

**Hist 108: American Origins Syllabus**  
**Fall 2023**

**Instructor:** Professor Emma Hart ([emmahart@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:emmahart@sas.upenn.edu))

**Office Hours:** Monday 3-5pm in the McNeil Center for Early American Studies (3355  
Woodland Walk – corner of 34<sup>th</sup> and Walnut)

**TAs:** Dan Premawardena ([ghanprem@upenn.edu](mailto:ghanprem@upenn.edu)) and Matthew Schoenfeld  
([schoenfm@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:schoenfm@sas.upenn.edu))

**Lecture:** Monday/Wednesday 10.15am – 11.14am

**General Overview**

Nothing is inevitable, not even the United States. It is in this spirit that we will explore North American history from c1550 to 1800. The new nation that emerged over this era was the product of encounters between the continent's old and new inhabitants – Native nations, settler- colonists and Africans. We will explore the nature of these often violent confrontations to understand the role of European empires, Indigenous peoples, and enslaved African people in the making of America. There were many moments when the contest between these groups might have ended differently. This course will introduce you to the explanations that historians have offered as to why it ended how it did.

This course fulfills the College requirements for Sector II: History and Tradition, and for Foundational Approaches: Cultural Diversity in the U.S. As a History and Tradition course, American Origins will help you learn to interpret primary sources, identify and discuss their core intellectual issues, understand the social contexts in which these sources were created, pose questions about their validity and ability to represent broader perspectives and utilize them when writing persuasive essays. As a Cultural Diversity in the U.S. course, it will address the histories, dynamic cultural systems, and heterogeneous populations that came to make up the national cultures of the United States—by focusing on those histories, systems, and populations before the United States existed and as the nation's political and social order was taking shape. This plunge into a deeper past may help you think more critically about the challenges facing the United States and the world in the present day.

## **Course Requirements**

A **review essay** of **3-4 pages** due on **October 2 by 5pm** will determine **15% of your grade**. An optional second review essay may be submitted on April 23. If you complete this second assignment, only the higher of the two grades will be counted.

A **quiz** to help you consolidate your knowledge of the second half of the course will take place on **November 20**. It will be worth **10% of your grade**.

The major portion of your grade will be determined by a **mid-term paper** due on **October 17** and a **final exam**. These pieces of work are worth **25%** (mid-term paper) and **30%** (final exam) **of your grade**. The mid-term paper should be about 2000 words in length and is designed to demonstrate understanding of the lectures, readings, and class discussions and your interpretive skills as a historian.

Instructions for all assignments will be posted on Canvas at least two weeks in advance of the due dates.

Your contributions to the success of the class **discussion** will determine approximately **20% of your grade**. Quality, not quantity, is the key factor. Quality can take many forms, but it is difficult to achieve without regular attendance and active participation in weekly discussion sections (our preferred term for what are usually called “recitations”). These discussions are one of the most important parts of this course. Unexcused absences from them will substantially affect your grade.

However, if you get sick please do not drag yourself to section and make everyone else ill. Covid is still out there, as are all the other seasonal viruses; look after yourself and your classmates by resting up and staying in your room. If you have to miss a discussion class because you are ill or in quarantine, you can submit a brief summary of the readings to your TA in order to get participation credit for that week. Please discuss the format of this summary with your TA if the necessity arises.

**Extensions** to the deadlines for the **book review** and the **mid-term paper** should be requested from your TA. There will be a penalty of one letter grade per day for late work, should you fail to request an extension. We are sympathetic to granting extensions in the right circumstances; if you encounter issues with your physical or mental health, or if other personal problems get in the way (tech disasters, family crises, and other such unforeseen issues) PLEASE alert your TA at your earliest convenience. If you want an extension simply because you had multiple deadlines at the same time and did not plan your time properly, we will be less sympathetic. If you know you are prone to letting things pile up, reach out to the wonderful people at CTL, or to your TAs.

## **Readings**

The schedule below lists two kinds of readings for our course. **Background Reading** will not be discussed intensively in class, but, as the title suggests, is crucial for understanding the lectures and general context and will be vital when the time comes to write papers. Most background reading is from the on-line collaborative textbook called *The American Yawp*. **Reading for Discussion** will receive much more intense attention in weekly discussion sections. Unless otherwise noted, readings are online and are accessible through Canvas. You can find them bundled together on the week's "page." You are encouraged to purchase paper copies of the following, all of which are also accessible online:

### **Books recommended for purchase:**

Michael Leroy Oberg, *The Head in Edward Nugent's Hand: Roanoke's Forgotten Indians* (Penn Press, 2008)

Randy J. Sparks, *The Two Princes of Calabar: An Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Odyssey* (Cambridge, 2004)

Robert Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence* (Chapel Hill, 2021)

### **Background Readings:**

<https://www.americanyawp.com/index.html> (Links to an external site.)

(as well as items linked to on Canvas Pages section)

## **WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

### **Part One: Origins of Empire**

#### **Week 1 (Wednesday August 30) Introductions**

8/30 Lecture 1: What is History, Anyway?

Discussion Readings:

<https://benfranklinworld.com/category/doing-history/> (Links to an external site.) Listen to "Bonus: Why historians study history."

Nikole Hannah-Jones, *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*, Preface, especially xxvi

American Historical Association Survey Results: How does the public define history?

#### **Week 2 (Sept 4): Around and Across the Atlantic**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 1-III

1/18 Lecture 1: Getting the Lie of the Land (and Sea) MERGE

9/6 Lecture: Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch Get to Work

Discussions Readings:

Michael Oberg, *The Head in Edward Nugent's Hand*, Prologue and Chaps. 1-2 Bartolomé De Las Casas, *The Destruction of the Indies* (1542; 1583 English edition)

#### **Week 3 (Sept 11): Shatter Zones of Contact in the Americas**

Background Reading: Robbie Ethridge, "European Invasions and Early Settlement, 1500-1680" in Frederick E. Hoxie ed., *The Oxford Handbook of American Indian History* (Oxford, 2016)

9/11 Lecture 1: Americans, Meet the Europeans

9/13 Lecture 2: In the "shatter zone"

Discussion Readings:

Michael Oberg, Chapter 3-4

Thomas Hariot, *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590), selection.

### **Week 4 (Sept 18): Colonists Gain a Foothold in North America**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Chapter 2, Parts IV-VII

9/18 Lecture 1: Claims and Conquests

9/20 Lecture 2: A Tidal Wave of Colonists

#### Discussion Readings:

Three letters of the Dutch Ministers to the classis of Amsterdam, 1655–1664

George Percy's history of the settlement at Jamestown, Virginia (published London 1625)

Jesuit missionary Jean de Brébeuf on life with the Hurons in French Canada 1635-37

### **Week 5 (Sept 25): Uprisings**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Chapter 3, Section III to end.

9/25 Lecture 1: Authority Challenged

9/27 Lecture 2: Authority Reasserted?

#### Discussion Readings:

Nathaniel Bacon justifies Rebellion in Virginia (1676)

Alexander Oliver Exquemalin, *Buccaneers of America*, extract (Amsterdam, 1678)

Cotton Mather, *Enchantment Encounter'd* extract (1693)

Crown agent Edward Randolph complains about the colonists breaking the law in a letter to the Board of Trade in London (1696)

**BOOK REVIEW DUE OCTOBER 2, 5pm**

### **Week 6 (Oct 2): Making Slavery. Making Money**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Ch. 3, Section II, Chapter 4 Section III

Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone* Chapter 7 “Growth and Transformation of Black Life in the North”

10/2 Lecture 1: Creating Racial Slavery in North America

10/4 Lecture 2: Slavery, Trade, and Inequity

Discussion Readings:

South Carolina’s “Slave Code” of 1740

Randy Sparks, *The Two Princes of Calabar: An Eighteenth-Century Odyssey* (2004) Chapters 1- 3.

## **Part 2: Consolidating Empire?**

### **Week 7 (Oct 9): Building Cities**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Chapter 4, Sections I, II, IV

10/9 Lecture 1: Cities and colonization

10/11 Lecture 2: Urban Culture

Discussion Reading:

The Catawba Deerskin map: View here [https://blogs.loc.gov/maps/2016/11/celebrating-native- american-cartography-the-catawba-deerskin-map/](https://blogs.loc.gov/maps/2016/11/celebrating-native-american-cartography-the-catawba-deerskin-map/) (Links to an external site.)

Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (1784,1789) extracts

Randy Sparks, *The Two Princes of Calabar*, Chapters 4-5.

## **FALL BREAK Oct 12-15**

### **Week 8 (Oct 16): Building Governments**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Chapter 5 Sections I-II

10/16 Lecture 1: “Salutary neglect”?

10/18 Lecture 2: Making a Colonial Political Order

Discussion Readings:

Thomas Pownall's plan for a new colony (1754)

Trevor Burnard, "The Rule of Gentlemen: Elite Political Involvement," *Creole Gentlemen: The Maryland Elite, 1691-1776* (2002)

**MID-TERM ESSAY DUE TUESDAY OCTOBER 17, by 5pm****Week 9 (Oct 23): Unsettlement (again)**Background Reading:

Colin Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and Transformation of North America* Chapter 3 and 4

10/23 Lecture 1: The Seven Years War

10/25 Lecture 2: A Fractious Society

Discussion Readings:

Michael Zuckerman, "Tocqueville, Turner, and Turds: Four Stories of Manners in Early America," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (June 1998), pp. 13-42

Advertisements for enslaved freedom seekers from the *Virginia Gazette*, 1745-75

Neolin's Prophetic Vision (c1763)

**Part 3: Rejecting Empire?****Week 10 (Oct 30): Crisis of Empire**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Chapter 5, Section III

10/30 Lecture 1: No Taxation Without Representation: The View from America

11/1 Lecture 2: Upstart Colonists: The View from Britain

Discussion Readings:

Robert Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence* (2021) Chapters 1-5.

Extract from *The Rights of Great-Britain Asserted against the Claims of America: Being An Answer to the Declaration of the General Congress* (Edinburgh, 1776, 6<sup>th</sup> edition) by James MacPherson

### **Week 11 (Nov 6): Declarations of Independence**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Ch. 5, Section IV

11/6 Lecture 1: The Declaration

11/8 Lecture 2: Other Declarations

Discussion Readings:

Robert Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks*, Chapter 6, Conclusion.

The Declaration of Independence <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003576546> (Links to an external site.)

Petitions of Enslaved and Free Black people to the Massachusetts government

### **Week 12 (Nov 13): Wars for Independence**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Ch. 5, Parts V–VII

11/13 Lecture 1: Warring with the British

11/15 Lecture 2: Warring with Each Other

Discussion Readings:

The experiences of the Wells family, Loyalists from Scotland/Charleston, SC

Extract from the Diary of Joseph Plumb Martin – Battle of Yorktown (1781)

Extracts from Diary of Arthur Fairies on an expedition against the Cherokee in the Carolinas (1776)

### **Week 13 (Nov 20): Thanksgiving Week**

**11/20: QUIZ (in lecture hour)** No lectures or recitations! Happy Thanksgiving!

### **Week 14 (Nov 27): The Challenges of Making a Nation**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Ch. 6, Parts I-II

11/ 27 Lecture 1: The Difficulties of State and National Government

11/29 Lecture 2: Expansive Ambitions

Discussion Readings:

Robert Morris writes to Alexander Hamilton on the subject of paper money, October 5, 1782

Frank Garmon Jr., "Mapping Distress: Taxation and Insolvency in Virginia, 1782–1790," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Volume 40, Number 2, Summer 2020, pp. 231-265

A letter from George Washington Henry Knox on the subject of Shay's Rebellion, February 3, 1787

### **Week 15 (Dec 4) A Constitution: Now what?**

Background Reading: *American Yawp*, Chapter 6, Parts III-V

12/4 Lecture 1: Writing and Ratifying the Constitution

12/6 Lecture 2: Onwards and Westwards: A New Empire?

Discussion Readings:

An ordinance for the government of the territory of the United States, North-west of the river Ohio (The Northwest Ordinance) 1787

Madison, *Federalist 10*

*The Address and Reasons of Dissent of the Minority of the Convention of PA to their Constituents* (1787)

### **Week 16 (Dec 11): The Revolution in Global Perspective**

12/11 Lecture 1: America, France and Haiti: An Age of Revolutions

**END OF SEMESTER: FINAL EXAM PERIOD DEC 14-21 (exact date TBC)**