

HISTORY 715
INTRODUCTORY COLLOQUIUM IN UNITED STATES HISTORY TO 1865
FALL 2013

Mondays, 2:00-4:50 pm, Hamilton Hall 570

Professor Harry Watson
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Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:00-5:00 pm, and by appointment

INTRODUCTION. History 715 is a readings seminar that explores a broad sweep of recent literature in American history from European contact through the Civil War. It is required for all MA students in US history, but students in other disciplines or other historical specialties are highly welcome.

OBJECTIVES.

- To introduce students to significant topics, themes, and periods in early and middle-period American history in a chronological framework.
- To teach students to read critically and analytically, expressing and defending their judgments in oral dialogue with other students, and synthesizing diverse readings into a coherent understanding of American history to 1865.
- To improve students' skills in writing strong, clear and, persuasive historical arguments.

CLASS FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS. The class will operate by oral discussion of the reading assignment for each week. Broad participation is essential, so every student must come to class well-prepared to analyze the assigned text and join actively and cogently in class discussion.

The instructor will provide greater detail on the class assignments at the appropriate time, but this is a preliminary description:

- Each student will launch one week's discussion with a fifteen minute oral presentation that recounts the highlights of the author's career, explains the historiographic context of the assigned text, and initiates a class discussion of important questions that it raises.
- Students will write reviews of three assigned books. Each should assess its subject in 800 words or less in the format of leading professional journals like *The Journal of American History*. The first will deal with Alan Taylor's *American Colonies* and is due on September 10. Students may choose the other books they wish to review, but each review is due in class on the day that book is discussed.

- Students will write an historiographic essay of approximately 7500 words addressing six to eight major historical works (in addition to the assigned work) on the topic for which he or she has led the class discussion. These papers will be due at the last class meeting.

Remember that “historiography” is the collected body of work about a certain historical subject. “Historiographical essays” are extended reviews of historical literature that summarize the findings of a certain group of scholars, trace the development of their thinking from some starting point down to the present, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of particular authors and of the field as a whole. Historiography is important because all of us are (or should be) taught by those who have come before us, even those we disagree with. We try to master the historiography of our fields in order to learn what is already known about it, identify what isn't known yet, and decide what needs to be reanalyzed, or what new subjects or questions ought to be explored next. Students should consult the instructor before assembling historiographical lists to share with the class or to write about.

Use your very best professional-style writing. All written assignments should be typed double-spaced with one-inch margins, following the format of *The Chicago Manual of Style* or Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*. Remember to use professionally-formatted footnotes or endnotes as appropriate.

The historiographic essays are due in the instructor's History Department mailbox on Monday, December 9.

CLASS SCHEDULE

The assigned books are available at Student Stores. In order to take full advantage of our time, students should come to class on August 26 prepared to discuss Richter's *Facing East from*

August 26 Daniel Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country*

LABOR DAY

September 9 Alan Taylor, *American Colonies*

September 16 David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*

September 23 Robert Gross, *The Minutemen and their World*

September 30 Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*

October 7 Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*
Gordon Wood, *The American Revolution: A History*

October 14 Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy*

October 21 John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America*
Robert A. Gross, "Culture and Cultivation: Agriculture and Society in Thoreau's
Concord," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Jun., 1982), pp. 42-61.

October 28 Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*
Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*

November 4 Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*

November 11 Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*

November 18 Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*

November 25 Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*

December 2 James Oakes, *Freedom National*

December 9 Historiographic essays due. Class will not meet.

Indian Country.