This course will trace the history of North America and the United States from the earliest contact among Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans, through the development of colonial societies, to the founding of a new nation, and, finally, to the testing of that nation during the Civil War. By looking at the many complex interconnections between political developments and personal life – by examining the ideas and experiences of countless ordinary men and women alongside the policies and pronouncements of leading thinkers and politicians – we will seek to understand when, whether, and how diverse peoples of America became a unified nation. We will pay particular attention to Native American experiences and perspectives on key moments in America’s past, as well as to the centrality of slavery to early American history.

This class will focus not only with the “who,” “what,” “when,” and “where,” of history, but also on the “how” and the “why.” Although we will be concerned with learning important facts and dates, we will be most interested in the meaning of that data, in thinking about questions of cause and effect, and in considering how history is made. We will think hard about how historians do history: why they choose certain topics for study, how they select evidence from the mass of available facts, and how they take an active part in analyzing the historical record, criticizing historians’ accounts of the past, learning to construct arguments, and coming to conclusions of your own.

Ultimately, we will ask how the past shapes our understandings of the present and our vision for the future. By the end of this class, you should have a clearer picture both of many individuals, ideas, and institutions that have shaped the story of the United States, and of your own place in the still-unfolding story of American history.

**Learning Goals:**
1. To develop a comprehensive understanding of early American history. By the conclusion of this course, students should have a strong command of the political, economic, and social dimensions of colonial North America and the Antebellum United States.

2. To foster critical thinking and analytical skills, so that students can apply them to a variety of textual and non-textual sources.

3. To strengthen oral communication, written expression, and research skills.

**Required Books** (Available for purchase at the Book Center and on reserve)
James Oakes, *The Scorpion’s Sting: Antislavery Politics and the Coming of the Civil War*
Course Requirements
1. Lecture Attendance. The most basic requirement of the course is regular and prompt class attendance. Lectures will complement course readings, providing context for and commentary on the themes, evidence, and arguments addressed in the assigned books. Material from lecture will be an important component of exams. Arriving late to class and unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade.

2. Class Readings and Participation (20%). Each week you will be assigned primary and secondary-source readings that coordinate with the week’s lectures. Secondary-source readings often present case studies that provide specific examples of the broad topics discussed in lecture. Or they may provide supplementary information and alternative views of the arguments and ideas presented in class. Documents provide a look at the kind of original evidence on which historians base their arguments and give an “up close” view of historical events. Total reading assignments have been held to about 150 pages per week, a substantial but manageable amount. Doing history at the college level is about learning to read and write critically and creatively, so be prepared to do a lot of each! **Students must also be prepared to contribute to class discussions and to participate in group exercises; failure to do so will affect your final grade.**

3. Papers (40%). There will be two 4-5 page papers in this class (each worth 20%). The first will require you to engage in original analysis of a primary source document, drawing on secondary sources from the syllabus. The second will be a historiographic paper in which, having previously tried your own hand at telling a historical story, you will be asked to summarize and comment on the analysis and arguments of historians who have taken diverse approaches to a common topic. This assignment will ask you to compare and contrast books you have already read for class. A more detailed set of questions to help frame your writing and thinking will be provided when the assignments are distributed later in the term.

   Paper Assignment #1: Primary Document Analysis,
   **Due Monday, 10/3 at the beginning of class.**
   Paper Assignment #2: Historiographic Analysis based on assigned secondary sources,
   **Due Monday, 11/16 at the beginning of class.**

4. Exams (40%). There will be both a mid-term and a final exam in this class. The mid-term exam, on Monday, **October 24**, will be worth 20%, the final exam, **to be held in class** on Wednesday, **December (TBD)** will be worth 20%.

5. Academic Integrity. All students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic
integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, etc. will constitute grounds for failure in this course as well as referral to university officials. Please share with me any difficulties you are having with your work and avoid resorting to desperate measures. You are always welcome in office hours and you can also email me with questions or concerns.

**Schedule of Lectures and Assignments**

**Week One: Introduction and American History before Europeans**

**Thursday, August 31: Introduction and Contested Histories of North America**

__ Karen Kupperman, “International at Creation”

**Week Two: Native Americans**

**Tuesday, September 5: Native Americans on the Eve of Colonization**

__ Harvard University’s Guide to Writing History Papers.

Document: Iroquois Creation Myth.

**Thursday, September 7:** European Context, Migration, and Colonization.


Document: Richard Haklyut, *Discourse on Western Planting* (1584); Virginia Charter (1606); John Winthrop’s *Reasons for Emigrating* (1629).

**Week Three: Colonialism and Its Discontents**

**Tuesday, September 12: Contact Zones**


**Thursday, September 14:** Colonial Virginia and New England: Development and Crisis


Documents: Nathaniel bacon’s Declaration (1676); Trial and Interrogation of Anne Hutchinson

**Week Four: Indian Slaveries**

**Tuesday, September 19:**


**Thursday, September 21:** No Class

**Week Five: The Rise of African Slavery**

**Tuesday, September 26:** African Slavery


Documents: Venture Smith, *Narrative of a Slave Capture* (1798); Morgan Godwyn, *Proposals for Carrying on the Negro's Christianity* (1681); Virginia Slave Laws.


**Thursday, September 28:** Racial Formation in Black and Red (and White)
Richter, *Facing East*, Chapter 5: “Native Peoples in an Imperial World”


**Document:** Immanuel Kant, *On the Different Races of Men* (1795).

**Week Six: Colonial Society in the Eighteenth Century**

**Tuesday, October 3** (Thursday Schedule):


*Document Analysis Due.*

**Thursday, October 5:** *No Class*

**Week Seven: The American Revolution**

**Tuesday, October 10:** Origins of the American Revolution


**Documents:** Stamp Act; Tea Act; *Declaration of Independence*; Adam Smith / Edmund Burke on the Colonial Crisis.

**Wednesday, October 11** (Thursday Schedule - No Class on Thursday October 12):


**Documents:** Articles of Confederation (1777, 1781); U.S. Constitution (1789); Northwest Ordinance (1789).


**Week Eight: The American Revolution in Red and Black**

**Tuesday, October 17:** The Revolution in Indian Country

Richter, *Facing East*, Ch. 6.

Colin Calloway, “The Continuing Revolution in Indian Country,” in Frederick E. Hoxie,
Thursday, October 19: African Americans in the era of the American Revolution
__ Kolchin, American Slavery, Ch. 3.
__ David Waldstreicher, “How the Constitution was Indeed Pro-Slavery,” The Atlantic.

Documents: Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation (1775); “Book of Negroes”


Week Nine: Mid-Term and Forging a New Republic
Tuesday, October 24: MID-TERM EXAM

Thursday, October 26: The Radicalism and Politics of the early U.S. Republic
__ Gordon Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution, Part III.

Documents: Federalist Papers (1787-1788); Bill of Rights (1791).

Week Ten: Politics in the Early Republic
Tuesday, October 31: Party Politics, Associations, and Democratization

Documents: Federalist and Democratic-Republican Party Platform Worksheets.
Thursday, November 2: The Second Great Awakening and Democratization

Document: Conversion Narrative.


Week Eleven: Labor Mobilization, Forced Migration, and U.S. Empire
Tuesday, November 7: Unwilling Western Migrants

Documents: President Andrew Jackson’s Second Annual Message to Congress (1830);


Thursday, November 9: Class and Labor Mobilization

Documents: Ely Moore, Address delivered before the General trades’ union of the City of New York (1833).

Suggested Reading: Seth Rockman, Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore (Johns Hopkins, 2009)

Week Twelve: Slavery and the Old South
Tuesday, November 14: Slavery, Capitalism, and Masters of Worlds (Big and Small)
___Kolchin, American Slavery, Chaps. 4 and 6.

Documents: Slave Advertisements; Ship Manifest from the LaFayette (1833).
**Thursday, November 16**: Slave Counterpoint
__Kolchin, American Slavery, Ch. 5__

Document: WPA Narratives


*Historiographical Essay Due.*

**Week Thirteen: The Road to Disunion**

**Tuesday, November 21**: Abolitionist Activists and Party Politics
__James Oakes, The Scorpion’s Sting: Antislavery and the Coming of the Civil War (W. W. Norton, 2015).__

Documents: Abolitionist Pamphlets.

**Suggested Reading**: Mathew Karp, This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy (Harvard, 2016).

**Thursday, November 23**: Thanksgiving - No Class

**Week Fourteen: The Civil War and Its Aftermath**

**Tuesday, November 28**: The Second American Revolution?
__Kolchin, American Slavery, Chap 7, pp. 200-237__
__Hahn, “Did We Miss the Greatest Slave Rebellion in Modern History?,” in The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom (Harvard,)__
__Charles Dew, Apostles of Disunion. __


**Thursday, November 30**: An Unfinished Revolution: Reunion and Reconstruction
Documents: Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address; Freedmen’s Bureau Reports.


**Week Fifteen: The Greater Reconstruction and Final Exam Review**

**Tuesday, December 5: Greater Reconstruction**

— Elliot West, “Reconstructing Race,” *Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 34, No. 1

Documents: Wounded Knee Documents (1890s; 1970s)

**Suggested Reading:** Heather Cox-Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (Yale, 2008); Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History* (Penguin, 2009).

**Thursday, December 7: Last Class - Final Exam Review**

**Final Exam: TBD**