

HIU12026 Themes in Modern American History  
Michaelmas term 2019



Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico* (1848)

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Office Hours Mondays 3-4 and Wednesdays 2-3 in Arts 3113

Lecturers: Dr. Daniel Geary and Dr. Peter Hamilton

Lectures: Mondays 11-12 and Wednesdays 12-1 in Arts 2043

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## **Course Description:**

This module provides an introduction to many of the main themes of American history from the beginnings of successful English colonization in the early seventeenth century to the present. It is arranged roughly chronologically, but each week focuses on a major theme in American history. While it is impossible to cover all aspects of American history in eleven weeks, this module aims to introduce students to its main contours as well as to a variety of approaches to the topic (e.g. political, cultural, social, economic, and foreign policy histories).

## **Course Format:**

This course is composed of two elements:

*Lectures* introduce students to general historical background, themes, and lines of historical interpretation.

*Tutorials* provide a forum for discussion of set texts. Regular attendance and participation in tutorials are an essential component of this course.

## **Learning Outcomes:**

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- **Interpret** and **engage** with various themes in modern American history.
- **Form** and **express** opinions and arguments centered on various historical debates and issues arising in American history.
- **Evaluate** and **critically analyze** both primary and secondary texts concerned with the study and documentation of American history.
- **Demonstrate** an ongoing engagement with, and ability to **contextualize** the latest developments on the main trends in American society throughout the period.

## Schedule of Lecture Topics Including Suggested Readings For Each

### **Week One (w/c 9 September) Cities on a Hill: Jamestown and New England, 1607-1700**

#### Suggested Reading:

Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America*

Jack Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of the Early Modern British Colonies*

Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*

Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*

Edmond Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*

Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*

Alan Taylor, *American Colonies*

Alan Taylor, *Colonial America: A Very Short Introduction*

### **Week Two (w/c 16 September) Republicans: Political Thought and Action, 1700-1789**

#### Suggested Reading:

Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*

Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*

Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian persuasion : evolution of a party ideology*

Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother," *American Quarterly*, 28 (Summer 1976), 187-205.

Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic*

J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*

Daniel Rodgers, *Contested Truths*

Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*

Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1989*

### **Week Three (w/c 23 Sept.) The Frontier: Western Expansion, 1750-1893**

#### Suggested Reading:

William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*

William Cronon, ed., *Under an Open Sky*

Douglas Hurt, *The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846*

Richard Kluger, *Seizing Destiny*

Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*

Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*

Fredrick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," available online (e.g., at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1893turner.html>)

Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*

Richard White, *The Middle Ground*

Richard White and Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Frontier in American Culture*

**Week Four (w/c 30 Sept.) Slavery and Freedom: Slavery, Abolition, Reconstruction, and Segregation, 1820-1900**

Suggested Reading:

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*

Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan Roll*

Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction* (an abridged version of *Reconstruction, 1863-1877*)

Terra Hunter, *To Joy My Freedom*

Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul*

Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*

Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*

Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*

C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*

**Week Five (w/c 7 Oct.) Music and Popular Culture: From Stephen Foster to Elvis Presley, 1840-1960**

Suggested Reading:

Jon Cruz, *Culture on the Margins*

John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cold*

Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays*

Peter La Chappelle, *Proud to be an Okie*

Eric Lott, *Love and Theft*

George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark*

Bill Malone's *Country Music USA*

Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train*

Eric Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz?*

Scott Saul, *Jazz is, Jazz Ain't*

Alexander Saxton, "Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology," *American Quarterly* 27 (Mar. 1975), 3-28

David Stowe, *Swing Changes*

Robert Toll, *Blacking Up*

Robert Walser, *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz*

**Week Six (w/c 14 Oct.) From the Melting Pot to Multiculturalism, 1880-2000**

Suggested Reading:

Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible*

John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*

David Hollinger, *Postethnic America*, Ch. 2

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*

Richard King, *Race, Culture and the Intellectuals*  
Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*  
David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*  
George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican-American*  
Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages*

*Please note that the week commencing 21 October is a reading week and no lectures or tutorials will be held.*

**Week Eight (w/c 28 Oct.) Feminism: The Struggle for Female Equality, 1870-1970 (Dr. Geary)**

Suggested Readings:

Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*  
Nancy Cott, *No Small Courage*  
Susan Douglass, *Where the Girls Are*  
Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*  
Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade*  
Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies*  
Linda Kerber, *Women's America*  
Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*  
Stephanie Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and Do*  
Kathryn Kish Sklar, ed., *U.S. History as Women's History*  
Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: the rise of women's political culture, 1820-1900*

*Please note that 28 October is a bank holiday and no lecture will be held*

**Week Nine (w/c 4 Nov.) Race and Migration: Chinese, Exclusion, and the Making of Whiteness (Dr. Hamilton)**

Suggested Readings:

Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).  
Madeline Y. Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).  
Emma Jinhua Teng, *Eurasian: Mixed Identities in the United States, China, and Hong Kong, 1842-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).  
Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).  
Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

Krystyn Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

### **Week Ten (w/c 11 Nov.) US Imperial Expansion in the Pacific, 1867-1945**

Suggested Readings:

Seth Archer, *Sharks Upon the Land: Colonialism, Indigenous Health, and Culture in Hawai'i, 1778-1855* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Stuart Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

Yen Le Espiritu, *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives Across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

### **Week Ten (w/c 18 Nov.) Advertising, Consumer Culture, and Globalization, 1880-2000 (Dr. Geary)**

Suggested Readings:

Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic*

Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century*

Thomas Frank, *Conquest of Cool*

Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance*

Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution*

Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*

Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*

Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-colonization and the Cold War*

### **Week Eleven (w/c 25 Nov.) Military Superpower: From World War II to the Second Iraq War, 1941-2011 (Dr. Geary)**

Suggested Reading:

Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*

Patrick Cockburn, *The Occupation*

John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War*

George Herring, *America's Longest War*

Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*  
Gabriel Kolko, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a War*  
Melvin Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*  
Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire*  
Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*  
Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*  
Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*

**Additional Resources:**

In addition to the readings recommended to complement lectures and tutorials, students have access to a wide range of journals at [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org). Students may also find it useful to consult a textbook. Eric Foner's *Give Me Liberty* is recommended as a readable single volume textbook

Students are strongly encouraged to consult primary sources when writing their essays. The library also has the full run of *New York Times* (a major American newspaper) and *Chicago Defender* (a major African American newspaper), which will be useful for essay writers. We also have access to a database of archival and primary source materials, "Popular Culture in Britain and American, 1950-1975" that could be useful for some topics. A wide range of primary sources are also available on the internet through institutions such as the Library of Congress and the National Archives. In most cases, simply googling your chosen topic along with "primary sources" will turn up relevant results.

If in doubt about which sources to consult, please ask your tutorial leader or Dr Geary for advice.

## Tutorial Guide

### Tutorial Assignment

Students must submit a 1000 word book review focused on the question, “What is the major historical argument developed in this book?” The essay is due in class on the day of their presentation.

In addition, each student will participate in a book “interview.” All students assigned to a particular week will come before the class to answer broad questions from the tutorial leader and classmates about the book’s arguments and whether or not they would recommend the book to fellow students. Versus a traditional group presentation, it is not necessary to prepare comments in advance. However, you must have read the book and be prepared to summarize its main arguments so that other students in the class may gain some understanding of the work.

While this assignment will not be assessed, it is required, and *students who fail to complete it satisfactorily will be given an unsatisfactory mark for the tutorial*. Because these assignments are not assessed, you may draw upon them in exam answers where appropriate.

Copies of the books will be available on library reserve, but you may wish to purchase your own copy; inexpensive used copies may be available from online dealers.

All students must submit a list of three preferences for choice of book to review at the first tutorial meeting the week of 3 February. A presentation schedule will be distributed by email directly following the tutorial. Students who do not submit their list of preferences may be assigned to any group.

The options are as follows:

Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (w/c 30 Sept..)

Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (w/c 7 Oct..; available as e-book through library website)

Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: the Unbroken Past of the American West* (w/c 14 Oct.)

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (w/c 28 Oct..; also available as e-book through library website)

Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (w/c 4 Nov.)



## **Attendance and Participation**

Your attendance and active and informed participation in seminar discussion is mandatory. *Students who have more than two unexcused absences from tutorial will be given an unsatisfactory mark for the class.*

## **Readings**

Tutorial discussion will focus on required readings, which are mandatory for all students. The works listed under recommended reading are suggested but not required.

Please note that required readings are available on Blackboard through mymodule.tcd.ie.

In addition, one film is assigned for this class. This may be watched either on your own or at a public screening (to be announced later).

If students encounter trouble in obtaining readings, they should email Dr. Geary at [gearyd@tcd.ie](mailto:gearyd@tcd.ie)

## **Tutorial Schedule**

*All required readings are available on Blackboard*

### **Week One: The Puritan City on a Hill (w/c 23 Sept.)**

#### **Required Reading:**

John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630)

#### **Recommended Reading:**

James Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers*

John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the culture of early New England*

David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: popular religious belief in early New England*

Perry Miller, "Errand into the Wilderness," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 10 (Jan., 1953), 3-32

Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan dilemma: the story of John Winthrop*

### **Week Two: Revolutionary Ideas (w/c 30 Sept.)**

#### **Required Reading:**

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776), Introduction, Chs. 1-4 (everything but the appendixes).

#### **Group Presentation:**

Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*

**Recommended Reading:**

Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*  
Daniel Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics Since Independence*  
Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England*  
Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*  
Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*  
Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*

**Week Three: The Frontier (w/c 7 Oct.)****Required Reading:**

Fredrick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893)

**Group Presentation:**

Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*

**Recommended Readings:**

Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*  
Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*  
Richard White and Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Frontier in American Culture*  
Richard White, *The Middle Ground*

**Week Four: Slavery (w/c 14 Oct.)****Required Reading:**

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), Ch. 1-11

**Group Presentation:**

Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*

**Recommended Reading:**

Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*  
Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*  
Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*  
C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*

*Please note that no tutorials will be held the week of 21 Oct. (reading week)*

**Week Five: Popular Culture & The Melting Pot (w/c 28 Oct.)**

**Required Reading:**

*The Jazz Singer* (1927 film)

Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, Ch. 4 (strongly recommended)

**Group Presentation:**

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*

**Recommended Reading:**

Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible*

John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*

Eric Lott, *Love and Theft*

Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train*

**Week Six: American Empire (w/c 4 Nov.)**

**Required Reading:**

“First Open Door Note” (1899)

Woodrow Wilson, “Fourteen Points” (1918)

**Group Presentation:**

Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*

**Recommended Reading:**

Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955*

Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*

Walter Lafeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-1996*

Penny Von Eschen, *Race for Empire*

Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-colonization and the Cold War*

## Essays

The moderatorship essay is compulsory and will be 2000-2500 words in length. It counts for 40% of the final mark for this module (the other 60% coming from the exam). Essays are due on 11 November for all students. Please consult course handbooks for submission details.

1. What legacy did the history of seventeenth-century colonial Virginia have for American development?
2. Why did the Salem witch trials occur?
3. Was the American Revolution a true “revolution” or merely a war of independence?
4. What role did pamphlet literature play in the emergence of republican ideology in the U.S. in the years before the revolution?
5. How did African Americans develop their own culture under conditions of slavery?
6. How did the concept of “manifest destiny” underwrite U.S. westward expansion?
7. Is federal policy toward Native Americans during the nineteenth century accurately described as ‘ethnic cleansing’?
8. Why did so many Euro-Americans perceive Asian immigration as threatening during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries?
9. What were the successes and failures of Reconstruction?
10. Using specific examples of your choosing, explore the relationship between American popular music and American race relations.
11. What distinguished the second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s from the first-wave feminism of the earlier twentieth century?
12. Assess the significance of the ‘melting pot’ ideal for the history of American immigrant groups.
13. In what ways did commercial advertising shape twentieth-century American culture?
14. To what extent is American foreign policy since the mid-nineteenth-century correctly characterized as ‘imperialism’?