

SYLLABUS

American History to 1877
History 151-3 - Spring 2009

Prof. May
T/Th. 9-10:15
UNIV 319

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”
George Santayana

“The ‘lessons’ taught by the American past are today not merely irrelevant but dangerous.”
David Donald

“Historians can rediscover the past only by the relics it has left for the present....But how reliable are the remains of the past as clues to what was really there?”
Daniel J. Boorstin

“A Historian...must have neither Religion or Country.”
John Quincy Adams



I. COURSE PHILOSOPHY

The object of this course is, in part, the traditional one of most survey courses in history—that is, to provide students with a basic or "core" knowledge of U.S. History (first "half") sufficient to stand on its own merits or to prepare students for more advanced courses in the field. But it is also designed with other purposes in mind. For instance, this course is designed to introduce students to some of the most provocative books published in recent years, as well as trends in the historical discipline such as the growing emphasis on gender and microcosmic history. I have not assigned a traditional textbook for the course, because I believe that there are superior means to learn history and retain the knowledge. This course prioritizes depth over breadth.

Here are some of the assumptions under-girding our course:

- (1) That facts can be easily looked up. The real pursuit of history, I believe, attempts to determine why events occurred (why things happened) and the consequences of human decisions. In other words, interpreting the past and explaining its significance is more important than merely recounting it.
- (2) That history students should study the building blocks of the field—historical documents themselves—rather than only learn second-hand information filtered by professional historians. No small part of this course revolves around reading what historians call their "primary sources"—the documents that virtually all history books and articles utilize to tell their stories. What makes history exciting is the detective work that it demands of its practitioners, as we try to make sense of what are often very confusing pieces of evidence. I hope to convince you, over the course of the semester, that studying history is a process of very fascinating detective work that is anything but dull.
- (3) That the process of historical inquiry is as important as the results of the inquiry. It is my goal to expose students to the different tools that historians use to understand the documents that they study. To give an example, historians sometimes use the methods of other fields—e.g. psychology, anthropology, literary criticism, folklore, material culture, sociology, statistics, economics—to assist in resolving questions about the past. But sometimes their methodical innovations come from within the profession. Some historians, for instance, apply comparative approaches, or "comparative history," to illuminate historical problems. That is, they might compare developments in different countries, or in different parts of the same country, to make sense out of otherwise mystifying historical problems.
- (4) That savvy students can differentiate what is "current" and what is "dated" in their field. Historians, over time, discard approaches to the past that do not seem to be paying dividends, or that are disproved. Historians keep applying new "angles" on the past, in order to make better sense of it. History is not a science, but that does not mean that historians do not take an experimental or empirical approach to their materials, hoping that new methods will reveal patterns and meanings that escaped prior scholars. This course intends to expose students to some of the most current "trends" or theories in the field.
- (5) To introduce students to what scholars call "historiography"—the study of how historians engage each other (often representing different "schools of thought"—e.g. Marxist, feminist) in disputes, especially over interpretations of the past. This part of the course will especially benefit students considering future enrollment in graduate programs in history.

Most weeks, students will spend Tuesday classes interpreting historical documents that will be read in advance of the course meeting. Thursday classes will be mostly devoted, in contrast, to exploring historical problems from different perspectives and using different methodologies and readings than for the Tuesday classes. The most traditional part of my teaching has to do with chronology. I believe that history makes the most sense when it is presented in order, from the past towards the present. Therefore, our exploration of American history will generally proceed chronologically, starting in the colonial period and ending with the controversial post-Civil War period known as Reconstruction. But there will necessarily be times when we will need to loop back to pick up strands overlooked in prior class meetings. Not all history can be neatly confined to exact chronological periods.

II. RECOMMENDED BOOK PURCHASES

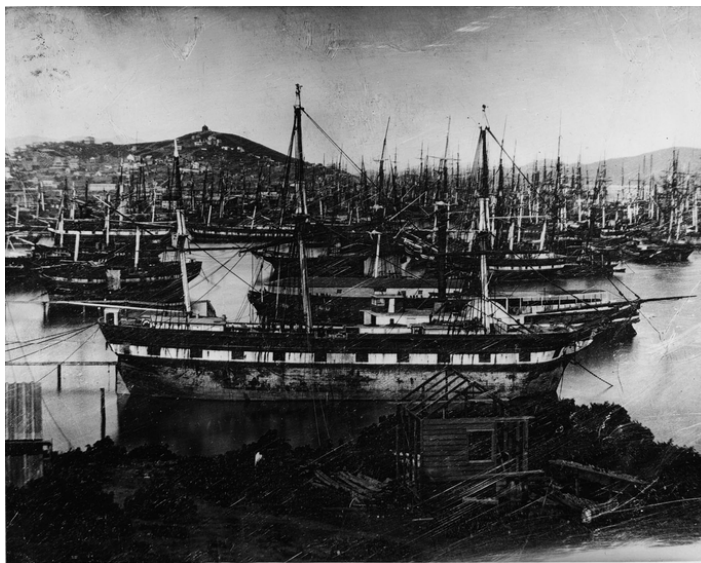
Elliott J. Gorn, Randy Roberts, and Terry D. Bilhartz,
Constructing the American Past, Volume 1, 6th Edition
Pearson/Longman (paperback)

Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution*
Beacon Press (paperback)

Scott Reynolds Nelson,
Steel Drivin' Man: John Henry, The Untold Story of an American Legend
Oxford University Press (paperback)

NOTE:

- *The Gorn, Roberts, and Bilhartz book will be available at University Book Store and at Follett's.*
- *The Young and Nelson books will be available at Von's Book Shop.*
- *Most other required readings listed on the syllabus will be available at the Reserve Book section of the Undergraduate Library*
- *Single copies of these books, if owned by the Purdue University Library system will be placed on reserve at the Undergraduate Library. In addition, copies of all other readings required for the course will be on reserve at the Undergraduate Library.*
- *Keep in mind regarding any articles required for the course that if the entire issue of the journal is on reserve rather than just the one article, you need to ask for the name of the journal, not the title of the article*



III: COURSE SCHEDULE

Tues., Jan. 13: ORIENTATION

Thurs., Jan. 15: COLONIAL VIRGINIA, ANGLO-INDIAN RELATIONS, AND SLAVERY

Assignment for class:

Read the following pieces and be prepared to discuss them in class. Pay careful attention not only to the information in this reading about such subjects as indentured servitude, Anglo-Indian relations, the origins of English settlement in America, and the origins and nature of slavery, but also what this reading teaches you about how historians find out about things that happened a long time ago.

Constructing the American Past, Chapter 2, 21-42

James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle,

After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection, 6th ed., Vol. 1, 1-23.

- Note: I have put two copies of *After the Fact* on reserve at the Undergraduate Library. However, students have permission to read earlier editions of this book, if convenient. You need to read chapter 1 about Colonial Virginia. Although the editors update their material in each edition, this chapter is mostly the same as in prior editions.

Tues., Jan. 20: THE PURITANS OF NEW ENGLAND AND WITCHES

Assignment for class:

One of the most interesting groups to study, historically, is the Puritans of early colonial New England. Who were the Puritans? What did they believe in? Would it be accurate to call them religious fanatics? What explains the Salem Witch trials, which occurred under their auspices? What did your readings for this class teach you about how historians draw upon other disciplines to uncover the past? Do you admire the Puritans or find them repulsive? What do your readings teach you about "historiography"—debates about the past among modern historians?

Constructing the American Past, Chapter 3, 43-64

James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle,

After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection, 6th ed., Vol. 1, 24-48

Thurs., Jan. 22: THE BORDERLANDS AND "MIDDLE-GROUND" THEORY

Assignment for class:

For much of American history, historians treated their national experience, insofar as it related to the frontier, as one of conquest and displacement. That is, white settlers of English birth or descent from the Atlantic seaboard constantly moved westward, conquering and displacing Indian tribes and taking over former Spanish and French possessions on their borders.

But it is hardly so simple. For most of the colonial period, the Spanish ruled what is today Florida and Texas. For part of the colonial period, Spain also ruled much of the Mississippi River Valley: after the French and Indian War (1754-61), the Spanish crown, in the settlement following the conflict, gained possession of New Orleans and Louisiana west of the Mississippi River. Meanwhile, the French controlled the Mississippi River Valley and the Gulf Coast before the Spanish did, and ruled most of today's Canada until their defeat in the French and Indian War. Spain temporarily gave up Florida to the British after the French and Indian War, but regained it in the settlement ending the American Revolution and continued in control of much of Florida until 1819, when it signed a treaty with the United States selling Florida for U.S. assumption of claims against Spain amounting to \$5 million. French influence and culture persisted in much of its former territory long after the United States acquired the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. In fact, throughout the border areas marking the divide between English and then U.S. territory with Spanish and French territory, a remarkably polyglot population resided, including many different Indian tribes. Several dozen Indian nations inhabited the Louisiana Purchase territory, for example, at the time the U.S. acquired it from France.

To make sense of the interactions of cultures in these areas, some historians have developed a theory and an approach that has become known as the "middle ground." Your assignment for class is, first, to figure out exactly what "middle-ground" theory alludes to. Then, explain how this middle ground actually operated. What happened on the middle ground? Does your reading for class seem to confirm or contradict the theory? What proof does your reading provide for its argument?

Assignment for class:

- Read Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, Vol. I, bottom of p. 117 to the middle of page 119 for a convenient synopsis of middle ground theory
- ***Also*** read an article or book chapter:

If your last name begins with the letters A-G, read Daniel E. Herman, "Romance on the Middle Ground," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19 (Summer 1999): 279-91

If your last name begins with the letters H-P, read Frank Lawrence Owsley Jr. and Gene A. Smith, "A Leftover of War: Negro Fort," in Owsley and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1997), 103-17

If your last name begins with the letters Q-Z, read Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation States, and Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 814-41

(Another interesting journal piece that addresses the borderlands issue is Gerald E. Poyo and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, "Spanish Texas and Borderlands Historiography in Transition: Implications for United States History," *Journal of American History* 75 (Sept. 1988), 393-416.)

Tues., Jan. 27: LIFE, THOUGHT, AND OPPRESSION IN THE 18TH C. ENGLISH COLONIES

Assignment for class:

Constructing the American Past, Ch. 4, 65-90

Thurs., Jan. 29: DRAWING MEANING FROM COMMON TEXTS

For this class, we will explore how seemingly trite texts can be richly revealing of a people and their culture. A journal of the life of a relatively obscure woman and the seemingly silly poem "Twas the Night Before Christmas" tell us much about life and social mores in America at different times and places in our early history.

Assignment for class:

Constructing the American Past, xi-top of xiv

(During class we will also view and discuss about 30 minutes of a videotape provided by the Undergraduate Library called "A Midwife's Tale" [VC 6988])

Tues., Feb. 3: THE CAUSES AND DIPLOMACY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Assignment for class:

Constructing the American Past, 91-109
Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, Vol. 1, xv-xxxi

Thurs., Feb. 5: INTERPRETING THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Assignment for class:

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, Vol. 1, 49-72
Constructing the American Past, Ch. 5, Documents 13-15 (pp. 112-15)

Tues., Feb. 10: THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

Assignment for class:

Constructing the American Past, 117-33

Thurs., Feb. 12: MEMORY STUDIES, THE PAST, AND THE CAUSES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

One of the most intriguing developments in historical scholarship in recent years has been the increasing study of historical memory itself. That is, historians are increasingly sensitive to the fact that the very way that we remember (and often distort) the past affects how we shape the future. David W. Blight shows for instance, in his award-winning book *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, that selective recollections of the Civil War have shaped race relations in this country ever since. For many decades, he explains, Americans chose to remember the valor of Civil War white soldiers more than the emancipationist outcome of the war and the contributions of black soldiers to the Union victory. True racial progress was difficult until memory changed. One only need consider how Adolph Hitler utilized myths about World War I to grasp the potential power of public memory. At any rate, more and more historians are producing memory studies. Among the best examples of this kind of writing are magisterial books by Merrill D. Peterson about two of America's most significant presidents: *The Jeffersonian Image in the American Mind* (1960) and *Lincoln in American Memory* (1994).

But do memory studies have to concern major figures like Jefferson and Lincoln? This week and next we will plunge again into memory studies, and in the process learn something about the American Revolution and revisit the issue of studying history from the bottom up. How can studying the life of an insignificant shoemaker teach us about a major event like the American Revolution? Further, what do we learn from this book about how collective memories are made? Who determines what memories the public should keep? This week we will learn about the life of this shoemaker, his role in the coming of the American Revolution and during the war, and his experiences as a veteran after the war. Next week we will look at his life in the context of public memory. In what ways did Americans celebrate the Revolution after it was over? Did Americans really like the concept of revolution and revolutionaries? Did all American social classes remember the Revolution in the same way? Why or why not? Did public memory about the Revolution stay consistent as decades passed? Or did it change over time? What role did war veterans like our shoemaker play in the formation or manipulation of public memory?

Assignment for class:

The Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 3-84

Tuesday, Feb. 17: FEDERALISTS AND REPUBLICANS: THE FIRST AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM
(1790s-War of 1812)

Note: This assignment has two purposes—to introduce you to the beginning of party politics in the United States (what historians call America's "first" party system) and to show how from the beginning of our country's history, sectional differences between Northerners and Southerners raised the possibility that the nation would not survive over the long run. Secondly, the assignment reminds us of the difficulty of interpreting conflicting historical documents and raises the role of "honor" and dueling in American politics—something that we will consider more later in the course.

Assignment for class:

William J. Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983),
70-106
Constructing the American Past, xiv-xxvii

Thursday, Feb. 19: HISTORICAL MEMORY (continued)

Assignment for class:

Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 87-207

Tues., Feb. 23: ANDREW JACKSON AND THE SECOND PARTY SYSTEM, 1820s-1840s

Note: This week's readings have several purposes. After the War of 1812, the Federalist party of Alexander Hamilton pretty much died out, though it held on locally in some areas for a while, especially in New England. But on the national level, although politicians had strong disagreements on issues, they did not divide into two major political parties again until Andrew Jackson ran for and won the presidency. What was there about Jackson that was so inflammatory as to cause most of America's politicians into two parties—the Democrats and the Whigs? How has "historiography" treated Jackson? What do your readings say about how historians are affected by their own times in interpreting the past. Do you admire Jackson or disparage him? Why? Was he a good president or a bad president? What do we mean by the term "Jacksonian Democracy"?

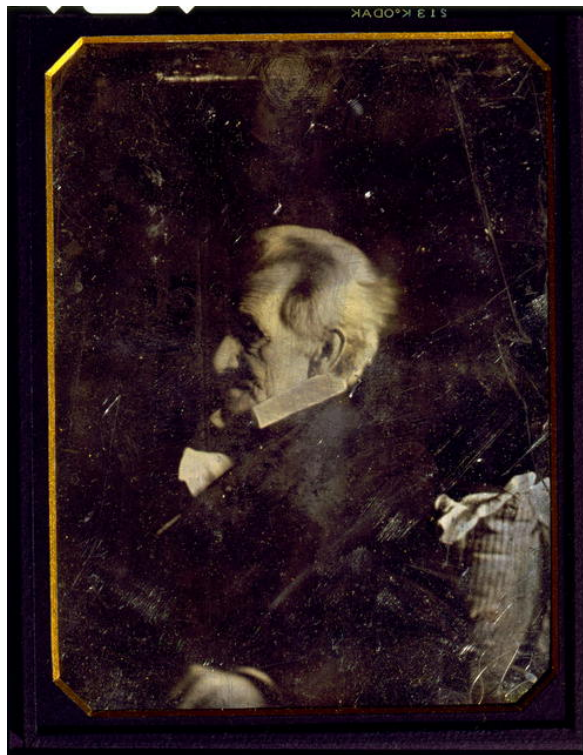
Assignment for class:

Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America*, 3-15
Constructing the American Past, 167-81

Thurs., Feb. 25

Assignment for class:

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, Vol. 1, 99-bottom of 117



Tues., Mar. 3: SLAVERY

Assignment for class:

Constructing the American Past, 147-65
Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, Vol. I, 177-209

Thurs., Mar. 5 COMPARATIVE HISTORY AND LEARNING ABOUT SLAVERY

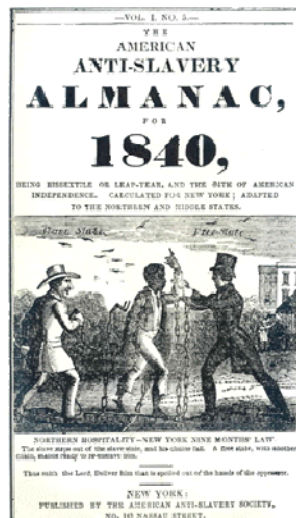
In 1923, recognizing the parochial nature of much historical research, the French historian Marc Bloch argued that the "perfection and general use" of comparative history had become "one of the most pressing needs of present-day historical science" ("Toward a Comparative History of European Societies," in Frederic C. Lane and Jelle C. Riermersma, eds., *Enterprise and Secular Change* [Homewood, Ill., 1953], 494-95). Bloch and other comparative historians have wisely recognized that everything is relative. How can one fully understand any aspect of a country's past, without relating it to developments elsewhere? Without perspective, observations about the unique culture, economy, or past of a particular country become almost meaningless.

American historians in recent decades have attempted to achieve new insights by widening their boundaries. That is, they have tried to gain a better understanding of their own country's past by noting and interpreting the pasts of other countries and regions. The purpose of this week's assignment is to acquaint you with the comparative method. We will see what we can learn by revisiting the issue of U.S. slavery, this time putting our inquiry into an international context. What did you learn from this reading? What do you feel are the advantages of comparative history? Can you think of any disadvantages? Do you feel that you learned things about U.S. slavery by thinking internationally? Or, do you feel that this kind of historical analysis was a waste of your time?

Assignment for class:

Read one of the following:

1. Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 1-10, 157-91
2. Herbert S. Klein, *Slavery in the Americas: A Comparative Study of Virginia and Cuba* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), 40-85
3. Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of The New World* (1979; paper ed., New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 1-50



Courtesy Indiana Historical Society Library

Tues., Mar. 10: MATERIAL CULTURE, POPULAR CULTURE, AND THE AMERICAN PAST

One method that more and more historians use to rediscover the past is to analyze objects that have survived from past cultures and civilizations. Even everyday household items can render significant historical meanings. This class, we will explore how historians of material culture have used such things as paintings, photographs, and exhibition displays to better understand America's mid-nineteenth century history. What have you learned of significance from these readings?

Assignment for class:

Read *After the Fact*, Vol. 1, 73-84 and one of the following:

Drew Gilpin Faust, "Race, Gender, and Confederate Nationalism," in Faust, *Southern Stories: Slaveholders in Peace and War* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 148-59

Emory M. Thomas, "Protruding Entrails and Petersburg," in Thomas, *Travels to Hallowed Ground* (Columbia, S. Car.: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 124-36

James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 73-118

Thurs., Mar. 12: ATLANTIC WORLD STUDIES AND U.S. HISTORY

One of the most important trends affecting the study of early U.S. history, in recent decades, is what scholars call "Atlantic World" studies or "Transatlantic History." There are whole conferences, programs, books, and other endeavors devoted to this perspective. Members of our own Purdue Department of History, especially Melinda Zook and Michael Morrison, have done important work in this area. The editors of *Transatlantic History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006) define this field as one organized by a "conceptual approach" focusing "on the interconnectedness of human experience over the centuries in the Atlantic Basin." They note that this field is "inherently interdisciplinary, transnational, and comparative in approach" and that it regularly "moves beyond the boundaries imposed by the concept of the nation-state." They add that transatlantic history appeals to "those willing to rethink, re-conceptualize, and recast their approach to both new and familiar material."

How does such a transatlantic approach facilitate our understanding of U.S. history? Or does it? Come to class prepared to answer this question as well as to explain to your classmates what you learned.

Assignment for class:

Read one of the following:

- 1) Stanley H. Palmer, "The Power of Numbers: Settler and Native in Ireland, America, and South Africa, 1600-1900," in Steven G. Reinhardt and Dennis Reinhartz, ed., *Transatlantic History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 90-123 (this is an excerpt from a very long chapter)
- 2) Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 10-76 (chapter 1)
- 3) Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 17-46 (introduction + chapter 1)

Tues., Mar. 24: THE WAR OF 1812 AND AMERICAN TERRITORIAL EXPANSIONISM

This week we will take a look at the War of 1812 against Great Britain, begun by U.S. President James Madison, who asked Congress for a declaration of war in June of 1812. Madison's war message to Congress emphasized U.S. maritime grievances against Britain—particularly British interference with U.S. commerce on the high seas and British impressments of U.S. citizens into the British Navy (acts committed to strengthen Britain's naval effort in its ongoing war against Napoleonic France). But one paragraph of Madison's war message alluded to Britain's assisting Native Americans in their attacks on U.S. settlers on the frontier.

Why, really, did the U.S. go to war in 1812? Did U.S. ambitions to acquire British Canada have anything to do with it? And what role did Spanish Florida have in the war? What do your readings teach you about the military course of the War of 1812? Who won the war? How did the war change U.S. history? And what role did General Andrew Jackson, who you met earlier in this course, play in these events? Do these events tell us anything about early U.S. attitudes about what today we might call "ethnic cleansing"? What about the role of "great men" in history? Say Andrew Jackson had never been born. Would the course of these events have been different?

Assignment for class:

Read one of the following:

1. Walter Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 75-129
2. Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America* (New York: Viking, 2005),

Thurs., Mar. 26: THE MONROE DOCTRINE

Not long after the War of 1812, the "Monroe Doctrine" became an important component of U.S. foreign policy. But what was the doctrine (a law? treaty? speech? Supreme Court opinion? something else?) and why did the United States adopt it? How did it affect the history of the United States and the world? Did other nations recognize its legality? So often, U.S. foreign policy has to do, at least in part, with domestic politics. Was this the case with the Monroe Doctrine, which was named, after all, after the politician President James Monroe? Finally, what role did Monroe's secretary of state and later president John Quincy Adams, play in this business?

Assignment for class:

Read one of the following:

1. George Dangerfield, *The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815-1818* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 161-94
2. Paul A. Varg, *United States Foreign Relations, 1820-1860* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1979), 43-59
3. Frederick Merk, *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism, 1843-1849* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 3-8, 105-32

Tues., Mar. 31: THE NEW MILITARY HISTORY

When most people think of military history, they think it concerns campaigns, weapons, strategy, battlefield tactics, and things of that sort. But in recent decades, many historians have argued for a more inclusive military history—one that is revelatory of cultural trends and that includes peacetime military affairs as well as the military's effect on society during wartime. Such matters as the combat experience of enlisted personnel, veterans' affairs, gender, race and ethnicity in the military establishment, the military's role in diplomatic affairs, the impact of military spending on society, draft resistance, and questions regarding civilian control over the military might all come, for instance, under the rubric of military history.

How can the "new military history" help us better understand the history of the United States before the Civil War? Most particularly, how does it help us to understand the U.S.-Mexican War of 1848? What did you learn from your reading about that war?

Assignment for class:

Read one of the following:

- Paul Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict during the Mexican-American War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 13-29, 113-54
Robert W. Johannsen, *To The Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 21-67
Richard Bruce Winders, *Mr. Polk's Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 139-85

Thurs., Apr. 2: TRANSCRIBING AND INTERPRETING A DOCUMENT

Most of the readings for this course, in one way or another, have used "primary source" documents—e.g. letters, diaries, government documents, and so on. We have also considered how historians go about making sense of a document. Now it is your turn to try (and to also develop and get feedback on your writing skills)!

Assignment for class:

1. Transcribe the letter on pages 18-20 of this syllabus . By a transcription, I mean type the letter as you decipher it.
2. Be sure to include all identifying information on the letter (date, salutation, signature, etc.). Type it so it looks like the letter in form. If you do it right, your version will be exactly the same, except that it is not handwritten.
3. Staple to the typescript an essay of 1000-1500 words, interpreting the document and what you think its historical significance might be. What does it tell you worth knowing about the American past? What questions does it raise for future research? Within your essay, provide *a minimum* of two footnotes or endnotes in proper historical form. You need not consult a style manual to learn how to cite sources correctly in a way to please historians. Rather, you could consult a number of books required for this course (and this syllabus) for models of how to properly cite a book, a magazine or journal article, a newspaper article, and so on. For instance, the Anderson and Cayton book *Dominion of War* and the Johannsen reading on the Mexican War provide excellent citation models in their notes. Your citations do NOT count in the 1000-1500 word maximum. I expect you in your notes to cite at least one scholarly book and at least one scholarly article. Scholarly books are usually published by university presses (though sometimes by commercial presses like Knopf); scholarly articles are usually articles of fifteen pages or more with notes in serious journals read by professionals—such as the *Journal of American History* and the *Journal of Southern History*. What I am trying to get at is whether you would know how to find out more about a historical document and its context. I also want to see your reasoning and writing. Don't forget to put your name on your mini-paper.

Tues., Apr. 7: GENDER AND ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

One of the most obvious trends in the historical profession in recent years, is to reassess the role of women in American life. On the one hand, historians have increasingly illuminated women's private lives, probing the meaning of what is sometimes considered their interior world. This is social and cultural history with a new twist—with a particular consciousness of women's perspectives and gender tensions. On the other hand, there is a growing recognition that perhaps early American historians were wrong in virtually reading women out of American public life before the Civil War. Perhaps women tried to influence the course of history more than was once believed. Perhaps women were political actors. Perhaps women had more "agency" (a buzz term among modern historians) than previously believed. That is, they had more control over their own destinies than we once thought. "Patriarchy" (or male dominance) had its limits. And on the other hand, perhaps discourse over women's characteristics and roles played a role in male public life.

With this in mind, read this week's assignments. Keep in mind not only what your readings teach you about women's history, but also U.S. history in general.

Assignment for class:

Constructing the American Past, 183-203 and one of the following:

Robert E. May, "Reconsidering Antebellum U.S. Women's History: Gender, Filibustering, and America's Quest for Empire," *American Quarterly* 57 (Dec. 2005): 1155-88

Amy Gilman Srebnick, *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers: Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1-12, 33-60

Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 197-230

Thurs., Apr. 9: THE MARKET REVOLUTION

Historians discussing the U.S. economy in the decades before the Civil War have been increasingly using a concept called the "market revolution" to make sense out of it. What was the market revolution? What did it have to do with America's changing patterns of production and transportation? Was the United States experiencing what scholars call "modernization" during the period before the Civil War? And did this modernization have anything to do with the growing sectional tension between the North and the South that helped to cause the Civil War?

Assignment for class:

Jill Lepore, "Vast Designs: How America came of age," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 29, 2007, pp. 88-92, and one of the following:

Kenneth Startup, "'A Mere Calculation of Profits and Loss': The Southern Clergy and the Economic Culture of the Antebellum North," in Mark A. Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 217-35

Douglas R. Egerton, "Markets Without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism," in Paul A. Gilje, ed., *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic* (Madison, Wis.: Madison House, 1997), 50-64

James A. Henretta, "The 'Market' in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (Summer 1998): 289-304

Tues., Apr. 14: SECTIONALISM AND THE COMING OF THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War was one of the most terrible wars in the history of the World, and certainly in U.S. history. More soldiers died in the one-day battle of Antietam in 1862, than in the entire American Revolution, War of 1812, and Mexican-American wars put together! But what caused the conflict? Were Northerners trying to abolish slavery in the South? Were most of the arguments between the North and the South over economic issues, such as the tariff? What did the impact of particular historical figures, such as John Brown, have to do with the coming of the war? Would history have been different had he never lived. What role did published polemics, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, play in the coming of the Civil War? What did Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas argue about in their famous debates in 1858? In what ways did their debates differ from modern political debates (such as the Obama-McCain debates)? Did they have anything to do with the coming of the war? Or were they merely an interesting sideshow?

Assignment for class:

Constructing the American Past, 205-26
After the Fact, Vol. 1, 150-75

Thurs., Apr. 16: SOUTHERN HONOR

In debating the origins of the Civil War, historians have divided roughly into two camps on the matter of cultural distinctiveness and the inevitability of the war. Some scholars have argued that Northerners and Southerners before the Civil War shared many values, including racism, and that the war came over specific issues that they were unable to resolve—such as the fugitive slave problem and the matter of whether or not slavery was to be permitted in American territories. Other scholars have argued that Northerners and Southerners, by the Civil War, developed entirely different cultures and values, and that it is no wonder that in 1860-61 the two major sections of the country were unable to coexist in the same nation. Central to this latter argument is the concept known as "Southern honor." Southerners prioritized honor over other cultural traits. When their honor was challenged, they had to respond physically, perhaps in a duel, perhaps with armies! What did you learn about Southern honor, including its causes, from your reading?

Assignment for class:

Read one of the following:

Christopher J. Olsen, *Political Culture and Secession in Mississippi: Masculinity, Honor, and the Antiparty Tradition, 1830-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3-middle of page 5, 17-middle p. 26

Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery*. . . (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), xi-xiv, 51-86

Manisha Sinha, "The Caning of Charles Sumner: Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23 (Summer 2003): 233-62

Tues., Apr. 21 **AMERICAN NATIVISM AND THE CIVIL WAR**

One of the most contested issues in modern American politics is the matter of federal, state, and local policy respecting undocumented aliens—or illegal immigrants—in this country. But this is hardly the only time in U.S. history that a groundswell of feeling arose against foreign immigration, whether legal or illegal. In the years before the Civil War, much feeling arose against foreign immigrants, especially Irish Catholics and Germans, who were arriving in the United States in enormous numbers and significantly affecting U.S. politics, the economy, and many other dimensions of American life—such as education. Historians call antipathy to foreigners "nativism," whether it is based primarily on race (as today) or ethnicity (as before the Civil War). And nativism helps to explain one of the most significant "home front" crises of the Civil War—the New York City draft riots of 1863. What do you learn about nativism, the Civil War, and the draft riots from your reading.

Assignment for class:

Read *Constructing the American Past*, 227-46 and one of the following:

1. Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (Routledge: New York, 1995), 34-51, 92-121
2. Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3-7, 20-51

Thurs., Apr. 23 **RECONSTRUCTION**

The period after the Civil War, roughly 1865-1877, is generally alluded to as Reconstruction. The term alludes to the Union occupation of the South after the Civil War, and the attempt by northern politicians, especially antislavery Republicans, to "reconstruct," or change, Southern society as the price of the South's readmission to the Union with full voting rights in Congress again. Some northern politicians merely wanted to ensure that slavery was gone forever in the South. Others had a more radical vision of a more egalitarian society springing up in the South. Still others were mostly interested in capitalizing on economic opportunities open in the South after the war. At any rate, it was during this period that blacks on a region-wide scale got the vote and the right to hold office. Ultimately Reconstruction ended, with most Southern blacks eventually losing their right to vote and hold office. Eventually a system of rigid segregation was implanted in the South. What did you learn about Reconstruction from your reading for today? What did you learn about the origins of the Ku Klux Klan, and its role in Reconstruction, from your reading? And finally, what can we learn

Assignment for class:

Constructing the American Past, 247-65

Tues., Apr. 28: FOLKLORE, HISTORY, AND RECONSTRUCTION

Almost everyone has heard, at one time or another, the famous folk ballad "John Henry," about a black railroad laborer who challenged a machine to make a railroad tunnel, and died in the process. But what if we use that song to probe history—most particularly the history of the Civil War, Reconstruction, modernization, Southern politics, convict labor, mining, race, and memory? In what way does the reading for this week reassert themes we have dealt with throughout the course? Are we back to where we began—that history is fascinating because it is process, because it is detective work rather than recitation of facts?

Assignment for class:

Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Steel Drivin' Man—John Henry—The Untold Story of an American Legend*
(New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-92

Thurs., Apr. 30:

Assignment for class:

Nelson, *Steel Drivin' Man*, 93-173

IV: COURSE GRADE

Your course grade for History 151H will be determined primarily by your work in class discussion. That is, 80% of your grade will come from these discussions. I will give you a grade for your work in every class discussion. You need to show during class that you have done the reading and that you have thought about it. I do not at all expect you to always interpret the readings in the same way that I do, or even to emphasize the same aspects of them.

Because class discussions are so essential (there will be no exams or quizzes), it is important that you never cut class unless you are unwell or facing some kind of a personal or professional emergency. If you do miss class, you should do a makeup paper of 2-3 typewritten pages explaining what you got out of the reading, and submit it the next time that you attend class. If you do this and your paper is satisfactory, instead of getting a zero for the missed discussion, you will get a pro-rated grade (that is, a grade based on your average for all the discussions that you attend). But you can only get credit twice during the semester for missed classes.

You can find out your discussion grades any time during the semester that you wish. There is nothing mysterious about them. All you need to do is visit with me during my office hours. In fact, I recommend doing this at least once or twice during the semester, the first time in about the third or fourth week of the course. I find that these chats often help students discover where they could do better, and that their grades frequently improve after talking with me.

The other 20% of the course grade will come from the paper due on April 2.

V: OFFICE HOURS

I enjoy meeting with students. You should not only take advantage of my office hours to discuss your work in class discussions, but also if you encounter any problems regarding course assignments or if you want to discuss any aspect of the field of history (such as history as a possible career). The office hours listed below are not writ in stone. If you find these hours inconvenient, please let me know and I will arrange a special appointment with you.

My office is Room 25, University Hall
My office phone is 44131

My office hours, this semester, will be:

T: 1- 1:50
W: 1:45 2: 40
Th: 10:30-11:15

VI: TEXTBOOKS

There is no textbook required for this course. Should you desire a more comprehensive treatment of American history than that provided in this course, I would recommend that you pick up a standard textbook in the field. Most U.S. history textbooks come in two volumes. In such cases, you will want to order Vol. 1 for the 151 course. Some of these are available at the various bookstores, because non-honors sections of this course generally require textbooks. Simply go to the bookstores and pick out a textbook that appeals to you visually. The bookstores will also gladly order a particular textbook if the one you want is not available.

