

## **HIST-121: Formation of the American Republic Spring 2019**

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**Robinson B343 ~~ Office Hours: W 11-1, or by appointment**

This course surveys the history of the geographical area that became the United States, from pre-colonization to the post-Civil War Reconstruction era. For those of you who like dates, our course runs roughly from 1450 (when Europeans began exploring the world in earnest and writing about what they found) until the end of Reconstruction in 1877. The class format will be a combination of lectures, discussions, and collaborative in-class work.

Although familiarity with content is important to your success in this course, we will also devote a significant amount of time to sampling the sources and skills that professional historians use in their research and writing. Over the course of the semester, students will complete three assignments (modules) using colonial Virginia newspapers, revolutionary era pro-slavery and anti-slavery documents, and letters written by Civil War soldiers and their families (all available online). The final exam will likewise focus less on memorization than on the interpretation of historical texts. The objective is to have you learn something about what historians *do*—how history is *made*.

### Course Requirements

The only required text for this course is *The American Yawp*, a collaboratively authored, open-source, U.S. history textbook and documents reader, which is available here: <http://www.americanyawp.com/>. Please open this link and bookmark this webpage, where you will find the table of contents to *American Yawp* with live links to each of its chapters.

There is required reading nearly every day for this course. We will be reading most of the fifteen chapters in Volume 1 of *American Yawp*, as well as some of the documents that appear at the end of each chapter. For specific readings assignments, please refer to the Course Schedule below.

Written work for this class falls into three categories:

- Quizzes: There will be 13 quizzes posted on the course Blackboard site in the "Quizzes" section. Each quiz corresponds to a chapter in *American Yawp* and must be taken to prepare for class during the week in which that chapter is assigned. Quizzes are 4 multiple-choice questions, timed (30 minutes), and open-book. You should at least skim the chapter before opening the quiz to avoid running out of time. Your best scores from 10 of 13 quizzes will count toward the final course grade. My advice would be for you to do all of the quizzes, in case illness, forgetfulness, or other circumstances lead you to miss some later in the semester. No extensions or make-ups will be given.

Each quiz will be available on Blackboard from Thursday morning at 6:00 a.m. through the start of class at 1:30 p.m. on Monday. For instance, Quiz 1, which covers Chapter 2 of *American Yawp*, "Colliding Cultures," will be available at 6:00 a.m. on Thursday 24 January; access to the quiz will close on Monday 28 January at 1:30 p.m.

- Modules: Three written assignments—two very short, one 3-5-page essay—based on primary sources. These assignments are described in detail in the infoguide for this course at <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/hist121/begin>. Please bookmark this webpage, as we will be using it frequently during the semester. Modules should be submitted via the "Assignments" section of Blackboard. Late submissions will be penalized, typically at a rate of 5 points per day (on a 100-point scale), or roughly half a letter-grade.
- Final exam: The final exam for this class will be on Wednesday 8 May, 1:30-4:15 p.m. The final exam will be in-class, open notes, open book, and primarily documents-based. If you miss the exam, you will receive a grade of 0 (zero) unless you submit a formal and specific written medical excuse (i.e., a doctor's letter) within 24 hours. Make-ups will be offered at the discretion of the instructor.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

Quizzes (10 of 13 quizzes; 4 questions each)	20%
Module 1 assignment	10%
Module 2 assignment	10%
Module 3 assignment	20%
Final exam	30%
Participation	10%

This course uses Blackboard, which you can access via the MyMason portal. The syllabus, quizzes, module assignments, and grades each have their own section on the course Blackboard site. I will also post the PowerPoint files used for lectures. These files, however, will be very minimal outlines with images and will not replicate most lecture material. Students are responsible for taking their own in-class notes.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact Disability Services at 993-2474, <http://ds.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services.

Finally, please note that all students are subject to the George Mason University Honor Code (see <http://jiju.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/honor.htm>). The penalty for cheating or plagiarism on any assignment will be—at a minimum—a grade of F for this course.

#### Electronics policy:

Cell phones, pagers, and other communicative devices are not allowed in this class. Please keep them stowed away and out of sight. Laptops or tablets (e.g., iPads) are permitted for the purpose of taking notes, though studies have shown that taking notes by hand is a much more effective way for students to process and retain the content of classroom lectures. Conversely, having access to a laptop or tablet will be useful—even essential—on the days we do our modules.

Engaging in activities not related to the course (e.g., gaming, email, shopping, etc.) will result in a significant reduction in your participation grade.

## **Course Schedule**

[Note that each Monday class takes its title from a chapter in *American Yawp*. That chapter is the assigned reading for that day's class and the basis of that day's quiz (and lecture). Each Wednesday, we will have class discussions of assigned documents from *American Yawp* and/or work on modules.]

**Wednesday 23 January:** Introductory meeting. Infoguide for HIST-121:

<https://infoguides.gmu.edu/hist121> (please bookmark)

**Monday 28 January:** Colliding Cultures (QUIZ 1 DUE)

**Wednesday 30 January:** Discussion of Native American creation stories and Hakluyt and Winthrop documents

**Monday 4 February:** British North America (QUIZ 2 DUE)

**Wednesday 6 February:** In-class work with the *Virginia Gazette* (Before class, do required reading for Module 1: <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/hist121/module1>)

**Monday 11 February:** Colonial Society (QUIZ 3 DUE)

**Wednesday 13 February:** Discussion about the *Virginia Gazette* and colonial society. **Module 1 assignment due on Blackboard by 1:30 p.m.**

**Monday 18 February:** The American Revolution (QUIZ 4 DUE)

**Wednesday 20 February:** Discussion of Hewes and Paine documents and Declaration of Independence

**Monday 25 February:** A New Nation (QUIZ 5 DUE)

**Wednesday 27 February:** In-class transcriptions of emancipation petitions (Before class, do required reading for Module 2: <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/hist121/module2>)

**Monday 4 March:** The Early Republic (QUIZ 6 DUE)

**Wednesday 6 March:** Discussion of pro- and anti-slavery in Virginia and the early republic. **Module 2 assignment due on Blackboard by 1:30 p.m.**

**\*\*Spring Break—No Class\*\***

**Monday 18 March:** The Market Revolution (QUIZ 7 DUE)

**Wednesday 20 March:** Discussion of Madison, Robinson, and Tocqueville documents

**Monday 25 March:** Democracy in America (QUIZ 8 DUE)

**Wednesday 27 March:** Discussion of Rhode Island, Philadelphia, Jackson, and Morse documents

**Monday 1 April: Religion and Reform (QUIZ 9 DUE)**

**Wednesday 3 April:** Discussion of Finney, Walker, Garrison, and Grimké documents

**Monday 8 April: Manifest Destiny (QUIZ 10 DUE)**

**Wednesday 10 April:** Discussion of Northrup, Cherokee, O'Sullivan, and Chinese merchant documents

**Monday 15 April: The Sectional Crisis (QUIZ 11 DUE)**

**Wednesday 17 April:** In-class examination of Civil War family letters databases (Before class, do required reading for Module 3: <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/hist121/module3>)

**Monday 22 April: The Civil War (QUIZ 12 DUE)**

**Wednesday 24 April:** Discussion of Civil War families and communities

**Monday 29 April: Reconstruction (QUIZ 13 DUE) Module 3 assignment due on Blackboard**

**Wednesday 1 May:** Read Anderson, Reynolds, and Douglass documents

**Wednesday 8 May, 1:30-4:15 p.m.: Final examination (either write by hand in blue exam books or submit as Word files via email to [ckierner@gmu.edu](mailto:ckierner@gmu.edu))**