

History of the United States to the Civil War Era



Thomas Cole, *Home in the Woods*, 1847.

History 101

Mosse Humanities Building, 1111
Lecture MWF, 9:55-10:45

Daegan Miller
drmiller9@wisc.edu
Office: University Club 305
Office Hours: Tuesday, 10-Noon; by appt.
Mailbox: 5036, Mosse.

TAs: Jeanne Essame
essame@wisc.edu
Office: Mosse Humanities 4260
Office Hours: Tuesday, Noon-2; by appt.

Section 301 M 1:20-2:10, Mosse 2131
Section 302 M 2:25-3:15, Mosse 2251
Section 303 T 12:05-12:55, Mosse 2611
Section 304 T 2:25-3:15, Mosse 2631
Section 305 W 12:05-12:55, Mosse 2125
Section 306 T 3:30-4:20, Mosse 2631
Section 307 R 12:05-12:55, Mosse 2631
Section 308 T 11:00-11:50, Mosse 2631

Andrew Shaffer
awshaffer@wisc.edu
Office: Mosse Humanities 4268
Office Hours: Tuesday, 10-11; Wednesday,
1-2; by appt.

Description

Names and dates, battles and elections, dead white men and their great deeds: that's history, right? But here's a wrinkle: what if we differentiate between the *past*—everything that has ever happened to anyone, anywhere—and *history*—how we select and make sense of that vast chronology of events? If we do so, then *history* gets both more complicated and more active: it is something that *we* make in the present, and for a reason. Making sense of the past—making and critiquing history—is what you and the TAs and I will do together this semester.

This course begins with the premise that history is a story told by historians: we pick beginnings, middles, and endings; we choose winners and losers, tell tales of triumph and heartbreak, select some events and ignore others; and we *always* use our stories to make a point. Yet, one need not be a licensed academic to tell an historical tale—indeed, one need only learn the rules of the game and some of the game’s conventions to be able to make one’s own history, and to critique the histories that others have made.

In this class, we will focus on the events of the early American past for our study. Though it is an introductory course, it is not a survey: we will not learn everything that happened from the last ice age to Reconstruction in the territory that would become the United States. Rather, this class will trace three recurring, contested, intertwined themes—slavery, freedom, and progress—across five crucial moments in early American history: King Phillip’s War (1675); The Revolution of 1800; westward expansion; John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry (1859); and the completion of the transcontinental railroad (1869). We’ll spend three weeks situating each event in a deep historical context, struggling to make sense of the past with a combination of primary and secondary sources.

Rationale

The aim of this class is to introduce you to the concepts of critical historical thinking, which will be valuable to you whether or not you ultimately choose to major in history, or even in the humanities. What makes a fact a fact, or one interpretation more legitimate than another? What does it mean to read critically? What is analytical writing? How can we make sense of historical documents—and what counts as an historical document? We will use the content of early American history to explore potential answers to each of the previous questions.

By the end of this class, each of you should be on the path towards:

- Reading, writing, and thinking critically, as well as understanding that the three are inseparable activities for historical thinking (as well as for other humanistic studies).
- Understanding that history is a practice, and gaining a familiarity with its conventions.
- Evaluating the histories that others have made.
- Making well-reasoned historical arguments of your own.

Digital Gadget Policy.

- Please turn off your cell-phone. No one wants to hear your ring tone!
- Unless you’ve made an arrangement with me or the TAs otherwise, *PLEASE DO NOT BRING LAPTOPS/TABLETS TO LECTURE OR DISCUSSION SECTION!* It’s old school, I know, but the temptation to get on the Internet is too great, and not only will you be distracted, but you’ll also divert the attention of everyone behind you by whatever you are looking at. Pen and paper only, please!
- I have placed all of the supplemental readings on Learn@UW. This will save you a great deal of \$\$\$ in copyright fees, but you will still need to *PRINT THEM OUT AND BRING THEM TO DISCUSSION SECTION.*

Requirements

- Attending all classes (though if you must miss a class or postpone a paper due to personal illness, family needs, or the observance of a religious holiday, please let me know ahead of time. You will be responsible for keeping yourself up-to-date with the reading and writing assignments!)
- Completing all written work.

- Please come to discussion section having done the reading carefully, and please be prepared to participate. The reading that I assign will be due on the day your discussion section meets.

Grading

- **Extensions.**
If you need an extension due to personal illness, family emergency, or the observance of a religious holiday, please *ask* your TA ahead of time.
- **Late Policy.**
Unless you have been given an extension, for every day that your paper is late you'll be docked 1/2 of a letter grade (i.e., AB to B).
- **Appealing a Grade.**
The Teaching Assistants for this class are experts in the history of the Americas, and their grade is final. DO NOT ask them to change your grade. If you don't understand why you received a certain grade, please WAIT 24 HOURS before contacting your TA and asking for clarification. If, after meeting with your TA, you are still unsatisfied, you may appeal to me. Come by my office hours, or set up an appointment, and we can talk about your work.
- **Academic integrity.**
All students are expected to abide by UW-Madison's code of academic integrity, which can be found at: <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html>
- **Assignments.**
 - 4 *short* (500 words, max) précis, which, in total, will be worth 20% of your final grade.
 - 1 midterm essay (3-4 pages max), which will be worth 20% of your final grade.
 - 1 final essay (3-4 pages max), which will be worth 30% of your final grade.
 - Participation in discussion section, which will be worth 30% of your final grade.

Required Texts (also on reserve):

- Gardner, Alexander. *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War*. Dover, 1959.
- Lepore, Jill. *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origin of American Identity*. Knopf, 1998.
- Melville, Herman. *Benito Cereno* in *Melville's Short Novels*. Norton Critical Editions, 2001.
- Nelson, Scott Reynolds. *Steel Drivin' Man: John Henry, the Untold Story of an American Icon*. Oxford, 2008.
- Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense*. Penguin Classics, 1982.
- Additional short pieces on Learn@UW

(Highly) Suggested Texts:

- Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers*, 8th ed.

A May-Be-Useful-But-Not-Required Text:

- Henretta, James et. al. *America: A Concise History*, Volume 1: To 1877

Course Calendar

Part One. Who is an American? Where is America? When is America?: King Phillip's War and Evolving Identities.

Week 1, 9/3:

Wednesday: Introduction: Three Beginnings, Three Unanswered Questions.
Friday: Where is the United States?; and A Short Talk on Active Reading.

Reading:

- Jill Lepore, *The Name of War*, Prologue-chapter 3.
- The Syllabus.

NOTE: No sections this week.

Week 2, 9/8:

Monday: Looking East from Indian Country.

Wednesday: Looking West from Europe.

Friday: Plantations and Cities Upon Hills.

Reading:

- Lepore, *The Name of War*, chapters 4-5.
- The Iroquois Describe the Beginning of the World
- The Ho-Chunk Creation Story
- John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity*.

Week 3, 9/15:

Monday: What Made the New World New?

Précis 1 Due at the Start of Class

Wednesday: Things Fall Apart.

Friday: Settlement? Invasion? Conquest?

Reading:

- Lepore, *The Name of War*, chapter 6.
- Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*.

Part Two. “We Hold These Truth to be Self Evident”: The View from 1800.

Week 4, 9/22:

Monday: Looking North from Africa.

Wednesday: Science, Race, and National Identity.

Friday: Economics and Empire.

Reading:

- Marcus Rediker, “Life, Death, and Terror in the Slave Trade,” and “African Paths to the Middle Passage” from *The Slave Ship*.
- Thomas Jefferson, selections from *Notes on the State of Virginia*.
- Phyllis Wheatley, “On being brought from Africa to America,” “A Farewell to America,” and “Liberty and Peace.”

Week 5, 9/29:

Monday: Towards Independence.

Précis 2 Due at the Start of Class

Wednesday: Who is an American, and How Can You Tell?

Friday: The Question of Religion.

Reading:

- Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*.

- Declaration of Independence.*
- The Constitution of the United States.*

Week 6, 10/6:

Monday: The Question of Where the Power Lies: Confederation and Sovereignty.

Wednesday: The Republic.

Friday: A Slave Society or a Society with Slaves?

Reading:

--*The Federalist Papers* 1, 9, 10, 39, 51.

--"Second Revolution" from Garry Wills, *"Negro President": Jefferson and the Slave Power.*

Part Three. The Course of Empire.

Week 7, 10/13:

Monday: Wilderness, Farm Fields, Cities: What *Should* the US Look Like?

Midterm Due at the Start of Class

Wednesday: The Surveyor and the Explorer.

Friday: Where is "the West?"

Reading:

--Selections from Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia.*

--Sally Hester, "The Diary of a Pioneer Girl," and Louisiana Strentzel, "A Letter from California," from *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries and Letters from the Western Trails.*

--John L. O'Sullivan, "Annexation."

Week 8, 10/20:

Monday: Nature's Nation.

Wednesday: Culture and Politics in Jacksonian America.

Friday: Religion, Reform, Virtue, and Character.

Reading:

--Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature.*

Week 9, 10/27:

Monday: Transcendentalism: The Radical Challenge, Part I.

Précis 3 Due at the Start of Class

Wednesday: Socialists, Anarchists, Free-Lovers, and Feminists: The Radical Challenge, Part II.

Friday: In Defense of Un-Freedom: The Antimodern Challenge.

Reading:

--Margaret Fuller, *The Great Lawsuit.*

--John Humphrey Noyes, selection from *First Annual Report of the Oneida Association.*

--Selections from George Fitzhugh, "Sociology for the South" and "Cannibals, All!"

--James Henry Hammond, "Mud Sill" Speech.

Part Four. The Making of a Martyr, the Coming of a War: John Brown, Abolition, and the Transcendentalists

Week 10, 11/3:

Monday: The Most Important Revolution You've (Probably) Never Heard Of: Haiti.

Wednesday: What is a Slave?

Friday: What is an Abolitionist?

Reading:

--David Walker, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, "Preamble" and "Article 1."

--Nat Turner, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*.

--Frederick Douglass, *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?*

--Selections from William Lloyd Garrison

Week 11, 11/10:

Monday: Resistance.

Wednesday: 1850 and its Roots.

Friday: Westward the Course of...Slavery?

Reading:

--Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*

Note: You only need read p. 34-102, though the context and criticism (199-230; 287-340) might be interesting/useful.

Week 12, 11/17:

Monday: Slavery in Massachusetts, Blood in Kansas.

Précis 4 Due at the Start of Class

Wednesday: Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans.

Friday: What to Make of John Brown?

Reading:

--Henry David Thoreau, *A Plea for Captain John Brown*, *Martyrdom of John Brown*, and *The Last Days of John Brown*.

Part Five. Constructing a Railroad, Reconstructing a Nation.

Week 13, 11/24:

Monday: "And the War Came."

Wednesday: Looking Backward.

Friday: NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK. ENJOY!

Reading:

--Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Celestial Railroad."

NOTE: No sections this week.

Week 14, 12/1:

Monday: The Real War Will Never Get in the Books.

Wednesday: The Costs of War.

Friday: What Will the New Nation Look Like?

Reading:

--Alexander Gardner, *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War*.

--Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address," and "Second Inaugural Address."

Week 15, 12/8:

Monday: The Post-War West.

Wednesday: The World the Railroads Built.

Friday: Conclusion: *Who* are we? *Where* are we?

Reading:

--Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Steel Drivin' Man: John Henry, the Untold Story of an American Legend*, chapters 1-6 (but I strongly recommend you read chapters 7-Coda, as well—they're worth it!)

FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 15 AT 2:25PM, IN MY OFFICE (305 University Club)

University Policies and Regulations

I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to my attention.

I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations should be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except in unusual circumstances, so that arrangements can be made.