

Fall 2023
MW 10:30-11:45 AM
Horizon 2010
Office Hours: Thursday, 4:00-6:00 PM and by appointment

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HISTORY 401: COLONIAL AMERICA

European exploration and colonization of the Americas marked the beginning of a new era in the history of four continents. As people, goods, plants, animals, microbes, and ideas circulated throughout this newly connected world, they created new patterns of community, conflict, and experience in Europe and Africa as well as the Americas. This course concentrates on the North American dimensions of this larger process from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. We will examine the multiple efforts to establish European settlements in North America, the social and political evolution of the various English colonies and their integration into a larger British Empire, the effects of colonization on native peoples and their efforts to adapt to and shape the new world in which they found themselves, the rise of slavery in North America and the experiences of Africans and their descendants in America, and the eighteenth-century political, cultural, and social developments that shaped the coming of the American Revolution. We will also consider the legacy and meanings of this “colonial” history in a wider historical context.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Class Participation and Preparation: This course is heavily based on reading and discussion—your attendance and active participation are crucial to its success. Evidence of preparation (i.e., having done and thought about the reading and any discussion questions), quality of discussion, engagement with other students’ ideas, and appropriate behavior all factor into the class participation grade.

Preparation also includes bringing a copy of the reading, something to write with, and paper to write on to be ready for any in-class writing or exercises. (This is subject to accommodation for students with disabilities that may interfere with their ability to write using traditional media.)

Short Exercises: Many weeks there will be a brief written assignment based on the readings or other exercises used to encourage thought and discussion. Details and instructions for each specific short exercise will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard. Often these will simply be reactions to the reading; other times they might be explorations of primary sources; sometimes they might be assignments designed to help you prepare for the essays (see below). They don’t usually require much sustained writing, but they should be the result of real consideration and effort.

Short Exercises are graded mostly on a completion and effort basis—if the assignment is completed and demonstrates serious engagement and effort, it will receive full credit. If it only demonstrates superficial engagement or token effort, they will receive some degree of partial credit.

In-Semester Reflection: Around the middle of the semester you will be asked to complete a reflection on what you have learned during the preceding section of the class. This reflection will have three main parts: 1) a section where you describe the most important information and ideas you've learned in that section of the class; 2) a section where you describe and assess your own understanding and engagement over that period of time; 3) a consideration of what you and the class can do to ensure your continued success and understanding of the material.

This reflection is graded on a combination of the level of effort and engagement it reflects and the specificity and accuracy with which it captures the information and ideas you choose to write about (particularly in part one).

Essays: You will write two five- to six-page essays based on course materials. These assignments ask you to use the information, ideas, and approaches you have learned in one section of the class to develop a sophisticated, informed answer to important thematic or conceptual questions about the topic or topics covered. Details of these assignments will be made available on Blackboard at least two weeks before the essay is due.

Final Reflection: There will be a final reflection due during exam period. This reflection is designed to help you think about the larger implications and significance of what we have covered this semester, what you have learned, and how it might shape your understanding of history and events going forward. This is not a major, high-stakes “final” exam or project, but rather a more open-ended, relatively low-stakes opportunity to synthesize and take stock of what you have learned.

Grading:

Participation	15%
Short Exercises	15%
In-Semester Reflection	15%
Papers (together)	40%
Final Reflection	15%

IN-CLASS BEHAVIOR

Behaviors such as frequent tardiness, leaving early, packing up to leave before class is over, sleeping, eating, talking when others are speaking, texting, checking email, wearing headphones/earbuds, using social media, and doing work for other classes have a strong negative effect on your own learning as well as on your classmates' ability to concentrate in class. Please make the effort to respect the class and your classmates—avoid or minimize disruption and distraction and help create an engaged, positive environment in class!

Laptop or other device use should be restricted to things directly relevant to class—primarily note-taking and consulting course readings or other online course resources. I reserve the right

to request that people close laptops and/or shut down/put away other devices if they become a distraction or if in-class activity would benefit from it.

DUE DATES AND LATE WORK

All assignments are officially due at the time specified in the assignment. Meeting these due dates is important for the pacing of the class, for maintaining a high level of informed, substantive discussion, for in-class activities based on assignments, and for the way in which assignments are designed to build upon one another.

Work that is turned in up to a week after its due date will be accepted with a 5% grade penalty. If you need more time than that, please contact me in order to make a plan.

My goal is to make sure you are able to complete the required work and get what you want out of the class, but that requires clear communication and planning in the event of major challenges.

IMPORTANT: In order to be counted and graded, all work besides the final reflection must be turned in by the end of reading period (currently scheduled as Tuesday, December 5) unless you have contacted me and we have agreed upon another specific plan.

In general, if you have any kind of problem that interferes with your work for the class, please consult with me as soon as possible.

HONOR CODE STATEMENT

All work in this course is governed by the George Mason University [honor code](#):

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: **Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.***

More information can also be found at the GMU [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

AI USAGE POLICY (DON'T)

The use of Chat GPT or other "AI" language models to complete assignments for this class is forbidden and constitutes an honor code violation. There are several reasons for this.

First, the writing you are asked to do in this course is not simply a product but a process--you are meant to learn something by conceptualizing, describing, and organizing information, ideas, and arguments. The process is crucial to the purpose of the assignment and to your overall learning. This reflects the idea that you don't *really* understand something until you have to explain it. Writing, in this case, is thinking.

Second, while language modeling can often (but definitely not always) produce a plausible-looking piece of text in a variety of genres, these programs do not actually "know" anything--they are not using information and facts in the way that we understand them, but are simply (or not so simply, really) putting together words in combinations that it has algorithmically determined reflect the genre and style that the prompt calls for. That, in essence, means that it will make stuff up if it sounds good. And it also means that its conclusions and arguments are usually bland, generic, and overly general. Writing, in this case, is emphatically not thinking.

Third, and more traditionally, this is a form of plagiarism—turning in work that you did not produce and presenting it as your own.

Crafting an effective prompt and learning how to use language models are certainly skills that involve analytical thinking and are worth developing in certain contexts... but given the goals and nature of the work you are asked to do in this course, this is not an appropriate place to do so.

OTHER POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Important Administrative Dates

Last day to add: Mon., Aug. 30

Last day to drop without tuition penalty: Tues., Sept. 7

Final drop deadline (50% tuition refund): Tues., Sept. 14

Unrestricted Withdrawal period (no tuition refund): Wed., Sept. 15-Mon., Sept. 27

Selective Withdrawal period: Tues., Sept. 28-Wed., Oct. 27

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ods.gmu.edu) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

GMU Email Accounts

Students must use their Mason email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

Useful Resources

Writing Center (writingcenter.gmu.edu): (703) 993-1200.

Counseling and Psychological Services (caps.gmu.edu): SUB I, Room 3129, (703) 993-2380.

University Catalog: catalog.gmu.edu.

Other university policies: universitypolicy.gmu.edu.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Books

The books listed below are required reading for this class and have been ordered at the GMU Barnes and Noble in the Johnson Center. They are also available through online merchants like Amazon, which sometimes offer better prices.

As noted below, some of the books are available electronically from Mason University Libraries (<https://library.gmu.edu>) (some can be fully downloaded in PDF form, some can be read online, temporarily downloaded, or partially downloaded).

In general, I still recommend having a hard copy that you own and can mark up, write in, flip through, and bring with you to class ... but the electronic versions are free from the library, so that can help you control your textbook costs as you see fit. Regardless of the format you choose, you should always bring the reading to class in some form that you can consult and refer to during discussion.

- Calloway, Colin G. *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. An electronic version of this book can be accessed and temporarily downloaded (and up to 97 pages can be permanently downloaded) from ProQuest Ebook Central, via Mason University Libraries: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/lib/GMU/detail.action?docID=273199&pq-origsite=primo>.
- Kelley, Sean M. *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare: A Journey into Captivity from Sierra Leone to South Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. An electronic version of this book can be permanently downloaded via Mason University Libraries, either as a single file from ProQuest Ebook Central (<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/lib/GMU/detail.action?docID=4443602&pq-origsite=primo>) or as individual chapter files from JSTOR: https://www-jstor-org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/10.5149/9781469627694_kelley.
- Lepore, Jill. *Book of Ages: The Life and Opinions of Jane Franklin*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. Paperback edition, Vintage Books, 2014.
- White, Sam. *A Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe's Encounter with North America*. Harvard University Press, 2017. An electronic version of this book can be permanently downloaded via Mason University Libraries either as a single file from Degruyter (<https://www-degruyter-com.mutex.gmu.edu/document/doi/10.4159/9780674981331/html>) or as individual chapter files from JSTOR (<https://www-jstor-org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/j.ctv24trb86>).

Articles, Book Chapters, and Primary Sources

Links to additional required readings listed on the syllabus are available in the “Schedule and Readings” section of the Blackboard site. Usually, these are links to articles or book chapters via the Mason University Libraries’ database subscriptions. Occasionally, they may be scanned PDFs, images, or links to external websites (newspaper or magazine articles, blogs, social media posts, etc...).

Other readings may be handed out in class or distributed electronically, and those will also be considered part of the required reading.

You should always have a either a hard copy of the reading or a device that you can use to consult and refer to the readings in class.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

WEEK ONE: WELCOME TO COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA

M, Aug. 21: Course Introduction

W, Aug. 23: The Medieval Worlds of North America and Europe

Reading:

- Sam White, *A Cold Welcome*, Introduction (pp. 1-9).

WEEK TWO: OLD WORLDS INTO NEW WORLDS

M, Aug. 28: European Expansion, from Africa to the Americas

Reading:

- Sam White, *A Cold Welcome*, Ch. 1 (pp. 9-27).

W, Aug. 30: The Spanish and their European Challengers in North America

Reading:

- Sam White, *A Cold Welcome*, Chs. 2-4 (pp. 28-87).

WEEK THREE: CONTACT AND CONFLICT IN NORTH AMERICA

M, Sept. 4: No Class-Labor Day

W, Sept. 6: The Beginnings of English Colonization

Reading:

- Sam White. *A Cold Welcome*, beginning and end of Ch. 5 (pp. 88-89, 103-108), all of Ch. 6 (109-131), and the middle of Ch. 7 (pp. 134 [start with paragraph that begins at the bottom of the page]-149).

WEEK FOUR: COLONIAL STRUGGLES & SURVIVAL

M, Sept. 11: Founding French Canada

Reading:

- Sam White, *A Cold Welcome*, Ch. 9.

W, Sept. 13: Saving Jamestown

Reading:

- Sam White, *A Cold Welcome*, Ch. 10 and Conclusion.

WEEK FIVE: CREATING ENGLISH SOCIETIES IN NORTH AMERICA

M, Sept. 18: Two Modes of English Colonization: The Chesapeake and New England

Reading:

- “Passengers to the New World: Two Lists of Emigrants, Bound for New England and Virginia” (1635)

W, Sept. 20: The Growth of the Chesapeake and New England

WEEK SIX: MAKING RACE AND SLAVERY IN THE ENGLISH ATLANTIC

M, Sept. 25: The Caribbean and the Rise of Slavery

Reading:

- Edward B. Rugemer, “The Development of Mastery and Race in the Comprehensive Slave Codes of the Greater Caribbean during the Seventeenth Century,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (July 2013): 429-458.

W, Sept. 27: Constructing Race in a Colonial World

WEEK SEVEN: COMMERCE AND COMMODITIES IN THE ENGLISH ATLANTIC

M, Oct. 2: Slavery and the Expanding Economy of British America

W, Oct. 4: Mercantile Society and the Slave Trade

Reading:

- Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare*, Introduction, Chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-51).

WEEK EIGHT: AFRICA & AFRICANS IN THE ERA OF THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

T, Oct. 10 (NOTE: Tuesday Meeting) Africa and the Middle Passage

Reading:

- Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare*, Chs. 3-5 (pp. 53-120).

W, Oct. 11: South Carolina and Georgia

WEEK NINE: PLANTATION SOCIETY IN NORTH AMERICA

M, Oct. 16: Slavery and African Identities in North America

Reading:

- Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare*, Chs. 6-9 (pp. 108-195).

W, Oct. 18: Continental Competition in Eastern North America

WEEK TEN: THE FIRST CRISIS OF EMPIRE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

M, Oct. 23: The Seven Years' War

Reading:

- Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, Introduction (pp. 3-18).

W, Oct. 25: North America in 1763

Reading:

- Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, Ch. 1 (pp. 19-46).

WEEK ELEVEN: EMPIRES, FRONTIERS, AND BORDERS**M, Oct. 30:** Land**Reading:**

- Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, Ch. 2 (pp. 47-65).

W, Nov. 1: Pontiac's War and the Proclamation Line**Reading:**

- Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, Chs. 3-4 (pp. 66-111).

WEEK TWELVE: THE CHANGING FACE OF NORTH AMERICAN EMPIRE**M, Nov. 6:** Canada Becomes British**Reading:**

- Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, ch. 5 (pp. 112-132).

W, Nov. 8: Empires Old and New**Reading:**

- Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, chs. 6-7, and Epilogue (pp. 133-171).

WEEK THIRTEEN: CULTURE, FAMILY, AND DAILY LIFE**M, Nov. 13:** Cultural Trends: Enlightenment, Awakening, Print, Consumption**W, Nov. 15:** Brothers and Sisters**Reading**

- Lepore, *Book of Ages*, pp. xi-100.

WEEK FOURTEEN: JANE AND BENJAMIN**M, Nov. 20:** Connections and Relations**Reading**

- Lepore, *Book of Ages*, pp. 103-172.

W, Nov. 22: No Class—Thanksgiving Break**WEEK FIFTEEN: LIVING THROUGH REVOLUTION****M, Nov. 27:** Life and Old Age in a New Nation**Reading**

- Lepore, *Book of Ages*, pp. 175-249.

W, Nov. 29: Review and Catch-up Day**READING DAYS, MONDAY, DEC. 4 TO TUESDAY, DEC. 5.**

Important: All outstanding work besides the final assignment must be turned in by the end of Tuesday, Dec. 5 in order to be graded and counted, unless I have agreed in writing to a specific alternative arrangement.