



# American History to 1865

## COURSE GUIDE

History 211

Spring 2005

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Hours: Tuesday, 3:15-4:15  
and by appointment

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### Scope of this Course

This course is designed to take you from the initial discovery and settlement of North America through the Civil War. We will explore major events and changes during the first four hundred years of American history, as a scattered collection of diverse colonies transformed themselves into a precarious union of states. Along the way, we'll study the impact of ordinary citizens as well as of famous individuals on the development of American society. Though we know the results of the major events of this period, it is important to keep in mind that the people who participated in the events we will study did not know what the consequences of their choices would be. One of the great challenges of studying history is trying to understand the past from the perspective of the people who lived it, rather than imposing our own present judgment on their choices.

Doing history requires much more than simply memorizing names and dates. In fact, there are many different kinds of history, and diverse, often conflicting, perspectives about what the past means. These different ways of understanding the past make the study of history more compelling than simply filling in blanks or listing endless facts. Therefore, beyond our investigation of what happened in the past, a primary goal of this course is to introduce you to skills used in the "historian's craft." These include recognizing the difference between primary and secondary sources, using library resources effectively, analyzing a variety of types of evidence, and constructing meaningful arguments.

## Goals of this Course

By the end of the semester, you should not only be able to speak knowledgeably about major events and people in American history; you will also have mastered the basic analytical skills historians use in the practice of history. Specific course goals include the following:

I. To evaluate the processes of change in the development of American society and culture before 1865. For each of the distinct periods we will study you should be able to:

A. Compare and contrast the experiences of different groups of North Americans based on factors such as race, class, gender, religious belief, ethnic origin, regional variation.

B. Assess the impact of ordinary citizens as well as of famous individuals on the development of American society.

C. Identify the major forces for historical change (immigration and migration, economic and technological change, or war, for example) and critically evaluate the significant consequences of those changes for the development of American society.

II. To acquire basic skills used by historians. By the end of the semester you should be able to:

A. Critically analyze primary sources consisting of a variety of formats by considering such factors as the point of view or intention of the author/creator, the intended audience of the source, and any bias in the evidence.

B. Use historical context (the particular place, time, culture, or political situation in which a document was created) to evaluate the meanings of primary sources.

C. Assess differing or contradictory interpretations of the same event or issue and use evidence from different points of view to explain your own conclusion based on the evidence.

D. Develop an historical research problem and identify appropriate research materials for studying it.

## Required Text

Brown, Victoria Bissell and Timothy J. Shannon. *Going to the Source: The Bedford Reader in American History. Volume 1: To 1877.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

## Evaluation

Participation:	10%
Research Exercise	15%
Unit Tests	75%

### **Participation: 10%**

This assessment will be based on your performance on in-class group worksheets and your substantive contributions to class discussion.

### **Research Exercise: 15% (due 14 April)**

You will complete one research exercises that will require you to develop a research problem and identify and evaluate appropriate scholarly sources for studying the problem. Specific instructions will be provided during a research workshop scheduled for 15 February. Late assignments will be penalized. Assignments that are more than one week late will not be accepted without an extremely compelling explanation.

### **Unit Tests: 75% (25% each)**

There will be three tests during the semester given at the end of each unit. These tests will require you to demonstrate your understanding of the major learning objectives for the unit. Tests will consist of a combination of short-answer, essay, and objective questions. All tests are take-home and open-book. No make-up tests will be offered.

The tests are scheduled as follows:

Unit 1 – distributed in class on 10 February; test due on 15 February at the **beginning** of class.

Unit 2 – distributed in class on 29 March; test due on 31 March at the **beginning** of class.

Unit 3 – distributed in class 28 April; test due on 3 May by 1:45 in my box in the History Department, Mclver 221.

## Class Schedule

11 January Introductions

### Unit 1: Colonial America

13 January Chapter 1: The Susquehannocks Discover Europeans  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 1-27

18 January Chapter 1: The Susquehannocks Discover Europeans  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 1-27

20 January Chapter 2: Coming to America  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 28-44

25 January Chapter 2: Coming to America  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 28-44

27 January Chapter 3: Colonial America's Most Wanted  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 45-64

1 February Chapter 3: Colonial America's Most Wanted  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 45-64

3 February Chapter 4: Germ Warfare on the Colonial Frontier  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 65-88

8 February Chapter 4: Germ Warfare on the Colonial Frontier  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 65-88

10 February Unit 1 Review  
**Unit 1 test distributed**  
**Test due at the beginning of class on 15 February**

15 February Research Workshop  
**Unit 1 test due** at the **beginning** of class

### Unit 2: Revolution and Early Republic

17 February Chapter 5: Toasting Rebellion  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 89-110

22 February Chapter 5: Toasting Rebellion  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 89-110

24 February Chapter 6: The Question of Female Citizenship  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 111-130

1 March Chapter 6: The Question of Female Citizenship  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 111-130

3 March Chapter 6: The Question of Female Citizenship  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 111-130

8/10 March SPRING BREAK

15 March Chapter 7: Debating the Constitution  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 131-151

17 March Chapter 7: Debating the Constitution  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 131-151

22 March Chapter 8: Family Values  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 152-173

24 March Chapter 8: Family Values  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 152-173

29 March Unit 2 Review  
**Unit 2 Test distributed**  
**Unit 2 Test due at the beginning of class on 31 March.**

### **Unit 3: Antebellum United States**

31 March Chapter 9: King Cotton  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 174-196  
**Unit 2 Test due at the beginning of class on 31 March.**

5 April Chapter 9: King Cotton  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 174-196

7 April Chapter 10: The West in Jacksonian Arts  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 197-220

12 April Chapter 10: The West in Jacksonian Arts  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 197-220

14 April Chapter 12: On and Off the Record  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 244-270  
**Research Exercise due**

19 April Chapter 12: On and Off the Record  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 244-270

21 April Chapter 13: The Illustrated Civil War  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 271-297

26 April Chapter 13: The Illustrated Civil War  
**Read:** *Going to the Source*, pp. 271-297

28 April Unit 3 Review  
**Unit 3 Test distributed**  
**Unit 3 Test due by 1:45 in my box in the History Dept. (Mclver 221)**

3 May Last day of classes (Friday schedule)  
**Unit 3 Test due by 1:45 in my box in the History Dept. (Mclver 221)**