

Course Syllabus | HIST 0108 920 | Summer 2024  
University of Pennsylvania  
Tues. & Thurs. 12–3:50p  
Instructor: Francis Russo | frusso@sas.upenn.edu  
Office Hours: TBD

## AMERICAN ORIGINS



## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Nothing is inevitable, not even the United States. In this spirit we will explore North American history from c1600 to the 1820s. The American Revolution and the new nation that emerged over this era was the product of encounters between the continent's old and new inhabitants—Indigenous peoples, settler-colonists, and Africans. We will explore the nature of these confrontations to understand the role of European empires, Native nations, and enslaved and free African people in the making of North America as well as structural forces and historical circumstances that shaped the lives and fates of peoples and societies until the beginning of the nineteenth century. 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.

The course begins in the deep pasts of the early modern European, African, and Indigenous North American continents, slowly brought together into an “Atlantic World” in the sixteenth century, when European expansion into the Atlantic basin began in earnest. The course continues through the American Revolution, when thirteen British colonies united in a revolt against Britain and created a new U.S. state that struggled to emerge out of Old Worlds that came before. We then explore some of the most consequential developments in the nation’s early history that shaped its subsequent path to today.

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. 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 through the period when nation’s political and social order was taking shape. This plunge into a deeper past will help you think more critically about the challenges facing the United States and the world in the present day.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This class is going to be a joint venture between yourself, your colleagues, and myself. The course will require your time and attention but promises ample reward. Readings for each class are designed to be light but read closely. You are expected to come to class having read required materials, prepared to discuss the readings thoughtfully, and respectfully engage with your colleagues.

Because this is a summer intensive course with long class periods, it is designed for a lot of the learning to be done *in class*. Each class period will contain two modules with a break in between. Each module will contain two parts: a lecture period, and a discussion period. Below is a detailed schedule of modules, lectures, and discussions. Under each *lecture* is listed “**Background Readings**”—these are **NOT required readings**, but they will help you understand and retain information given in lectures, and you are encouraged to read them. Most are from the online course textbook, called *The American Yawp*. Under each *discussion* is listed “**Required Readings**”—these are **required readings that you must read before each class period**. These required readings we will discuss closely together as a group in class. **Required Readings average approximately 20–35 pages per module**: they typically include some combination of very short primary sources (2–8 pp.) and longer secondary sources (20–35 pp.). All readings will be available on Canvas.

### COURSE ASSESSMENT

#### Grade Breakdown:

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Attendance and Participation | 25% |
| Final Paper                  | 30% |
| Mid-term Exam (Quizzes)      | 30% |
| Source Analysis              | 15% |

***Attendance and Participation:*** Your contributions to the success of the class will determine approximately 25% 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 class discussion. These discussions are one of the most important parts of this course. Unexcused absences from them will substantially affect your grade.

**Final Paper:** The take-home final paper will be on your choice of one of several preset essay topics and will determine approximately 30% of your grade. The final paper should be about 2000 words in length and should demonstrate your understanding of the lectures, readings, and class discussion and your interpretive skills as a historian. The final is designed for you to demonstrate your understanding of the course information and its themes as a whole. We will discuss the details and expectations of the final in class.

**Midterm Exam (Quizzes):** In lieu of a midterm exam, this course will have five low-stakes “check-in quizzes” (each valued at 6% of your final grade). If you attend lecture regularly and read the assigned material, you should do well on these. These quizzes will be given in class once per week. The quizzes will determine approximately 30% of your grade.

**Source Analysis:** In this analysis of a primary source, you will think about who created the source you are examining and for what purpose; what the source can tell us about the past; and how the source relates to the other primary and secondary sources assigned that week. Doing this thoughtfully will refine your ability to evaluate, interpret, and use new information: skills that are crucial not only for historians but for people in just about every profession. The source analysis should be 1-2 pages in length and is due halfway through the course, on July 25. An optional second primary source analysis may be submitted on August 6. If you complete this second assignment, only the higher of the two grades will be counted. The primary source analysis will determine approximately 15% of your grade.

## COURSE POLICIES

### **Academic Integrity:**

Do not cheat. Academic integrity and honesty are of paramount importance. Cheating and plagiarism is not allowed under any circumstances. Please make sure you are aware of this student guide to Academic Integrity (<http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity>) and the Handbook for Students, Ethics and Original Research (<https://www.itmat.upenn.edu/assets/user-content/Penn-ethics-handbook.original.pdf>).

We know that AI generative learning tools such as ChatGPT and Bard can provide numerous resources for students. Using AI as a brainstorming tool to develop your own ideas is permitted in this course. We encourage you to share your findings with the class if you do. Using AI to write any portion or portions of your papers violates the Code of Academic Integrity and will result in the lowering of your grade accordingly. All essay prompts are run through AI beforehand by the instructor. Remember: you are smarter than AI—it can do things faster, but not necessarily better. Your grade will be lowered if your engagement and understanding of course material is faulty by relying on it. Your own hard work and use of human creativity are the best guarantee for a good grade in this course as well as gaining the knowledge and intellectual skills that will last you a lifetime.

### **Attendance:**

Regular attendance in this course is essential and students are expected to arrive on time and prepared to engage with the material. However, we recognize that many students enrolled in LPS courses have competing demands on their time, whether due to work, childcare, or other responsibilities. In

acknowledgement of these realities, all students in this course will be given **one no-questions-asked, excused absence** to use at their discretion during the semester. If other situations arise, please email me as soon as possible so that we can work out accommodations. If you are feeling ill, please stay home and rest. For those who cannot attend class due to a COVID-19 exposure or quarantine (but are feeling well), we will arrange for you to attend class virtually so that you can keep up with the course material—virtual attendance is only available for COVID-19 related reasons. If you know that you will be missing class for this reason, please let me know so that I can make the necessary arrangements.

## SCHEDULE

### PART I. WORLDS MEET, 1600–1763

#### WEEK 1

Tues. July 9

##### ⊕ Module I

**Discussion:** We Meet One Another! Course Introduction & What is History?

Required Reading:

Podcast: “Why Historians Study History,” *Ben Franklin’s World* (2016) [25 mins.]

Carl Lotus Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian” (1932) [10 pp.]

James Baldwin, “History... is not merely something to be read” (1965) [1 pp.]

**Lecture:** New Worlds for All

Background Reading:

Taylor, *American Colonies*, Introduction, Ch. 1, “Natives, 13,000 B.C.-A.D. 1492,” 3-22.

Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 2, “Colonizers, 1400-1800,” 23-49.

##### ⊕ Module II

**Lecture:** European Routes to the Americas

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 1, Parts IV–V, Ch. 2, Parts I–III.

Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 3, “New Spain, 1500-1600,” 50-66.

Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 4, “The Spanish Frontier,” 67-90.

Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 5, “Canada and Iroquoia, 1500-1660.”

**Discussion:** The Spanish and Their Rivals

Required Reading:

Letter from Christopher Columbus to Luis de Santangel (1493) [5 pp.]

Richard Hakluyt, “Discourse of Western Planting” (1584) [5 pp.]

Bartolomew Las Casas, “A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies (1542)” (Penguin Online Edition: <http://www.columbia.edu/~daviss/work/files/presentations/casshort/>), 9-45 (“Preface: to “New Spain”).

Three letters of the Dutch Ministers to the classis of Amsterdam, (1655–1664) [8 pp.]

Jesuit missionary Jean de Brébeuf on life with the Hurons in French Canada (1635–37) [4 pp.]  
Paul LeJeune, “Relation de ce qui s’est passé en la Nouvelle France en l’année 1636,” or “Account of what happened in New France in the year 1636” (excerpted online edition: <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/amerbegin/settlement/text3/JesuitRelations1636.pdf>), Ch. VIII-X.

## Thurs. July 11

### ⊕ Module I

**Lecture:** Native North America’s New Old World

Background Reading:  
American Yawp, Ch. 1 Parts I–III

**Discussion:** Facing East

Required Reading:  
Excerpts from Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Harvard, 2002) [30 pp.]  
An Innu Native Story of the First Arrival of Europeans (1633) [4 pp.]

### ⊕ Module II

**Lecture:** Old Worlds in New Worlds, Part I: Virginia

Background Reading:  
American Yawp, Ch. 2, Parts IV–V  
Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 6, “Virginia, 1570-1650,” 117-137  
Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 7, “Chesapeake Colonies, 1650-1750.”

**Discussion:** Cavalier Royalists: Did Virginia Become a Slave Society?

Required Reading:  
John Smith, “A True Relation, 1608,” 27-71. <http://www.americanjourneys.org/pdf/AJ-074.pdf>  
Thomas Hariot, *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590) [6 pp.]  
Captain John Smith Describes Virginia Indian Society (1608) [3 pp.]  
Film Excerpts: *The New World* (2005)

## WEEK 2

## Tues. July 16

### ⊕ Module I

**Lecture:** Old Worlds in New Worlds, Part II: New England

Background Reading:  
American Yawp, Ch. 2, Parts VI–VII  
Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 8, “New England, 1600-1700.”

**Discussion:** Hot Protestants:

Required Reading:

Excerpts from Michael Winship, *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America* (2019) [30 pp.]

John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630) [3 pp.]

William Bradford, "Of Plymouth Plantation" (1651) [5 pp.]

⊕ **Module II**

**Lecture:** North America, Europe, Africa, and an Emerging Atlantic World

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 3, Parts I–IV.

Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 10, "The West Indies, 1600-1700"

**Discussion:** Enslaved Africans and Plantation Economies

Required Reading:

John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (1998), Ch. 6 [30 pp.]

Stephanie E. Smallwood, "African Guardians, European Slave Ships, and the Changing Dynamics of Power in the Early Modern Atlantic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 64.4 (2007): 679-716.

Video: 3D Reconstructions of Slave Ships Marie-S raphique and L'Aurore

<https://www.slavevoyages.org/>

**Thurs. July 18**

⊕ **Module I**

**Lecture:** Contests for a Continent

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 3, Parts V–VI.

Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 16, "French America, 1680-1750," 363-395.

Taylor, Ch. 13, "Revolutions, 1685-1730" 338-362.

**Discussion:** The Age of Anarchy

Required Reading:

Geoffrey Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century Reconsidered," *American Historical Review* 113 (2008), 1053-1079 [26 pp.]

Bacon Justifies Rebellion (1676) [3 pp.]

Alexander Oliver Exquemalin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678) [4 pp.]

Cotton Mather, *Enchantment Encounter*'d extract (1693) [4 pp.]

⊕ **Module II**

**Lecture:** British Americans and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 4, Parts I–II, IV.

Taylor, *American Colonies*, Ch. 15, "Awakenings, 1700-1775"

**Discussion:** An Empire of Goods?

Required Reading:

T.H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776" *Journal of British Studies* (1986) [32 pp.] or T.H. Breen, "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (1988): 73-104.  
Benjamin Franklin, selections from *Autobiography* (1784, 1789) [6 pp.]  
Explore: John Singleton Copley paintings

**WEEK 3**

**Tues. July 23**

⊕ **Module I**

**Lecture:** The Seven Years' War and the Transformation of North America

Background Reading:

Colin Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and Transformation of North America* (Oxford, 2006), Ch. 3 and 4 [41 pp.]  
Taylor, Ch. 18, "Imperial Wars and Crisis, 1739-1775," 420-443.

**Discussion:** Continental Conversions

Required Reading:

Neolin's Prophetic Vision (c1763) [4 pp.]  
A Declaration and Remonstrance...of the Frontier Inhabitants (1764) [5 pp.]  
Alibamo Mingo's Reflection (1765) [4 pp.]  
Advertisements for enslaved freedom seekers from the *Virginia Gazette* (1745-75) [6 pp.]  
George Washington Recalls His Defeats at Fort Duquesne, 1754-1755 (1786) [5 pp.]  
Two Images of Paxton Boys and the Massacre of Susquehannock Indians at Conestoga [2 pp.]

⊕ **Module II**

**Lecture:** Slavery and Antislavery in the British Empire

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 4, Part III

**Discussion:** The Problems of Slavery and Freedom

Required Reading:

Servant and Slave Runaway Ads from the 1750s [4 pp.]  
South Carolina's "Slave Code" (1740) [4 pp.]  
Olaudah Equiano Describes the Middle Passage (1789) [3 pp.]  
John Woolman, Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes (1754) [5 pp.]  
William Knox's Proslavery Treatise (1768) [4 pp.]  
Somerset v Stewart (1772) [1 pp.]  
Phillis Wheatley, "To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth" (1772) [1 pp.]  
Two Black Petitions for Freedom in Massachusetts (1773) [2 pp.]  
Henry Laurens Letters (c. 1776) [5 pp.]

**PART II. THE AGE OF ATLANTIC REVOLUTIONS AND THE EMERGENCE  
OF THE U.S. REPUBLIC, 1763–1820s**

**Thurs. July 25**

⊕ **Module I**

**Lecture:** Roots of Imperial Crisis and Revolutionary Ideology

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 5, Parts I–III.

**Discussion:** Republicanism and Crisis Go Viral

Required Reading:

Robert Navarre, *Journal of Pontiac's Conspiracy* (1763) [6 pp.]

George Washington Scorns Proclamation Line (1767) [4 pp.]

A Declaration and Remonstrance . . . of the Frontier Inhabitants (1764) [4 pp.]

Patrick Henry, Virginia Resolves (1765) [4 pp.]

Stamp Act Congress Resolutions (1765) [5 pp.]

Boston Gazette [reporting the Boston Massacre], March 12, 1770 [1 pp.]

Exchange between Samuel Seabury (A. W. Farmer) and Alexander Hamilton [5 pp.]

John Dickinson, Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania (1767) [3 pp.]

⊕ **Module II**

**Lecture:** From Resistance to Revolution

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 5, Part IV.

**Discussion:** Separation Anxieties

Required Reading:

Excerpts from David Waldstreicher and Staughton Lynd, “Free Trade, Sovereignty, and Slavery: Toward an Economic Interpretation of American Independence,” *William and Mary Quarterly* (2011) [20 pp.]

Robert Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence* (2021) Ch. 6 and Conclusion [20 pp.]

Thomas Paine, selections from *Common Sense* (1776) [6 pp.]

“An American” (Charles Inglis), *The True Interest of America* (1776) [4 pp.]

**WEEK 4**

**Tues. July 30**

⊕ **Module I**

**Lecture:** The Many Wars for Independence

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 5, Parts V–VI; Ch. 6, Parts I–IV.



**Discussion:** “Who Should Rule at Home?": Part I

Required Reading:

Excerpt from Woody Holton, *Liberty Is Sweet: The Hidden History of the American Revolution* (2022) [20 pp.]

Diary of Joseph Plumb Martin – Battle of Yorktown (1781) [6 pp.]

Wells family, Loyalists from Scotland/Charleston, S.C. [3 pp.]

Diary of Arthur Fairies on an expedition against the Cherokee in the Carolinas (1776) [5 pp.]

Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation (1775) [1 pp.]

⊕ **Module II**

**Lecture:** Constitution Making and the Federal Constitution

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 5, Parts V–VI; Ch. 6, Parts I–IV.

**Discussion:** A Hot Philadelphia Summer and a New Constitutional Order

Required Reading:

The Federal Constitution (1787) [4 pp.]

Northwest Ordinance (1787) [5 pp.]

Robert Yates, Brutus, no. 1 (1787) [4 pp.]

James Madison, The Federalist, no. 10 (1787) [6 pp.]

Address and Reasons of Dissent of the Minority of the Convention of PA to their Constituents (1787) [11 pp.]

George Washington’s letters to Henry Knox on the Shay’s Rebellion (1787) [3 pp.]

Video: Professor Danielle Allan on the Constitution (YouTube)

**Thurs. August 1**

⊕ **Module I**

**Lecture:** Many Revolutions

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 6, Parts V

**Discussion:** “Who Should Rule at Home?": Part II

Required Reading:

Excerpt from Woody Holton, *Liberty Is Sweet: The Hidden History of the American Revolution* (2022) [20 pp.]

Statement from a Confederation of Native peoples (1786) [3 pp.]

Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur describes the American people (1782) [4 pp.]

Mary Smith Cranch comments on politics, (1786-87) [2 pp.]

Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) [5 pp.]

⊕ **Module II**

**Lecture:** Two Kinds of Republics: Disunion in the 1790s, Jeffersonians vs. Hamiltonians

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 6, Parts VI–IX.

**Discussion:** Frenemies and Politics in the New Nation

Required Reading:

George Washington’s “Farewell Address” (1796) [4 pp.]

Letter from Mary Smith Cranch to Abigail Adams (1798) [4 pp.]

Alexander Hamilton’s report on manufactures (1791) [7 pp.]

**WEEK 5**

**Tues. August 6**

⊕ **Module I**

**Lecture:** The Many Revolutions of 1800 and Last Wars of Independence

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 6, Part X; Ch. 7, Parts I, III–VII.

**Discussion:** Haiti, Napoleon, and the Louisiana Purchase

Required Reading:

Haiti and the Louisiana Purchase Readings [5 pp.]

Benjamin Banneker letter (1791) [4 pp.]

Tecumseh’s Call (1810) [5 pp.]

⊕ **Module II**

**Lecture:** Empires of Liberty and Empires of Slavery

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 7, Part II; Ch. 8 Part III–IV.

**Discussion:** Gradual Emancipation?

Required Reading:

Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (2005), 1–35 [34 pp.]

Sarah L. H. Gronningsater, *The Rising Generation: Gradual Abolition, Black Legal Culture, and the Making of National Freedom* (2024), Introduction and Ch. 2 [30 pp.]

Explore: Map, The Spread of U.S. Slavery, 1790-1860 <https://lincolnmullen.com/projects/slavery/>

**Thurs. August 8**

⊕ **Module I**

**Lecture:** New Societies, New Empires, New Markets?

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 8, Part II, VI.

**Discussion:** How Revolutionary was the Revolution?

Required Reading:

Historians Debate One Another (read the articles below in this order):

Gordon Wood, "Radical Possibilities of the American Revolution," in *Major Problems in American History* (2012) [8 pp.]

Michael Zuckerman, "Rhetoric, Reality, and the Revolution: The Genteel Radicalism of Gordon Wood" *William and Mary Quarterly* (1994) [10 pp.]

Gordon Wood, "Equality and Social Conflict in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* (1994) [14 pp.]

⊕ **Module II**

**Lecture:** Republics and Empire in the Nineteenth Century: More Old Worlds and New Worlds?

Background Reading:

American Yawp, Ch. 9, Parts I–IV.

**Discussion:** American Origins in America Today

Required Reading:

Nikole Hannah-Jones, "Our Country's Founding Ideals Were False When They Were Written. Black Americans Have Fought to Make Them True," in *New York Times, The 1619 Project*

Response by Professor Leslie Harris

Response by Professor James Oakes