History 5195-001
a graduate readings course in “early” North American and U.S. history
Fall 2018 / W 2:30-5:30 / Wood 4A

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This readings course explores some classic and recent scholarship in U.S. and North American history stretching from the 1500s to the 1850s, with most of the focus prior to 1800. Our readings expose us to: trends in the related scholarship over the past 50 years; debates and fault lines in the historiography; a variety of methodological approaches; recent monographs and grand syntheses that happen to have won acclaim and prizes. One goal is that students successfully completing this course will gain a solid foundation for further historical and historiographical investigation of the period. Indeed, each of you will be developing an annotated bibliography on a theme of your choosing, and thus expanding your ken of the available literature and resources. Another goal is to discuss week by week how each of us might teach these issues and topics.

Course Requirements:

Each class member is required to be prepared to discuss thoroughly the assigned readings each week. Note also that attendance in graduate seminars is not optional: any absence due to a situation other than a dire emergency will notably affect the student’s grade.

Two points on Class prep: 1) I strongly urge you to finish the week’s reading by Sunday or at the latest Monday night so that you can devote a considerable part of the 24-48 hours prior to our class to analyzing the main book assigned and its relation to prior or other readings. In addition, part of becoming a professional historian is sleuthing, digging more information out about the book and the author, and reading “around” it. Get into this practice! Think of it as a fascinating hunt. Use your peers’ discussion post to find out about the author and the author’s career, etc. 2) We constitute ourselves a collaborative learning environment, and hence it is very important that you read carefully the posts and discussion questions made by classmates (printing them out and bringing them to class is a good idea!). As you digest these, sketch out how you would answer, reword, and extend the ideas.
In addition, assignments include:

1. **Book review** (ca 1000 word) and **oral report-plus-posting** on one book on the supplemental lists (you choose the book and thus the week). Note that a book review should summarize and critically analyze the author’s main historical arguments, use of evidence, methodological approaches, historiographical contribution, findings, and conclusions. Readers of your review should be able to grasp the structure and content of the book as well as its significance and most important insights. The review should also raise new questions and suggest new avenues for historical inquiry and research based on your engagement with the text. Useful models of slightly longer reviews can be found in the *William & Mary Quarterly* and *Reviews in American History*. **Posting** (by Tuesday night at 8 pm): 1) state the topic, chronological/geographical scope, and thesis of the book; 2) offer a bulleted list of 5-6 takeaway points that you believe we should all benefit from knowing; 3) give a link (or attached file) to the best published review of the book. In your **oral report** (under 12 mins!), do not restate this info! Build on it by telling us more about the book (e.g., sources, methods), your assessment of it, your questions and ideas for further research and explain how the ‘best’ review compares with others you read. **Class members:** prior to our class session, please read the written book review is 9 a.m. the Monday following your in-class oral report (by email attachment in .docx or .rtf).

2. **Meta-review**: a 7-8 page critical assessment of three book academic reviews of one eligible monograph from our common reading (eligible books are marked with bolder double asterisks--**). Your task is to find three substantial reviews (i.e., longer than 800 words) in journals such as the *WMQ, Reviews in American History*, the *Radical History Review* (skip the *AHR* or *JAH*, if possible) and write a critical assessment of those reviews in light of your reading of the book. What choices does each reviewer make (organization, coverage, tone)? How disparate are the reviews in style, coverage, and critique? How do the authors indicate their own preferences for method and interpretation, if at all? What surprises or disappoints you about these reviews? Finally, what would you add in a critique of your own that is not present in these reviews? The meta-review is **due** sometime on the class day (up to midnight) when the book is under discussion by hard copy and email attachment — please ask me if I need you to attach xeroxs or send me pdfs of one or more of the book reviews you use). I will make some sample meta-reviews available on HuskyCT.

3. **Pair Posting of discussion questions.** In weeks 3-14 for the sessions when we are reading a book in common, a pair or trio of class members will consult in advance, jointly author or collaborate on, and post (by Tuesday 8 pm): at least **three** discussion questions plus some background information on the book’s author (write this out in a biographical paragraph; do not just give a weblink).
Your questions could raise a variety of debatable issues—analytical, interpretive, historiographical, methodological, pedagogical, etc.—that force us to wrestle with each week’s readings and deepen our comprehension of the historical and historiographical issues presented to us. These questions must do more than ask us to repeat or summarize the content or approach of a particular text. Some of your questions might ask us to compare works between weeks. (We will try to arrange it so that if you are presenting on a Supplemental book that week, you are exempt!) In the class session that day, I will enlist the posting team’s help and input in structuring our conversation.

4. Your final project is an Annotated Bibliography on a particular historiographical issue/topical theme, due exam week. Topics need to be vetted by me; I am glad to help you frame your topic and develop your list. I will make models available. Note that: by no later than mid-October, you should have a pretty firm idea of what your bibliography will focus on. Make an appointment or email with me about this! In class on Nov 14th, class members will report (5-10 minutes) on their initial findings on their topic—major trends, volume of output, interdisciplinary strands, etc. A guide to this assignment is posted on HuskyCt.

Re-writes are offered for papers where the original grade is not in the A range. These must be scheduled with me soon after you receive my feedback, and the re-written essay must be submitted before the end of classes.

Please any submit papers due up until exam week, both by hard copy and by email attachment (.doc or .rtf, titled “your surname bk review,” for example). The Annotated Bibliography can be submitted by email attachment.

Course grades will be apportioned on this basis:
- Quality of your posts and oral participation in our sessions 30%
- Effectiveness of oral reports to the class 10%
- Book review, written version 15%
- Meta-review 20%
- Annotated Bib 25%

Recommended: Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (Penguin, 2001): the best synthesis—readable, valuable, accurate and up-to-date as of about 2000 —far better than a textbook though still is in style of an omniscient narrator. You also may want to dip into or read alongside our assigned course items a standard US History textbook, such as Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty*, or Michael Johnson et al., *The American Promise*. 
Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Week 1. Aug. 29

Introduction

Overviews and historiographical essays on “early” North American History:

- Alan Taylor, American Colonies, Intro., Table of Contents
- Alison Games “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, Opportunities,” American Historical Review 111:3 (June 2006), 741-57

Context for, and a book to compare, with the book we are reading for Week 2 (Fenn):


For some perspective on graduate readings courses:

- Karin Wulf, “Efficient Reading [or, How to Gut a (Scholarly) Book in 5 Almost-easy Steps],” blogpost on “Vast Early America,” January 2018
- Douglas Hunter, “Book Breaking and Book Mending,” Slate, blogpost July 25, 2018,

Week 2. Sep. 5

- Elizabeth Fenn, Encounter at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People (2014)
- Published reviews of the book: I will post pdfs or links on HuskyCT. Read, print, mark-up and bring to class: we will discuss ways you might craft a meta-review if you were writing one

Supplemental:
- Daniel Richter, Before the Revolution: America’s Ancient Pasts (2013)
- Daniel Richter, Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America (2001)
- Andrew Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast* (2015)

**Week 3. Sep 12  Native Peoples and Slavery Practices**

**Supplemental:**

**Week 4. Sep 19  Plantings**
All readings except ESM will be on HuskyCt:
- Simon P. Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (UPenn Press, 2013), Chaps. 4, 8, 9 and Conclusion
- Jennifer L. Morgan, “‘Some could Suckle over Their Shoulder’: European Depictions of Indigenous Women, 1491-1750,” the slightly abridged version in Kerber et al., eds., *Women’s America*, 8th ed. [originally a WMQ article; also chap. 1 of her 2004 book]

**Supplemental:**
- Anya Zilberstein, *A Temperate Empire: Making Climate Change in Early America* (2016)
- Katherine Grandjean, *American Passage: The Communications Frontier in Early New England*

Week 5. Sep 26


Supplemental:

**Week 6. Oct. 3**

- Alan Greer essay/book chapters on New France society (HuskyCT)
- Nancy Shoemaker, chap. on Gender, in *A Strange Likeness* (HuskyCT)

**Supplemental:**

**Week 7. Oct 10**

  (unlimited user e-book via Babbidge website)

**Supplemental:**
- Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History*

**Week 8. Oct. 17**


Resources to know about:
- In Motion: the African-American Migration Experience, (Schomburg Institute), [http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm](http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm)

Supplemental:
- Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to the Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (2016)
- Sowande’ Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (2016)

**Week 9. Oct 24**

Supplemental:

**Week 10. Oct 31 Treasure Hunt: Primary Source Caches**

- **Newspapers**: chapters from Charles Clark, *The Public Prints*; Read four issues each from one northern (PA/NJ and north) and one southern newspaper — 2 consecutive issues each in two separated decades from 1750s to 1830s
- **Post** a 500-word blogpost reviewing a **DH website** (from a list we will arrive at together) that showcases and invites analysis of one genre of U.S. or North American or Caribbean sources prior to 1860
- **sample documents** with editor’s headnotes (MJ; WA, etc)

In-class: we’ll do some transcription exercises, for fun and for modelling for classroom use.

**Week 11. Nov. 7 Revolution**

Recommended:
- Alfred F. Young and Gregory H. Nobles, Whose American Revolution Was It? Historians Interpret the Founding (2011)

Supplemental:
- Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire (2013)
- Timothy Breen, American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People (2010)
- Bernard Bailyn, The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson (1974)
- Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, An Empire Divided The American Revolution and the British Caribbean (2000)
- Liam Riordan, Many Identities, One Nation: The Revolution and Its Legacy in the Mid-Atlantic (2007)
- Eliga H. Gould, Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire (2012)

Week 12. Nov 14  TBD

➢ We will decide what to do/read, based on several options
➢ In one part of class, members will report on their initial findings on the topic chosen for you Annotated Bib
➢ we could also have 1-2 book review oral reports this week (on supplemental book listed for Weeks 11 or 13)

[Thanksgiving week, no class Nov 21]
Week 13. Nov. 28  Early National Communities and Circulations


Supplemental:
- Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to the Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (2016)
- Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (2016)

**Week 14. Dec. 5 City Life**


**Supplemental:**
- Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (2009)
- Rachel Hope Cleves, *Charity and Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America* (2014)

**Annotated Bibliography:** If you send me a draft (including your introductory paragraphs) before Tuesday Dec 11, I will give you feedback. **FINAL version is due Friday Dec. 14 by noon,** via email attachment AND posted to our HuskyCT site. (Don’t forget to harvest your classmates’ Bibliographies before the close of business on noon on Dec. 19th when HuskyCt course sites disappear!)