course grade will be based on a combination of class participation (10%), two papers due Sept. 21 and Nov. 26 (15% each), two in-class midterm exams on Oct. 15 and 29 (15% each), and a final exam on Dec. 20 (30%). Students who have performed well on the midterms and take-home essay (averaging B+ or better) will have the option of substituting a research paper of 10-15 pages using primary sources on an approved topic for the final exam with my advanced permission. Students interested in this option should register their topic by Wednesday, November 21. It is due at the start of the final exam (December 20). Any assignments submitted late will be penalized 5 points per day (or part thereof). I do not give
makeup exams or assign incomplete grades unless they are sanctioned by the dean’s office.

**Class Participation:** Through lectures and discussions of films and monographs, we will develop a better understanding of America’s pre-industrial past. Your attendance is required and will be monitored through a sign-in book. It is worth 10% of your grade, the equivalent of a full letter grade. After two unexcused absences, each missed class will reduce your grade by 2%. This means that if you attend regularly, 10% of your grade will be a straight A. Alternatively, the quickest way to turn a B into a C is to blow off seven classes. Only officially sanctioned absences with advance notification or cases of sickness with independent documentation (i.e. a doctor’s note) will be excused. I expect you to have done the assigned readings and come to class prepared with questions and comments for discussion. **I reserve the right to take pop quizzes if I suspect a significant portion of the class is unprepared.** Failure to demonstrate adequate preparation will result in loss of that day’s attendance. In addition to lectures, three films will be screened on Thursday nights before class discussion: *Black Robe* (on Oct. 4), *A Midwife’s Tale* (Nov. 15), and *Colonial House, episode 1* (Nov. 19; you will need to see the other five episodes on your own). We will evaluate them in discussion sections the following day. If you cannot attend these screenings, you are responsible for seeing them on your own at the Rush Rhees Multimedia Center (room G122) prior to our discussion. Even if you have already seen them, please view them again in light of the new material we are covering in this class. There will also be an optional (but highly encouraged!) field trip on Saturday, October 20 to Ganondagan State Historic Park (a 1670s Iroquois Longhouse) and the Landmark Society’s Stone-Tolan house to explore Western New York from opposite sides of the same frontier: the Seneca Indians and the area’s earliest Anglo-American settlers.

**Course Website:** This course will maintain a website for accessing electronic reserve material, course syllabus and assignments, weekly terms, and other related material using Blackboard/My Courses. It is accessible via the Rush Rhees Library Reserve Website: [http://www.lib.rochester.edu/index.cfm?page=courses](http://www.lib.rochester.edu/index.cfm?page=courses) by selecting HIS 145. In the past, students have had trouble viewing recently added terms. Adjusting your web browser history to refresh settings to 1 day or less should fix this problem.

**Required Texts:** The following books are available at the college bookstore and are on reserve at Rush Rhees. They are also available (new and used) at many on-line sites for less.

- Geoffrey Symcox and Blair Sullivan, *Christopher Columbus and the Enterprise of the Indies* - CCEI

Recommended:
- *Colonial House* (DVD, 2004)

In addition to these, I have placed several articles and sections of other books on electronic reserve, accessible through the course syllabus on the course web-page.
A Note on Communication: I assume you are all adults and that the work you do in this class is entirely your own original composition. It is your responsibility to get to class and to submit all your work on time or early in paper form. I check my email and phone messages regularly and usually am good about responding to correct and courteously worded missives (on weekdays between 9 and 5), but don’t expect instant responses (I don’t IM) and do not assume I got your email. Informal and poorly punctuated/capitalized emails annoy me. If a truly urgent or important situation arises, contact me in person, relay a message via the history department, or call me at home (678-4704), rather than count on an email. Also, do not simply “disappear” if you find yourself overwhelmed or struggling in this class: I can only work with you if I know this is happening, and an early timely intervention is far better than damage control at semester’s end.

CLASS SCHEDULE

** denotes reading on E-Reserve

Aug. 31 (Fri) An Introduction to an Atlantic Perspective on Early America
Sept. 5 (Wed) The Dynamics of Colonization

Part I: Settlement
Sept. 7 & 10 (Fri, Mon.) 1491: Europe, Africa, and America on the eve of contact AS, 1-19
Sept. 12 (Wed.) Columbus, Conquest, and Colonization – CCEI, 1-37 FIRST PAPER TOPIC DISTRIBUTED

Sept. 14 (Fri) DISCUSSION of Christopher Columbus and the Enterprise of the Indies, 43-176 MEET IN DISCUSSION SECTIONS
Sept. 17 (Mon.) Spanish and Portuguese America AS, 19-26
Sept. 19 (Wed.) England’s Western Turn: Ireland, Roanoke, and Jamestown ** R. Hakluyt, “Discourse on Western Planting” AS, 27-34, 38-46
Sept. 21 (Fri.) NO CLASS but FIRST PAPER DUE

Sept. 24 (Mon.) The Early Chesapeake, 1607-1675 - AS, 46-51
Sept. 28 (Fri) DISCUSSION of Changes in the Land, all - MEET IN DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Oct. 1 (Mon.) Iroquoia
Oct. 3 (Wed.) French and Dutch America – AS, 26-27, 60-62
Oct. 4 (Thurs.) SCREENING of Black Robe
Oct. 5 (Friday) DISCUSSION of Black Robe

Oct. 8 (Mon.) FALL BREAK
Oct. 10 (Wed.) Bermuda and the Caribbean ** S. Jordain, “Plain Description of Bermuda” & Taylor, American Colonies, 204-221
Oct. 12 (Fri.) Cockpit of Empires: Caribbean Society
Oct. 15 (Mon.) FIRST MIDTERM EXAM

Oct. 17 (Wed.) Chesapeake Development, 1660-1760 - AS, 84-92, 98-100
Oct. 19 (Fri.) New England Declension, 1660-1760 – AS, 76-84, 100-102
Oct. 20 (Sat.) FIELD TRIP to GANANDAGAN and STONE TOLAN

Oct. 22 (Mon.) The Lower South – AS, 67-72
Oct. 26 (Fri.) British America in 1750 AS, 94-98

Oct. 29 (Mon.) SECOND MIDTERM EXAM

**Part II: American Experiences**

Oct. 31 (Wed.) HALLOWEEN Lecture: Pirates and Witches

Nov. 2 (Fri.) Africa and Slavery ** Berlin, “Atlantic Creoles”
Nov. 5 (Mon.) Black Worlds, White Worlds: American Slavery, AS, 88-94
Nov. 7 (Wed.) Atlantic Slavery – DISCUSSION of Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, all.

Nov. 9 (Fri.) Spiritual Worlds, Rational Worlds: Religion and Reason - AS 118-127
Nov. 12 (Mon.) Material Worlds, Creole Worlds: Daily life in Early America – 110-118

Nov. 14 (Wed.) Women’s Work, Women’s Worlds
Nov. 15 (Thurs.) SCREENING of *A Midwife’s Tale*, 8:00-9:30 p.m.
Nov. 16 (Fri.) DISCUSSION of *Midwife’s Tale*, MEET IN DISCUSSION SECTIONS
SECOND PAPER TOPIC DISTRIBUTED

Nov. 19 (Mon.) SCREENING of *Colonial House* (Episode 1) – **See Episodes 2-5 on your own over Thanksgiving Break.**
Nov. 21 (Wed.) DISCUSSION of *Colonial House*

**Part III: American Revolutions**

Nov. 26 (Mon.) Imperial Rivalries: War and Empire in the 18th-century Atlantic – AS, 64-67, 128-135  SECOND PAPER DUE
Nov. 28 (Wed.) The Seven Years War – AS, 135-141
Nov. 30 (Fri.) Roots of the Revolution, 1763-1775 – AS, 145-165
Dec. 3 (Mon.) The American Revolution, 1775-1777 – AS, 165-181
Dec. 5 (Wed.) The American Revolution, 1778-1783
Dec. 7 (Fri.) The Revolution from the Trenches: DISCUSSION of Joseph Plumb Martin - *Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, all - MEET IN DISCUSSION SECTIONS
Dec. 10 (Mon.) The American Revolution as a World War
Dec. 12 (Wed.) Revolutionary Legacies: Counting Costs, Assessing Change – AS, 185-197

Dec. 20 (Thurs.) FINAL EXAM, 7:15-10:15 - Historic research papers (optional) also due