

AMH 6198

Graduate Readings in Early American History

Spring 2019

Tuesday, per. 8-10 (3 – 6 pm.), 13 Keene-Flint

Prof. Jon Sensbach, office 233 Keene-Flint

Office hours: 1 – 3:30 p.m. Thursday and by appointment

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This course will explore political, social and cultural developments in early America from the period of colonial contact through the American Revolution. We will examine the complex cultural interchange and contest for power among European, African and Indian peoples while paying close attention to historiographic developments in the field over the last twenty years. Among the topics the course will explore are the impact of European colonization on indigenous people; the creation of an “Atlantic world” and its relationship to global and continental approaches to early America; the rise of free and slave labor systems and the evolution of both racial ideology and African-American cultures; the role of religion in colonial life; gender and women’s history; the imperial struggle among competing European nations; and contested meanings of freedom during the era of Revolution.

The following books are required:

Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford, 2009).

Catherine Brekus, *Sarah Osborn’s World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (Yale, 2015).

Edward Rugemer, *Slave Law and the Politics of Resistance in the Early Atlantic World* (Harvard, 2018).

Kathleen Duval, *Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Pennsylvania, 2007).

Alejandra Dubcovsky, *Informed Power: Communication in the Early American South* (Harvard, 2016).

Julius Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (Verso, 2018).

Jennifer Anderson, *Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America* (Harvard, 2015).

Cécile Vidal, ed., *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World* (Pennsylvania, 2014).

Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (Penguin, 2007).

Ann Little, *The Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright* (Yale, 2018).

Robert G. Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (UNC, 2016).

## Course Outline

As one of the history department's three foundation courses for Americanist graduate students, this course is designed to provide a broad working knowledge of historiographic developments in early American history as well as exposure to important recent writings that are helping to reshape the field. Students who complete the course may not be experts in early American history, but they should have a reasonably competent grasp of the field and a sound basis upon which to prepare for an early America segment of an MA exam or for the Ph.D. qualifying exams. The reading and writing load is consequently fairly heavy. Weekly assignments average a book and several extra articles (all articles available on JSTOR or other online venues through the UF library catalogue. Students are expected to contribute to weekly discussions. On selected weeks we will hear a report from one student on an additional related reading which will help provide historiographic context to promote lively discussion.

The course will also focus on techniques of writing history. We will examine how authors present issues and link evidence to theory. We will try to identify what makes effective historical writing and compare approaches to scholarship and writing that will help us clarify what kinds of history we aspire to write. An 8-page writing assignment in Week 8 asks students for a comparative analysis based on the week's readings and other accumulated readings to that point in the semester. And for the final assignment, an 18-20 page paper, students will have a choice of writing either a historiographic essay on a selected subfield of early American history or a research paper based on a creative synthesis of original investigation in published or unpublished primary documents, along with critical secondary sources, on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor.

The course requirements are as follows:

18-20 page final paper	60%
8 page paper	20%
Class participation	20%

## Schedule

Week 1. Jan. 8. Introduction. Early America: Atlantic, Continental, Global?

Greene and Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History*:

Intro (3-33); Peter H. Wood, "From Atlantic History to a Continental Approach" (279-98); Jack Greene, "Hemispheric History and Atlantic History" (299-316); and Peter Coclanis, "Beyond Atlantic History" (337-56).

Week 2. Jan. 15. Natives and Newcomers

Duval, *Native Ground*

Juliana Barr, "Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the 'Borderlands' of the Early Southwest," *William and Mary Quarterly* 68 (2011), 5-46

Juliana Barr, "There's No Such Thing as 'Prehistory': What the Longue Durée of Caddo and Pueblo History Tells Us About Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (2017), 203-40.

Amy Bushnell, "Indigenous America and the Limits of the Atlantic World," in Greene and Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History*, chap. 7 (191-223).

Week 3. Jan. 22. The Slave Trade and Atlantic Africa

Rediker, *The Slave Ship*

Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114 (2009), 1231-49.

Philip D. Morgan, "Africa and the Atlantic, c. 1450 to c. 1820," in Greene and Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History*, 223-48.

Gregory E. O'Malley, "Slavery's Converging Ground: Charleston's Slave Trade as the Black Heart of the Lowcountry," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (2017), 271-302.

Week 4. Jan. 29. Race and the Creation of New World Slave Societies

Rugemer, *Slave Law and the Politics of Resistance*

Rebecca Anne Goetz, "Rethinking the 'Unthinking Decision': Old Questions and New Problems in the History of Slavery and Race in the Colonial South," *Journal of Southern History* 75 (Aug. 2009), 599-612.

Catherine Molineaux, "Pleasures of the Smoke: 'Black Virginians' in Georgian London's Tobacco Shops," *William and Mary Quarterly* 64 (April 2007), 327-76.

Marjoleine Kars, "Dodging Rebellion: Politics and Gender in the Berbice Slave Uprising of 1763," *American Historical Review* 121 (2016), 39-69.

Week 5. Feb. 5. Transformations in the Early American South

Dubcovsky, *Informed Power*

Joshua Piker, "Colonists and Creeks: Rethinking the Pre-Revolutionary Southern Backcountry," *Journal of Southern History* LXX (2004), 503-40.

Alejandra Dubcovsky, "Defying Indian Slavery: Apalachee Voices and Spanish Sources in the Eighteenth-Century Southeast," *William and Mary Quarterly* 75 (April 2018), 295-322.

Week 6. Feb. 12. Toward an Environmental History of Early America

Anderson, *Mahogany*

Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands," *William and Mary Quarterly* 67 (April 2010), 173-208.

James D. Rice, "Early American Environmental Histories," *William and Mary Quarterly* 75 (July 2018), 401-32.

Week 7. Feb. 19. Spiritual Lives of Early American Women

Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*

Emily Clark and Virginia Meacham Gould, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1853," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (2002), 409-49.

Rachel Wheeler, "Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village," *Religion and American Culture* 13 (2003), 27-67.

Week 8. Feb. 26. Atlantic Convergence and Divergence

Vidal, *Louisiana*

Greene and Morgan, eds., *Atlantic World*: Kenneth Andrien, "The Spanish Atlantic System" (55-80); Trevor Burnard, "The British Atlantic" (111-36); and Laurent Dubois, "The French Atlantic" (137-62).

**8-p. paper due comparing Spanish, French and British models of colonization**

Week 9. Spring Break March 4-9

Week 10. March 12. The World in a Grain of Sand: Early American Microhistory

To see the World in a Grain of Sand  
And Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the Palm of your hand  
And eternity in an hour.

William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*

Little, *Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright*

Marjoleine Kars, "History in a Grain of Sand: Teaching the Historian's Craft," *Journal of American History* 83 (March 1997), 1340-45.

Wendy Warren, "The Cause of Her Grief: The Rape of a Slave in Early New England," *Journal of American History* 93 (March 2007), 1031-49.

Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, "A Blackymore Maide Named Francis," in Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Beacon, 2000), 71-103.

Week. 11. March 19. No class; meet individually with instructor to discuss final project

Week. 12. March 26. Age of Revolutions, part 1

Parkinson, *Common Cause*, Introduction and chaps. 1-5

Alan Taylor, "Introduction: The Revolution's New Empire," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (2017), 619-32.

Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, "Atlantic Cultures and the Age of Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (2017), 667-96.

Week 13. April 2. Age of Revolutions, part 2

Parkinson, *Common Cause*, chaps. 6-9 and Conclusion

Sara T. Damiano, "Writing Women's History Through the Revolution: Family Finances, Letter Writing, and Conceptions of Marriage," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (2017), 697-728.

Eliga Gould, "Independence and Interdependence: The American Revolution and the Problem of Postcolonial Nationhood," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (2017), 726-52.

Week 14. April 9. Atlantic Emancipations

Scott, *The Common Wind*

Week 15. April 16 No class – work on papers

Week 16. April 23. Student presentations

**Final papers due Monday, April 29**