History 403

Immigration, Assimilation, and Ethnicity in American History

History 403 examines American immigration and ethnicity from the arrival of the first English colonists to the present day. It treats the experiences of Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans as well as those of the Europeans who have, until recently, constituted the majority of the immigrant flow. The course covers the histories of both those who came as free immigrants and of those who arrived in bondage.

History 403 is an intermediate course, not an elementary one. It will be fast-paced and comprehensive. The assumption must be that you already know the basic facts, trends, and issues relating to the broad issues of the American past. If your knowledge of U.S. history is weak, you should not take History 403, or you should be ready to do supplemental reading in a college-level textbook such as those used in History 101 and 102.

The goal of History 403 is to answer a series of basic questions. Who came, and why did they leave their native countries? When did various ethnic and racial groups arrive in North America, and where did they go after landing here? How did the residents whose families had come to America in earlier years, or decades, or centuries receive newcomers? How did the immigrants respond to the foreign environment in which they suddenly found themselves? To what extent did the immigrants and their offspring become part of the mainstream of American society? Which of their Old World practices and values – if any – survived in the New World? Of what importance is immigration in the present era and how may it affect the future? The questions seem straightforward, but beneath their appearance of simplicity lies a reality that involves serious and complicated problems of definition, measurement, and judgment.

WebCT

WebCT is on-line courseware used to support History 403 and other courses. The address for the WebCT home page for History 403 is uwmad.courses.wisc.edu/public/history403_001_sp02. The address webct.wisc.edu/public/history403_001_sp02 will also work. Once there, you can log in using your email userid (the part before @students.wisc.edu) and a password, which is your date of birth in the form mmddyy. If you were born on January 2, 1983, your initial password will be 010283. After you log in, you can change your password, if you desire to do so.

WebCT has many useful components. You will find a copy of this syllabus as well as a calendar containing useful information and links to materials for each lesson. Those materials will include web-compatible copies of the PowerPoint slides that I present during the lectures and Rich Text Format (RTF) versions of them. You will also find subprograms that allow you to take on-line quizzes, to keep track of your grades, and to engage in question and answer sessions when they are scheduled. You will receive more information about WebCT during the Introductory Lecture on 23 January.

The PowerPoint, RTF, and other course content materials that you will find at the WebCT site at the beginning of the semester date from semester's edition of the course. Those files serve as a good guide to the content of the course. Parts of some lessons, however, will change this semester. I expect to have the updated versions of the lessons available before the date scheduled for each of the classes.

Before each lesson, you should receive, via email, an outline of the scheduled lecture in RTF format. Students in past years have found that printing out those files makes note taking easier.

PowerPoint is a Microsoft product, and last year students who used the Internet Explorer as their web browser had a better experience manipulating the files than did those who used Netscape. Try the latest version of whatever browser you use. If you encounter difficulties, ask a staff member at a computing lab for assistance.

Assignments and Examinations

Four books constitute the required reading for History 403. They are:

Marianne Wokeck, Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America

Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race

Peter Levine, Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish Experience

David Hollinger, Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism

For those desiring a textbook, I shall make available, through WebCT, Becoming American, a book I wrote some time ago. I am now updating that book.

There will be two examinations – a mid-term and a final. The mid-term will take place during a regularly scheduled lecture hour; the final will be on the day scheduled for it. Both exams will last approximately 1.25 hours, and will carry equal weight in determining 70 percent of the final grade for each student.

In all cases, performances in sections will determine the remaining 30 percent of the grades. To contribute effectively, students must come prepared for those sections. Therefore, students will be expected, by dates before specific meetings, to provide answers to simple quizzes based on the pertinent lectures and readings. Those quizzes will be found on the Web CT page created for the course and will generate15 percent of the grades. The Teaching Assistants will directly control the remaining 15 points.