

AMH 6198  
Graduate Readings in Early American History

Spring 2016

Tuesday, Per. 8-10 (3 - 6 p.m.), 13 Keene-Flint

Prof. Jon Sensbach, office 233 Keene-Flint

Office hours: Thursday 1-3:30 p.m. 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 peoples; the creation of an “Atlantic world;” 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* (New Haven: Yale, 2013).

Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650-1820* (Chicago, 2015).

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

Kathleen Duval, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (Random, 2015).

Alan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford, 2006).

Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (Vintage, 2003).

Janet Polasky, *Revolutions Without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (Yale, 2015).

Rebecca Scott and Jean Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Harvard, 2012).

Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Harvard, 2008).

Alan Taylor, *Internal Enemies: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (Norton, 2014).

Serena Zabin, *Dangerous Economies: Status and Commerce in Imperial New York* (Philadelphia, 2011).

### 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 American 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. A 5-page writing exercise in Week 6 will introduce students to the analysis of primary documents from early America.. 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%
1 5-page paper	20%
Class participation	20%

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## Schedule

Week 1. Jan. 5. Introduction to early America

Week 2. Jan. 12. 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.

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

Week 3. Jan. 19. Fusions/Diffusions

Greer, *Mohawk Saint*

Sophie White, "Massacre, Mardi Gras, and Torture in Early New Orleans," *William and Mary Quarterly* 70 (July 2013), 497-538.

Brett Rushforth, "'A Little Flesh We Offer You': The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France," *William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (Oct. 2003), 777-808.

Week 4. Jan. 26. Creating New World Slave Societies

Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*

Alden T. Vaughan, "The Origins Debate: Slavery and Racism in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 97 (1989), 311-54.

Edward Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race in the Comprehensive Slave Codes of the Greater Caribbean during the Seventeenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly* 70 (July 2013), 429-58.

Week 5. Feb. 2. Africa and the Atlantic World

Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*

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

Alejandra Dubcovsky, "The Testimony of Thomas de la Torre, a Spanish Slave," *William and Mary Quarterly* 70 (July 2013), 559-79.

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

Week 6. Feb. 9. Hunting Witches

Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*

**Writing assignment:** Research one accused witch in Salem witchcraft database and write a 5-6 page paper based on trial transcripts. Database is:  
<http://saalem.lib.virginia.edu/home.html>

Week 7. Feb. 16. Spiritual Revival in Protestant America

Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*

Erik R. Seeman, "'Justis Must Take Plase': Three African Americans Speak of Religion in Eighteenth-Century New England," *William and Mary Quarterly* 56 (1999), 395-416.

Rhys Isaac, "Evangelical Revolt: The Nature of the Baptist Challenge to the Traditional Order in Virginia, 1765 to 1775," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (1974), 345-68.

Week 8. Feb. 23. Off week - preliminary work on projects, meet with instructor

**Spring Break** Feb. 27 - March 5

Week 9. March 8. Age of Revolutions

Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders*

Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, "A Motley Crew in the American Revolution, chap. 7 of *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000).

Week. 10. March 15. Revolution in the Borderlands

Duval, *Independence Lost*

Week 11. March 22 Slavery and Freedom in an Age of Revolution

Taylor, *Internal Enemies*

Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (Oct. 2006), 632-674.

Week 12. March 29. Urban Upheavals

Zabin, *Dangerous Economies*

Week 13. April 5. Atlantic Emancipations

Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*

Week 14. April 12. No class - work on papers

Week. 15. April 19. Student presentations

**Final papers due Monday, April 25**