

AMH 2010: U.S. History to 1877
Hybrid “Hy-Flex,” Spring 2021



Emanuel Leutze, Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way (1865)

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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-11 am via Zoom & by appointment

Course Description

The goal of history is to tell true stories about the past. Truth depends on evidence but stories rely on interpretation.

What is the “true story” of the Americas and early United States? In this class, we will study the history of the Americas with a particular focus on North America and the United States through Reconstruction to formulate an answer.

We will focus on three key questions and their corollaries to guide us. First, how did Europe, a down-and-out continent in the fourteenth century, become the expansionist continent of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and what were the consequences of expansion into the Americas? Second, why did the thirteen British American colonies, situated at the margins of the British empire, become the United States of America? What cultural, political, and economic factors shaped the movement for independence and the establishment of a new kind of republic? And, finally, how did a democratic-republic designed to manage internal strife through civil politics devolve into civil war in the 1860s and how did a fractured nation reforge itself?

Although the purpose of history is to tell true stories, it is also about developing skills in critical thinking, effective communication, and time management. Students will be held to a standard that places a premium on well-developed arguments, nuanced use of qualitative and quantitative evidence, as well as clear and forceful writing.

Note: I reserve the right to alter the syllabus if necessary.

Course Format

This class will be taught in a hybrid “hy-flex” format per the requirements of the University of Florida. The instructor and a small group of face-to-face students will be in the classroom compliant with mask and social distancing regulations while all other students will participate via Zoom simultaneously for Tuesday lectures. In contrast, Thursday discussion sections will take place exclusively through Zoom for all students.

Given the challenges of this format, I ask only for your patience. Regardless, I will strive to teach effectively and to make the class as rewarding as possible.

Required Readings

Selected primary sources and other material via Canvas

Andrés Reséndez, *A Land So Strange: The Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca*

Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*

Paul Johnson, *Sam Patch, The Famous Jumper*

Optional Reading

I recommend reading the optional chapters in *The American Yawp* to reinforce lectures as well as aid in studying for other assignments. *The American Yawp* is a free, open-source textbook: [The American Yawp: A Massively Collaborative Open U.S. History Textbook, Vol. I: Before 1877](#)

Assignments and Grading

Participation (10%)

Book Quizzes (10%)

Video Check-Ins (10%)

Canvas Posts (15%)

Book Review, *Unruly Americans* (15%)

Midterm (20%)

Final Project (20%)

Participation: The participation grade will be calculated factoring in both attendance and engagement. For each lecture and discussion section, **attendance will be mandatory**. If students are not in the Zoom call or in class, their absence will be considered unexcused unless they have communicated with me about their absence. In this class, students are allowed two unexcused absences. Additional unexcused absences will result in a 2% deduction from the participation grade, which is worth 10% of the final grade. Please see the attendance policy below for additional detail. Meaningful and thoughtful engagement in class discussion is also expected.

Canvas Posts (CPs): Students will write two CPs, responding to a prompt related to assigned primary sources, required readings, and lectures. Students will not be expected to reply to other students but feel free to generate interesting conversations.

Video Check-Ins: In short five to ten minute videos, students will reflect on course themes as well as update me on final project progress. [Click here for details on how to record video assignments in Canvas.](#)

Book Quizzes: The book quizzes will test knowledge of *A Land So Strange & Sam Patch, The Famous Jumper*.

Book Review: The book review will offer students the opportunity to assess and analyze a self-contained piece of historical work—in this case, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*—that meaningfully engages with course themes. Guidelines for the book review will be provided during the course.

Midterm: The midterm will be take-home, essay-based, and open-note. Consequently, students can use lecture notes, *The American Yawp*, and primary source material as long as appropriate citations are provided. I will provide additional guidance on citations during the course.

Final Project: Each student will select their own topic for historical research within the parameters of the course content and formulate their own historical questions. In a ten to fifteen minute pre-recorded presentation either in audio or video format, each student will articulate a clear thesis that answers their historical question and substantiates their argument with evidence presented in a clear and concise way. In other words, everyone will compose their own mini-lecture!

Grading Scale

A: 90-100 B+: 87-89 B: 80-86 C+: 77-79 C: 70-76
D+: 67-69 D: 60-66 E: Below 60

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is a central feature of our learning community. As such, ethical violations including cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and academic misconduct (including turning in the work of others as your own or reusing old assignments). These will not be tolerated and will possibly result in a failure of the assignment, the risk of an automatic failing grade in the course, and possible expulsion from UF. To avoid plagiarism, you must not copy the words, phrases, arguments, ideas, or conclusions of another person or source including internet sources without properly crediting the person or source with both quotation marks and a footnote or parenthetical citation. Make sure that you properly cite direct quotations, paraphrased information, and facts that are not widely known. I will provide you with guidelines for proper citations and formatting prior to your submission of all written work, but you may contact me at any time for clarification. For more information on UF's academic honesty policy, see:

<http://regulations.ufl.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2018/06/4.040-1.pdf>

For more information on how UF's Judicial Affairs processes cases of plagiarism, see:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/appeal-process/>

Attendance Policy

Although mandatory attendance is not ideal, FERPA—a federal law regulating higher education—restricts teachers from recording classes without student consent. As a result, Zoom sessions will be considered equivalent to face-to-face meetings and attendance is mandatory to ensure high participation. However, I understand that students might face unique challenges and I am willing to be flexible. **But I absolutely expect communication—students must communicate with me if they will be unable to attend any course sessions or have any technical difficulties, and I will seek reasonable accommodation. If a student did not attend and I have no record of communication either before or during a course session that student's absence will be considered unexcused. In short, communicate. Otherwise, participate.**

Students are allowed two unexcused absences. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a 2% reduction in their attendance grade. Students with more than five unexcused absences will fail the course. For the sake of clarity, attendance will be tracked within Canvas.

UF's official attendance and make-up policies can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Late Work

All late work will be penalized 1/3 a letter grade for each day it is late unless otherwise excused by me. Missed exams cannot be made up unless students have a university excused absence and I am notified beforehand. If you have an unforeseen emergency, please contact me as soon as possible so adjustments can be made as needed.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting an accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Schedule

Week 1, January 11-15

Tuesday Lecture—Americas, B.C.: Before Columbus

Thursday Discussion—Native Creation, Abrahamic Creation

READ: Article and primary sources for Thursday discussion

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 1 (sec. I-II)

Week 2, January 18-22

Tuesday Lecture—“The Ocean Shall Unloose the Bonds of Things”: The Origins of the Age of Discovery

Thursday Discussion—European and Native Encounters

READ: Primary sources for Thursday discussion & *A Land So Strange*, intro-ch. 3

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 1 (sec. III-V)

DUE: Video Check-In 1—What is *American* history to you?

Week 3, January 25-29

Tuesday Lecture—Connections and Conflict in the Atlantic World

Thursday Discussion—The Columbian Exchange

READ: Articles for Thursday discussion & *A Land So Strange*, ch. 4-6

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 2 (sec. I-II)

DUE: Canvas Post 1—Why Europe?

Week 4, February 1-5

Tuesday Lecture—European Reformations, New World Incursions

Thursday Discussion—*A Land So Strange*

READ: Finish *A Land So Strange*, ch. 7-Epilogue

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 2 (sec. III-IV)

DUE: Book Quiz 1

Week 5, February 8-12

Tuesday Lecture—Colonial Experiments: Virginia and New England

Thursday Discussion—Bacon’s Rebellion and Religious Dissent

READ: Article and primary sources for Thursday discussion
OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 3

Week 6, February 15-19

Tuesday Lecture—Culture and Economy of British North America

Thursday Discussion—The “Invention” of Choice

READ: Book review, primary sources for Thursday discussion & *Unruly Americans*, ch. 1-4

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 4 (sec. I-IV)

DUE: Video Check-In 2—What is your final project topic?

Week 7, February 22-26

Tuesday Lecture—The Imperial Crisis: The Coming of the American Revolution

Thursday Discussion—No class, study for the midterm

READ: *Unruly Americans*, ch. 5-7

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 4 (sec. V-VII)

DUE: Take home midterm

Week 8, March 1-5

Tuesday Lecture—The American Revolution

Thursday Discussion—Experiencing the Revolution

READ: Primary sources for Thursday discussion & *Unruly Americans*, ch. 8-13

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 5

Week 9, March 8-12

Tuesday Lecture—The Origins of the U.S. Constitution

Thursday Discussion—*Unruly Americans*

READ: Primary sources for Thursday discussion & finish *Unruly Americans*, ch. 14-Epilogue

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 6 (sec. I-VI)

DUE: Canvas Post 2—How revolutionary was the American Revolution?

Week 10, March 15-19

Tuesday Lecture—The Early Republic

Thursday Discussion—A Republican Society

READ: Primary sources for Thursday discussion & *Sam Patch*, ch. 1

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 6 (sec. VII-XI) & ch. 7 (sec. I-IV)

DUE: Book Review of *Unruly Americans*

Week 11, March 22-26

Tuesday Lecture—The War of 1812 and the “Market Revolution”

Thursday Discussion—Early American Democracy

READ: Primary sources for Thursday discussion & *Sam Patch*, ch. 2-3

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 7 (sec. V-VII) & ch. 8

DUE: Video Check-In 3—What is your historical question? How are you approaching the topic and what is your evidence? Why does it matter?

Week 12, March 29-April 2

Tuesday Lecture—The Age of Jackson

Thursday Discussion—*Sam Patch, The Famous Jumper*

READ: Finish *Sam Patch*, ch. 4-5

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 9

DUE: Book Quiz 2

Week 13, April 5-9

Tuesday Lecture—The Impending Crisis: Westward Expansion, Southern Slavery, and the Republican Party

Thursday Discussion—The Coming of the Civil War

READ: Primary sources for Thursday discussion

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 12 & 13

Week 14, April 12-16

Tuesday Lecture—The Civil War

Thursday Discussion—War for Union, War for Emancipation

READ: Primary sources for Thursday discussion

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 14

Week 15, April 19-23

Tuesday Lecture—Reforging a Nation: Reconstruction as the “Second Founding” & Final Reflections

WATCH: Historians on the “Legacy of Reconstruction” (C-SPAN)

OPTIONAL: *The American Yawp*, ch. 15

DUE: Video Check-In 4—Three Takeaways

DUE: Final Project (4/20-4/27)