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:


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


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

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


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

Rediker, *The Slave Ship*


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

Rugemer, *Slave Law and the Politics of Resistance*


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


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

Dubcovsky, *Informed Power*


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

Anderson, *Mahogany*


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


Brekus, *Sarah Osborn’s World*


Vidal, *Louisiana*


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

Week 9. Spring Break March 4-9


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*


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


Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, “Atlantic Cultures and the Age of Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (20107), 667-96.

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

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


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**