

HISTORY 2111 — UNITED STATES HISTORY I (to 1877)

Fall Semester, 2009

CRN 8272, Mon., Wed., 6:00-7:15 (J-109)

CRN 8273, Mon., Wed., 7:30-8:45 (J-109)

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Office Hours: Monday 3:30 – 4:30; Tuesday, 12:30 – 1:30 and 2:45 – 3:45; Wednesday, 2:00 – 3:00 and 5:00 – 6:00; and by appointment

Course Description

Many of the cultural, political, and social issues that we see in the United States today had their origins during the period covered by this course. Such “modern” issues as race and gender relations, the role of religion in society, and even piracy in Africa all had their parallels in the period between 1607 and 1877. Those years saw the exploration of the North American continent, the growth of European settlement, and the displacement of Native Americans. As the British colonies in North America matured, they rebelled against the benefits and the restrictions of colonialism. The formative years of our new nation witnessed a variety of often conflicting beliefs as Americans struggled to make sense of the present and move toward a better future—issues that confront us still. In order to understand these issues and devise solutions to the modern problems that still accompany them, it is first necessary to examine the historical context in which these issues emerged. Just as individual actions in childhood influence later behavior as an adult, the events of the past 500 years influence what we are as a nation and who we are as a society. These events also remind us that, in times of crisis, Americans have rarely agreed on the proper course of action to follow. Had different policies been adopted, a much different America might have emerged. This alone should make us pause before we unjustly criticize radically different social, political, or economic value systems. We must also be careful not to “mythologize” the past – that is, to make decisions on what actually happened in the past (and is happening today), and not what we *think* was the case, what we *wish* had been the case, or what some (or some website) *suggested* was the case.

Briefly, four major themes emerge in the development of the colonies and the early United States. We will refer to these themes throughout the semester:

First, the exploration and early settlement of North America, a process that provided great opportunity for many Europeans, but also produced devastating hardship for America's indigenous inhabitants.

Second, the growing rift that developed between the thirteen American colonies and Great Britain—a rift that led to the first (but not the last) large-scale rebellion against a European imperial power in the history of the world.

Third, the process whereby the victorious revolutionaries created a radically new and largely untried form of government—the representative democracy—and, in doing so, established a democracy that was far less democratic than we would like to admit.

Fourth, the presence of slavery in the United States, an institution that produced unimaginable suffering, made a mockery of our democratic ideals, and finally led to the Civil War—the most serious crisis that our nation has ever faced.

Learning Outcomes:

After satisfactorily completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify historical issues in and cite knowledge of the American past.
2. Reach informed conclusions about historical sources and develop multiple explanations for historical events.
3. Describe the ways in which the past affects current events.
4. Identify the cultural values of the U.S. and the role of minority views in reshaping those values.

Readings:

The following books are available at the SPSU campus bookstore, or at the Southern Engineering bookstore across the street. You are expected to have read (and, if necessary, reread) assigned materials **prior to** the class meeting for which those readings were assigned.

Pauline Maier, Merritt Roe Smith, et al., *Inventing America: A History of the United States, 2nd Edition, Volume 1*. Even though this text is required reading for the course, any good quality, college-level Modern U.S. History survey text is acceptable. The text serves three functions. First, and most importantly, you will need to read ahead, so that you will be familiar with basic information on a particular topic BEFORE we discuss it in class. There are no specific chapter assignments, but you can read ahead in the text simply by charting our progress in the class relative to the course outlines. Obviously, the less familiarity you have with U.S. history, the more thoroughly you will have to read the text. Second, the text will enable you to fill in things that you might have missed in class, particularly if you are absent on a particular day. Third, the text will provide an alternate perspective and interpretation to the material presented in lecture.

Retrieving the American Past (a.k.a., RTAP) – Black cover—since this is a customized reader, do not purchase a version at any other bookstore, or from a previous semester – this is probably also a book that you should buy directly from the SPSU bookstore, since they are the only ones with new, unmarked, current copies of RTAP

Bruce Olds, *Raising Holy Hell*

Class Policies:

- Please refrain from private conversations in class—if you have a question, ask the instructor, not your neighbor.
- Turn off all cell phones, pagers, etc., before entering the classroom.
- **Any student using a cell phone or similar device during class (except to turn it off) will have his / her course grade reduced by one letter grade for each infraction.**
- Tape recorders and calculators are not permitted, except under extraordinary circumstances, and only with the prior permission of the instructor. **Laptop computers are not permitted under any circumstances.**
- Students may not, under any circumstances, work on material from any other course during class time.
- All exams, quizzes, etc., will be given at the beginning of class. Students who arrive late to class will NOT receive additional time in which to complete these assignments.
- Once an exam, quiz, etc., has begun, students may NOT leave the classroom for any reason before they complete that assignment.
- Pay attention to the withdrawal date – I will not authorize any withdrawals (with a “W”) after this date, except under extraordinary circumstances, that are clearly beyond the student’s control.
- Please do not request extra credit – each student is judged by the quality, and not the quantity, of their work.
- **If you do not agree with the policies listed above, then you should not take this course.**
- Any student who has a learning disability should see me as soon as possible.

Student Responsibilities:

- 1.) Attend class
- 2.) Listen actively
 - a.) Prioritize information
 - b.) Take notes
 - c.) Formulate questions
 - d.) Contribute to discussions
 - e.) Demonstrate interest and enthusiasm
- 3.) Invest 2-3 times outside of class (5-8 hours per week in addition to time spent in class)
 - a.) Read the assignments
 - i. Build your vocabulary – **use a dictionary**
 - ii. Reread, if necessary
 - iii. Take notes on the readings – mark up your books
 - b.) Recopy notes
 - c.) Outline notes
 - d.) Integrate notes covering lecture, discussion, text, and supplemental readings
 - e.) Study regularly

Suggestions to Help you in the Course:

First, if you do not understand a course requirement or course material, please ask about it. I welcome opportunities to answer your questions.

Second, if you do not understand the grading of your exams, please seek clarification at the earliest opportunity.

Third, remember that the prime concern of history is to analyze change or changes through a period of time. When, why, and how the changes occurred and the **SIGNIFICANCE** of these changes to American history are concerns at the center of each exam question. It is also important to understand who were the key participants in American history, what they accomplished, and where they accomplished it. Remember: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, HOW, and above all **SIGNIFICANCE**.

Grading

Your final grade will consist of the following:

Class participation (10%) – Note that class *attendance* is NOT the same as class *participation*!

Wednesday Quizzes (25%)– on the dates listed at the end of this syllabus, eleven quizzes in all. These will be short (typically five or ten multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or true / false questions, designed to assess how effectively you have learned both the readings assigned for that week (if any) *and* the lecture material from the previous two class days (i.e., the quiz on Wednesday, September 2 will cover the material discussed in class on Wednesday, August 26 and Monday, August 31, as well as the RTAP chapter on Christopher Columbus). These will be **CLOSED BOOK** quizzes. The lowest quiz score will be dropped and the average of the ten remaining quiz scores will constitute 25% of your overall course grade.

Midterm Exam (15%) – Wednesday, October 14

This exam will consist of 20 objective questions, along with three short answer/ID questions (you will answer **one** of these). The answers must be written in proper sentence/paragraph format. Remember to be concise, and to include WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, HOW, and above all the **SIGNIFICANCE** of each topic. This exam will cover material from the first third of the semester. This exam will be **CLOSED BOOK**.

For example:

Question:

The Mexican War

Answer:

The Mexican War began because of Texas. When the United States made Texas a state in 1845, Mexico immediately broke off diplomatic relations. The real problem, however, was a disputed piece of territory that lay between the Rio Grande and Rio Nueces. Both sides sent troops to the area, and war broke out in 1846. The people of the United States were deeply divided on the war, with northerners opposed to it (because they saw the possibility of slavery expanding) and southern whites supporting it. As the RTAP reading on Nat Turner's Rebellion shows slaves also opposed the War and hoped that Mexico would win the War and free them. The United States was unprepared for war, and its forces initially did not do well. Eventually, American troops captured the Mexico City, bringing the war to an end. In the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo (1846), Mexico was forced to give more than a third of its territory to the United States. This included California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and other areas. Because of this, the United States gained valuable natural resources. After the war, debates erupted as to whether this newly acquired land would be open to slavery or closed to slavery. Thus, the real significance of the Mexican War is that it was the single most important event contributing to the Civil War of the 1860s.

Debate (15%) – dates listed in the “Important Dates” section at the end of this syllabus.

One of the great, ongoing issues in early U.S. history concerned the allocation of political power between (on the one hand) the national government and (on the other hand) local and state governments. Americans argued passionately on both sides of this issue, each side firmly committed to their own particular vision of government that would

best preserve this nation and meet the needs of its citizens. While the Civil War established the absolute outer limits of what is often called the “states’ rights” issue, Americans today still debate this topic. Some favor a strong national government; others fear the power of a single national political entity.

With this in mind, the class will examine three events relating to the states rights’ issue: First, the debate concerning the ratification of the Constitution; second, the contentiousness of the Nullification Crisis; and third, the discussions concerning the secession of the Southern states. One third of the class will engage in a debate on each topic, half on one side of the issue, half on the other. The remaining two-thirds of the class will listen to the debate, ask meaningful questions, and evaluate the effectiveness of the arguments presented by each side. Each debating team (composed of one-sixth of the students in the class, selected at random) will of course need to do some basic research on their topic and then formulate a coherent, logical argument in defense of their position. The key here is to use your **IMAGINATION**, which is the greatest skill that any historian can possess. Forget that you live in the early 21st century, surrounded by automobiles, TV, and the Internet. Immerse yourself in the lifestyles and the issues of the era that you are studying. Remember that these issues **MATTERED** to the people who lived at that time—in some cases mattered more than life itself. Remember, too, that the states’ rights issue is still very much a part of American political discourse in our own time, and that the skills that you will develop as part of this debating exercise will not only help you to clarify your attitude on this particular issue, they will also help you develop and defend many other political, social, cultural, and economic views.

Additional information and resources relating to on this assignment are available on the History 2111 web site, and we will discuss the specifics of this assignment in greater detail later in the semester.

Quiz on *Raising Holy Hell* (10%) – Wednesday, December 2

A short-answer (paragraph format) quiz on Bruce Olds’s historical novel, followed by a discussion.

Final Exam (25%) – Date and time not yet scheduled by the Registrar’s Office – Check Banner for Updates

This exam will consist of 20 objective questions, along with two essays (you will answer one of these). A week before this exam, I will give you a sheet containing four essay questions. You will have one week to prepare these questions to the best of your ability; to study your notes, to write out sample outlines or sample essays, to discuss the questions with other students, or (and this is particularly encouraged) to discuss the questions with me. The exam itself is strictly **CLOSED BOOK**, and books, notes, outlines, and other study aides are prohibited. The exam sheet will contain two of the four essay questions from the previous sheet. You will answer **ONE** of these. The essay must be written in proper essay format (multiple paragraphs, introduction + body + conclusion, etc.). The objective portion of this exam will cover material from the final third of the semester (after the second exam), but the essay portion of the exam will be **COMPREHENSIVE**.

Grading Scale:

89.5%-100%	A
79.5%-89.4%	B
69.5%-79.4%	C
59.5%-69.4%	D
Below 59.5%	F

Make-up Policy

Make-up assignments are inherently unfair to all concerned, and I try to avoid them whenever possible. However, students with a legitimate excuse (serious illness, death in the family, etc.) may certainly make up a missed assignment. If you anticipate missing **ANY** assignment, you *must* contact me *prior* to the scheduled date and time of this assignment (e-mail is preferable in this case). Failure to do so will result in an automatic grade of zero for that assignment. Make-up assignments will only be given to those students who can *document* a serious medical emergency or personal crisis.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct (i.e., cheating) is not just unfair to your fellow students; it also deprives you of the opportunity to learn the information and, more importantly, the knowledge skills that will serve you long after you have left college. At its most basic level, all exams are closed book, and no books, notes, or other study aides will be allowed during exams. If you are unsure as to the precise meaning of academic misconduct, then you should discuss the issue with me. All students should be aware that I might use plagiarism detection and prevention services (such as turnitin.com) that may archive examples of student work. Any student who considers such practices to be a violation of fair use doctrine should not take this course.

Important Dates:

Wednesday, Sept. 2	QUIZ Discussion, <i>Historical Legacies of Christopher Columbus</i>
Monday, Sept. 7	Labor Day Holliday – no class
Wednesday, Sept. 9	QUIZ
Wednesday, Sept. 16	QUIZ Discussion, <i>Salem Witchcraft Scare</i>
Wednesday, Sept. 23	QUIZ Discussion, <i>Women and the American Revolution</i>
Wednesday, Sept. 30	QUIZ
Wednesday, Oct. 7	QUIZ Discussion, <i>The Barbary Wars</i>
Monday, Oct. 12	Study and Debate Preparation Day
Tuesday, Oct. 13	Last day to withdraw without a WF
Wednesday, Oct. 14	MIDTERM EXAM
Wednesday, Oct. 21	QUIZ Discussion, <i>Lewis and Clark: The Opening of the West</i>
Monday, Oct. 26	First Debate – Ratification of the Constitution
Wednesday, Oct. 28	QUIZ Discussion, <i>Andrew Jackson and Cherokee Removal</i>
Wednesday, Nov. 4	QUIZ
Monday, Nov. 9	Second Debate – The Nullification Crisis
Wednesday, Nov. 11	QUIZ Discussion, <i>Remember the Alamo!</i>
Wednesday, Nov. 18	QUIZ Discussion, <i>Nat Turner and Slave Resistance</i>
Wednesday, Nov. 25	Thanksgiving Holliday – No Class
Monday, Nov. 30	Third Debate – Secession
Wednesday, Dec. 2	<i>Raising Holy Hell</i> quiz and discussion
Wednesday, Dec. 9	Last day that this class meets
Thursday, Dec. 10	Last day of classes

Final exam: Date and time not yet established by the Registrar's Office