American History to 1865

Course description and goals

This course is an introduction to the history of America from pre-Columbian times through the Civil War.

The topics covered include exploration, colonization, Native American responses, the rise of race slavery, the American Revolution, Anglo-American expansion, slave life and culture, industrialization, reform, disunion, the Civil War, emancipation, and Reconstruction. The emphasis will be not just on facts but also on issues that often resonate today.

In addition, through reading, writing, discussion, and close analysis of primary documents, the course is intended to introduce students to history as an ever-evolving academic discipline.

Students will acquire a basic understanding of key issues in American history through the Civil War. Students will gain critical reading skills, learning to appraise both primary and secondary source material with a critical eye. Finally, students will learn to use historical evidence to build and support their own arguments.

How to approach this course

College is an awesome thing. You get to hang with smart people and learn, learn, learn. Don’t miss the opportunity this and every other class presents. You won’t get a do-over—not for this class, not for college, and not for life. Commit yourself to making conscious decisions that maximize your experience at every stage.

For the sake of this and every other class, where will you sit? Whom will you sit with? Will you introduce yourself to the professor the first week? Will you stay on top of readings? Take notes on them? Will you let yourself get excited? Will you speak up in section? Will you challenge yourself? Will you make yourself accountable?

The net effect is cumulative. But if you screw up one day—and you will—put it behind you. Redouble your efforts thereafter.

Sit up front. Take notes like crazy, on readings, in lectures, and during recitation sections. Talk to your TA in advance about your paper. Write drafts early. Reread and revise. Be proactive. Wonder about things. Let your learning transform you.

Weak students learn as little as necessary. Strong students learn as much as possible.

Which will you be?
Readings: textbook, articles, and documents


The text is available at the university book store. You are free to use either a paper or a digital version, but if you use a digital text, you are responsible for syncing the pagination of the assigned readings. The pagination in the syllabus is for hard copy of the 2014 4th edition only.

Additional required readings are posted to D2L. These will be the focus of your recitation meetings. They include the articles listed below as well as a course document collection.

Please download and print these items now so you can take hard copy with you to your recitation meetings.

Assigned articles (posted on D2L—download and print now!)


Document collection (posted on D2L—download and print now!)

Reading assignments for most weeks include primary source documents connected to the week’s lecture topics. These documents have been compiled into a single PDF that you can download and print from D2L.

Written by historical figures in their own time, these documents are the materials historians use to reconstruct the past. Read them and think: Now you are the historian.

Franquelin’s map of the Mississippi River, circa 1682. 
*Courtesy the Library of Congress*
Grades, grades, grades, grades, grades, grades,

Exams (2). (30%) There will be two essay exams (a midterm and a final) in this course. Each counts for 15% of your final grade. The final exam will not be cumulative. The date and time of the final exam are determined by the university and are posted in the class schedule below. Bring bluebooks to all exams.

Quizzes. (30%) Weekly short, objective, open-book quizzes based on readings will be administered online through Desire2Learn. Quizzes will each be open for one week, from 12 AM Sunday to 11:59 PM Saturday. While the quizzes are open book, collaboration of any kind is prohibited. Collaboration on quizzes will be considered a violation of the CU Honor Code. I will prosecute any and all suspected cases. Make-up quizzes will not be administered. Any quiz not completed by the weekly deadline will be recorded as a zero. For the purpose of computing your final grade, your three lowest quiz scores will be dropped from your average. Please note that you have 45 minutes to complete each quiz. You cannot start a quiz and come back to it beyond that timeframe. You must complete it in the allotted time. If you start but do not complete a quiz, your grade will be calculated on the basis of what you have done when the clock times out. If you sign up for the course late and miss an early-semester quiz, it will register as a 0 and, presuming you don’t have more than three such scores, count as one of your dropped grades.

Paper. (20%) You will write one three- to four-page paper this semester, choosing one of the approaches described at the end of this syllabus. The paper due date is in the class schedule.

Recitation/Participation. (20%) You are expected to engage in lively, thoughtful, and informed discussion in your recitation meetings. All assignments and readings are to be done ahead of time. Because you cannot participate if you are not in class, your participation grade will reflect your recitation attendance. More than one unexcused section absence will count against your final grade.

Studies show that laptops and other electronic devices significantly undermine most classroom learning environments.* As a consequence, such devices are not permitted in this class. Notes should be taken by hand. Laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other electronic devices should be turned off and stowed out of sight. Please see the professor before class if you need to have a cell phone on for a crisis situation. Otherwise, each use of an electronic device in class will result in the reduction of your final grade by one full letter.

Attendance at both lectures and recitation meetings is expected. Because lecture material may well present a view that is different from that found in the readings, it will be difficult to do well in this course if you miss class. Do not rely on note-taking services. The notes they generate can be rife with errors and misinformation.

Leaving the room during class is disruptive and distracting to everyone else in the room. Please use the restroom and make necessary phone calls before class begins.

Athletes and others who must miss class meetings for travel on official university business are expected to provide their TAs with a full schedule at the beginning of term and to remind their TAs before each absence. Otherwise the absence will be considered unexcused. You are

Policies (cont’d.)

responsible for all the material covered in missed section meetings and lectures.

**Late papers:** In recognition of the fact that everyone deals with scheduling conflicts, family emergencies, and other crises at some point, **late papers will be accepted without penalty so long as they are turned in within a three-day grace period following the paper due date. You do not need permission to utilize this grace period, nor do you need to provide a reason.** Simply submit your paper within the allotted three days, and there will be no penalty. Easy!

Extensions beyond this three-day grace period will only be granted at Professor Fenn’s discretion and only in the event of an extreme illness or family emergency that keeps you away from class for more than one week. You must contact Professor Fenn by email as soon as possible, and you must provide appropriate documentation of your illness or family emergency.

**Make-up exams** will only be administered in the event of extreme illness or family emergency. You must provide appropriate documentation of your illness or emergency, and you must contact Professor Fenn within three days of the original mid-term date in order to schedule a make-up exam. Make-up exams are likely to differ from regular exams, and they will be administered at the convenience of the professor and the TAs. You must make this work with your schedule.

**Make-up quizzes** will not be administered. For the purpose of computing your final grade, your three lowest quiz scores will be dropped from your quiz average. **If you sign up for the course late and miss an early-semester quiz, it will register as a 0 and, presuming you don’t have more than three such scores, count as one of your dropped grades.**

**Accommodation in support of disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to Professor Fenn a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by email at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see **Temporary Injuries guidelines** under the Quick Links at the Disability Services website and discuss your needs with Professor Fenn.

**Absences due to religious observances:** Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, you are expected to provide Professor Fenn with a list of dates by the third week of class and to plan in advance so you have access to someone else’s notes for the class missed. You are not exempt from readings and assignments for these absences. See **campus policy regarding religious observances** for full details.

**Classroom Behavior:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the **policies on classroom behavior** and the **student code**.

**Discrimination and harassment:** The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs. The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining
Policies (cont’d.)

a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU’s Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU-Boulder’s Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the OIEC website.

Academic Honesty: All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of the institution. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible of violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to non-academic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at http://honorcode.colorado.edu. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, ask your TA or Professor Fenn before you write your paper!

Class schedule & assignments (subject to change at the professor’s discretion)

WEEK ONE
1. January 11: Discoveries 01: The First Americans
- Please read the course syllabus thoroughly.
- Created Equal, pp. 1–12
- D2L documents, 2–7 (The Columbus Letter, 1494)
- D2L article: Charles Mann, “1491”

2. January 13: Discoveries 02: Europeans Discover Another World
- Created Equal, pp. 25–35, 51–63
- D2L documents, 9–15 (Jesuit Missionary Paul Le Jeune Describes the Montagnais Indians; A Keresan Pueblo Man Explains the Pueblo Revolt)
- D2L article: Colin G. Calloway, New Worlds for All (excerpt)

WEEK TWO
3. January 20: The Columbian Exchange
- Created Equal, 12–24
- D2L documents, 8–9 (A Mexica [Aztec] Indian Describes Spanish Horses; A Micmac Indian Chides the French)
- D2L article: Colin G. Calloway, New Worlds for All (excerpt)

WEEK THREE
4. January 25: Colonization: New Spain and New France
- Created Equal, pp. 25–35, 51–63
- D2L documents, 9–15 (Jesuit Missionary Paul Le Jeune Describes the Montagnais Indians; A Keresan Pueblo Man Explains the Pueblo Revolt)

5. January 27: Colonization: Virginia
- Created Equal, pp. 35–38
- D2L documents, 15–17 (Starving Time in Virginia; Colonial Outposts as Male Enclaves [2 documents])
- D2L article: Edmund S. Morgan, “The Labor Problem at Jamestown”

WEEK FOUR
6. February 1: Colonization: New England
- Created Equal, pp. 38–50, 64–78
- D2L documents, 17–21 (Puritan Leaders Decry Price-Gouging and Explain the Meaning of a “Just Price”; Roger Williams Calls for Religious Freedom)

7. February 3: Race Slavery: The Terrible Transformation
Class schedule & assignments (cont’d)

- Created Equal, pp. 79-103
- D2L documents, 22-29 (An African Captive Describes the Middle Passage; An Ex-Slave Describes His Capture in West Africa)

WEEK FIVE
8. February 8: Eighteenth-Century American Society
   - Created Equal, pp. 105-132
   - D2L article: Ian K. Steele, “Susannah Johnson, Captive”

9. February 10: War & Social Tensions in Eighteenth-Century America
   - Created Equal, pp. 133-148
   - D2L documents, 29-34 (“Account of the Negro Insurrection”; The Regulator Rebellion)

WEEK SIX
10. February 15: The Imperial Crisis
    - Created Equal, pp. 149-158

11. February 17: Radical Republicanism & 18th-Century Military Culture
    - Created Equal, pp. 159-165, and in the appendix please read The Declaration of Independence, pp. A-1–A-2.

WEEK SEVEN
12. February 22: The Revolutionary War
    - Created Equal, pp. 166-185

13. February 24: Defining a Nation: From Confederation to Constitution
    - D2L article: Alfred F. Young, “The Framers of the Constitution and the ‘Genius’ of the People”

WEEK EIGHT – NO QUIZ THIS WEEK – MIDTERM EXAM
14. February 29: MIDTERM EXAM

15. March 2: The Federalist Era
    - Created Equal, pp. 215-240
    - D2L documents, 39-46 (The Alien Enemies Act; The Sedition Act of 1798; The Espionage Act of 1918; Executive Order 9066; Excerpts from the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001)

WEEK NINE
16. March 7: An Agrarian Republic
    - Created Equal, pp. 241-257 (up to “Transformations”)

17. March 9: Jacksonian Democracy
    - Created Equal, pp. 265-282

WEEK TEN (Complete this week’s quiz by Friday night, not Saturday night, to accommodate the change to Daylight Savings Time on March 13. Saturday quizzes may be rejected. Add a reminder to your calendar.)
18. March 14: Slavery, Textiles, and the Rise of King Cotton
    - Created Equal, pp. 257-264, 282-290
    - D2L documents, 47-60 (Elizabeth Keckly Describes Her Girlhood; Excerpts from David Walker’s Appeal; William Lloyd Garrison Responds to the Appeal)

19. March 16: Slave Resistance & African-American Culture
    - No reading for today. Take a breather, and work on your paper.

SPRING BREAK – BE SAFE – NO QUIZ THIS WEEK

WEEK ELEVEN – PAPERS DUE – NO QUIZ THIS WEEK
20. March 28: Industrialization: The Demise of the Trades
    - D2L documents, 60-71 (Walt Whitman, “A Song for Occupations,” 1855; “The Factory Bell”—Poem by a New Hampshire Mill Girl, 1844; Lyrics to Protesting Mill Workers’ Song, 1836; A Factory Operative Appeals to Reformers for Assistance; A Philadelphia Industrialist Reorganizes His Glass Factory, 1833)

21. March 30: Immigration, Accumulation, and Social Transformations (PAPER DUE BY 6 PM)
    - Created Equal, pp. 291-305

WEEK TWELVE
22. April 4: Reform in Antebellum America
    - Created Equal, pp. 305-309
    - D2L documents, 72-82 (The Declaration of the Seneca Falls Convention, 1848; Sojourner Truth’s Speech to the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention, 1851; A Frenchman’s View of American Prisons, 1853; Horace Mann on Public Education, 1848)
Class schedule & assignments (cont’d)

- **D2L article**: Christine Stansell, “Women, Children and the Uses of the Streets”

23. **April 6: Manifest Destiny**
   - **Created Equal**, pp. 309-324
   - **D2L documents**, 83-90 (Chief Seattle Describes the Differences between White Americans and Native Americans; John O’Sullivan, “The Great Nation of Futurity,” 1839; Henry David Thoreau Calls for Civil Disobedience, 1848)

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

24. **April 11: Paving the Road to War: The Politics of Disunion**
   - **Created Equal**, pp. 324-342

25. **April 13: The Civil War I: A House Divided**
   - **Created Equal**, pp. 343-351
   - **D2L documents**, 90-91 (The Confederate Victory at Fredericksburg: A Texas Soldier’s Account)

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

26. **April 18: The Civil War II: Union Victory**
   - **Created Equal**, pp. 352-368
   - **D2L documents**, 92-105 (A Firsthand Account of the New York City Draft Riots; A Union Soldier’s Poem for His Sister; An African American Soldier Appeals to Lincoln for Fair Treatment; A Tennessee Woman Spies for the Union Army)

27. **April 20: Reconstruction and the Triumph of White Supremacy**
   - **Created Equal**, pp. 369-392
   - **D2L documents**, 105-112 (Freedman Jourdan Anderson Writes to His Former Master; Excerpts from the Mississippi Black Code)
   - **D2L article**: Eric Foner, The Story of American Freedom (excerpt)

**WEEK FIFTEEN**

28. **April 25: CATCH-UP DAY**
29. **April 27: CATCH-UP DAY**
30. **May 1, 4:30 p.m.: Final Exam**

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Paper assignment: general tips

Your paper should be three to four double-spaced pages (no more than 1500 words) in length, with 1-inch margins, in a standard 11- or 12-point font such as Calibri or Times New Roman. (Please do not ask if you can write more. Pare back extraneous words instead.) It should have a compelling title, and it should be organized in a clear, logical fashion. Pay close attention to your writing as well as your analysis. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence, and your tone should be formal, free of colloquialisms and contractions. Avoid long, awkward, confusing sentences. Write in the active (not passive) voice, and make sure your paper is free of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style. Make sure your paper has page numbers. Write multiple drafts, and proofread them repeatedly.

This is not a research paper. You may want to do a little outside research, but you are neither required nor expected to do so. The point of the paper is to read closely, think deeply, and write clearly.

Please make sure your paper adheres to the standards of the CU honor code. If you use someone else’s words, they must be enclosed in quotation marks. Changing a few words or “tweaking” someone else’s prose is not acceptable. If you use someone else’s ideas, you must either quote directly or restate the idea entirely in your own words. And even then, a citation of some kind is required. For the purposes of this class, parenthetical citations (e.g., [Jones et al., 130], [Stansell, 312], [Documents Collection, 83]), endnotes, or footnotes are all acceptable. If you use parenthetical citations, please provide a list of works cited. If you use endnotes or footnotes, such a list is not necessary.

Papers must be submitted online to the D2L dropbox, which automatically scans them for plagiarism through a service called TurnItIn.com. **Your TA may also request a hard copy of your paper.**

You have your choice of two paper approaches as described below. Indicate clearly which option you are pursuing.

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Write in the active voice

Here is an example of active voice: “The robber shot the dog.”

Here is an example of passive voice: “The dog was shot.”

See how the passive voice avoids causation? See how direct and clear the active voice is?

Here is another example of active voice: “The hurricane destroyed the ships.” Here is the passive voice: “The ships were destroyed.”

Choose active over passive voice.
Paper assignment: pick one

Paper Option A--Primary Source Analysis

Choose one of the primary source documents you have read for this course. (Don’t leap ahead. Choose one of the documents we have already read.) Your task is to read the document very closely and then to write a three- to four-page essay analyzing it as a historical source. Treat your reader as an outsider, someone not in this class but smart and interested in the kind of history your document illuminates. You’ll want to describe the document briefly and then proceed to your analysis of the ways in which it might (and might not) be useful. Some of the questions you may want to address are listed below. Some questions, of course, are unanswerable. That is part of the challenge of studying history.

1. Who wrote the document? (In some instances you may not know. This can be interesting in its own right and may give you the opportunity to speculate about the author on the basis of the document’s contents.)
2. Why was the document created?
3. What is the document’s historical context?
4. Who is the intended audience?
5. What can we learn from the document?
6. Does the document contain any interesting omissions? (Sometimes a document can be as interesting for what it does not say as for what it does say.)
7. What are the document’s limitations?
8. What questions does the document raise for you?

Paper Option B--Secondary Source Analysis

The object of this assignment is for you to learn how historians think and work, how they use evidence, and how they construct an argument. Choose one of the secondary-source articles posted on D2L that you have read for this course. Make your selection carefully. You may find that some of the articles--particularly that include footnotes, endnotes, or essays on sources--are more suitable than others. Once you have chosen your article, your task is to write a three- to four-page appraisal of the author’s argument and the author’s use of evidence to support it.

You should start by introducing the article and by summarizing its argument. What is the “takeaway”? What is the main point the author wants you to get out of reading the essay? Are there several main points? Then, have a look at the evidence used to support the author’s claims. What kind of evidence does the author use? How does the author use it? Is the meaning of the evidence clear? Or is it ambiguous? Does the evidence suggest additional research questions for future historians to pursue? And finally, are you convinced by the author’s argument? Why or why not?

Bison Dance of the Mandan Indians in front of their medicine lodge. Hand colored aquatint after Karl Bodmer, courtesy the Library of Congress