# US History I (21:512:201): Syllabus

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Instructor information

Christopher (Chris) Mitchell
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Instagram: christophermitchelhistorian

Office hours

Monday/Wednesday: 3-5 p.m. and by appointment

Required readings

Alan Taylor, American Colonies: The Settling of North America (Penguin)

Deborah Gray White, Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South (W.W. Norton)
**E-book versions strongly recommended. Other readings will be posted to Blackboard.

Course description

The topic of this class is the development of the United States dating from period of the encounter between Native Americans and Europeans in the fifteenth century to the conclusion of the US Civil War. Over this long period of time, millions of documents and artifacts were produced and preserved, giving historians and other scholars of the past some of the tools we need to understand how the United States evolved into a distinct set of cultures shaped by African, Native American, and European people; an integrated capitalist economy based on geographic expansion, racial slavery, and industrial production; and a distinctive form of government organized by the federal system. We also have the insights of professional historians and scholars of the past, who have used these documents to interpret the past and contest the interpretations of other scholars. Historians and other scholars of the past provide us important analytic tools to think about how interpreting the past can explain the problems of the present, as well as drawing critical attention to the ways in which the past is sometimes manipulated, distorted, and misused in popular culture and political discourse.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- identify, note and detail important facts from historical reading, including chronologies as well as names of historically significant actors, ideas and concepts, cultural artifacts, geographical locations, and significant events
- distinguish between primary sources and the historiography (or secondary sources), and apply those concepts to various readings in the class
- analyze primary sources and evaluate historical claims

Students will also acquire some of the following academic skills:
• how to establish objective criteria for defining the historical facts using a collaborative Wiki
• how to engage classmates in critical discussions of historical material in a digital environment using Blackboard features like Discussion Board and Voice Thread
• how to develop and write a brief paper that evaluates the argument and evidence presented by a major historical work
• how to complicate simplistic historical narratives by presenting historical information analytically as well as descriptively on shorter written assignments and an essay-based comprehensive examination
Disability statement

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

- **Students with Disabilities**: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact ODS, register, have an initial appointment, and provide documentation. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and documentation submitted) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided to the student. The student must give the LOA to each course instructor, followed by a discussion with the instructor. This should be completed as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS: (973) 353-5375 or ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

- **Religious Holiday Policy and Accommodations**: Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule. The Division of Student Affairs is available to verify absences for religious observance, as needed: (973) 353-5063 or DeanofStudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

- **Counseling Services**: Counseling Center Room 101, Blumenthal Hall, (973) 353-5805 or http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/.

- **Students with Temporary Conditions/Injuries**: Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury that is adversely affecting their ability to fully participate in their courses should submit a request for assistance at: https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu.

- **Students Who are Pregnant**: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist students with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

Gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment

- Students experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, should know that help and support are available.

- To report an incident, contact the **Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance**: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. To submit an incident report: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm.
• To speak with a staff member who is confidential and does NOT have a reporting responsibility, contact the **Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance**: (973) 353-1918 or run.vpva@rutgers.edu.

• Please note that the instructor for this course is a mandated Title IX reporter and cannot be considered a confidential source. Although class members may to speak to the instructor about sexual harassment and assault, the instructor is mandated by law to report to the Title IX officer. Students who wish to speak to a confidential source should consider contacting the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance.

**Name and gender pronoun**

This class affirms all forms of gender expression and identity. If class members prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let the instructor know. Class members should feel safe to correct the instructor or any member of the class on names or gender pronouns, or if class members do not wish to use a gender pronoun. Class members who have any questions or concerns should not hesitate to contact the instructor.

**Libraries and learning centers**

**Rutgers University Libraries**
The most important resource at Rutgers is the University library system, which can be accessed at libraries.rutgers.edu. Many resources from the library may be directly accessed on-line, including most of the University’s scholarly journals, books, reference guides, music, visual materials, and films. This class will make extensive use of the library’s resources and students are encouraged to explore the library website. In addition, Rutgers-Newark has a library location at the John Cotton Dana Library on the main campus, which also houses the Institute of Jazz Archives. When the Dana Library is open during regular school hours, class members can contact the front help desk at (973)353-5901.

**The Writing Center**
The Writing Center (http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter), located in Room 126 of Conklin Hall, offers writing tutoring and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes on the Rutgers-Newark campus. Their tutors work to help students become more independent readers and writers capable of responding well to the demands of writing within the university. The Writing Center is available to them free of charge and encourage them to take advantage of their services to strengthen their reading, writing, and research skills.

**The Learning Center**
The Learning Center (https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/learning-center) located in Room 140 of Bradley Hall, provides tutoring services for a range of subjects in either small groups or one-on-one. Our tutors are successful undergraduates who are trained to clarify important concepts with the understanding that everyone can learn and improve given sufficient time, attention, and encouragement. To properly benefit from tutoring, the Learning Center requires students to come prepared to engage in tutoring sessions as an active participant, having attended class,
read the required textbook or readings, taken and reviewed their notes, and attempted their assignments. The Learning Center also hosts a series of workshops over the course of the semester on a range of success topics each semester and provides academic coaching sessions where a learning specialist helps students identify areas for improvement and select from a range of possible solutions. Then the specialist provides feedback over time until student performance improves.
Statement on academic honesty and plagiarism

**Plagiarism will not be accepted.** Students will submit all electronic work to Blackboard through Turnitin or SafeAssign, and students must sign the University honor pledge when submitting any assignments. Any student who commits plagiarism or other acts of academic dishonesty will be investigated by the Office of Academic Integrity, and may result in further disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes unauthorized collaboration on homework assignments and, of course, cheating on in-class assignments.

Assignments must include the following pledge: “**On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination / assignment.**”

From the University’s Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students: “**Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source stored in print, electronic or other medium is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: ”to paraphrase Plato's comment..." and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.**”
Classroom policies

**Attendance**
Class members should log in at least once each weekday to ensure their connection to Blackboard discussion boards and other collaborative assignments. Participation in wiki, discussion board, and other collaborative activities may be used to account for attendance in on-line courses. Class members should do this even if the course is asynchronous, or organized with no set time. If on-line classes or sessions are scheduled synchronously, then pay attention to when required log in times.

**Absences and documented excuses**
Occasional illness (including illness of a child, parent, or other dependent), serious injury, transportation delays, and bereavement are inevitable. However, it is not the instructor’s responsibility to “catch you up.” If class members must miss a class meeting, please assume personal responsibility for work missed. Exchange contact information with classmates to help keep up with lectures or discussions missed. **Given the time constraints and other classmates’ needs, students should not expect the instructor to repeat or summarize a lecture via e-mail or during office hours.**

The instructor can only excuse absences with proper documentation, and all students who miss classes should email or meet with the instructor briefly before class in order to receive an excuse. Proper documentation should be dated and include a signature. Proper documentation includes physician or medical care provider notes (including for sick children and dependents), court documents, obituaries, and formal requests from administration or faculty. Students who miss more than a day of classes are strongly encouraged to self report their absences at the following website: [https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/). In addition, students with extended absences (longer than two weeks) should notify the Dean of Students at Rutgers-Newark. University policy stipulates that work scheduling conflicts and family vacations will not be excused. Students who simply e-mail the instructor without documentation, or who fail to follow up with documentation will not be excused.

Class members will be required to check in on discussion board and other collaborative assignments where attendance can be noted. Failure to do so may result in an undocumented absence. Department policy maintains that students are permitted four unexcused absences, after which they will begin to lose 5 percentage points of their final grade. Students with more than eight absences should withdraw from the course.

**E-management and organization**
Students must participate in all aspects of the course, including Blackboard assignments. Students must also regularly check their email to attend to any class-related business over the course of the session. The digital classroom requires continual electronic communication between instructor and student, and failure to communicate regularly via email will not count as an excuse for missed/late assignments or disorganization. Class members must have a working RUID and password, as well as coordination of email and Blackboard. *The instructor is*
not responsible for registering individual students for a username or gaining access to Blackboard, and students are responsible for any and all material and instructions posted on Blackboard regardless.

Student conduct on-line
Please be respectful of other class members, the instructor, the classroom community, and the university setting. The classroom community will not tolerate ad hominem attacks on other class members or the instructor, including attacks couched in racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, discrimination based on ability, and religious intolerance. Class members who are severely disruptive may be asked to leave the forum; such students will be marked absent for the day and may lose credit in more substantive ways.

Late work
Late work will be accepted, so students should not email the instructor to ask if they can submit work late. However, work submitted late without a documented excuse will be penalized 10% per class day late. Work submitted after five days will not be penalized more than 50%, but 50% represents the highest amount of credit students can earn after five days.

Readings
Students must complete the readings before each class meeting, prepared to bring questions and comments for class. Students must purchase or otherwise obtain copies of the required texts. All other texts will be available on the course blackboard page. Students are required to bring the readings to class in order to reference page numbers and other references to the readings in podcasts. This is an intensive summer course of study, and students will read an average of 30-40 pages per class meeting. Although on a handful of days we will exceed that limit, many days will consist of only 15-20 pages of readings. Some students may find the amount of reading difficult, and such students should make plans to dedicate extra hours in order to successfully complete the course readings. Again, this is a summer course, and the amount of reading we will cover in six weeks is ordinarily covered in about three months during a regular semester, so please plan study time accordingly. The University and the instructor suggest that students schedule or otherwise dedicate 5-10 class hours per week reading and studying for this course. The instructor expects students to complete all the assigned readings before the date they appear on the calendar, and students should expect the instructor to call on them and ask questions about the readings at any time. In addition to the readings listed on the course calendar, students are responsible for reading all supplemental materials, including the syllabus, the writing guide, and all prompts found on Blackboard.
Course work

Class wiki (20%). The class wiki is a collaborative project that students will contribute to at least twice a week. The class wiki meets our knowledge-based learning goals by providing students with the opportunity to collaboratively note important people, events, and key terms by providing references to readings and verified external sources. For example, you might write or contribute to an entry on the Salem Witch Trials, Phillis Wheatley, or Manifest Destiny.

Voicethread primary source analysis (20%). Each week, a visual or audio primary source will be posted to Blackboard using Voicethread. Voicethread allows students to record comments after viewing an image or listening to a clip. Voicethread assignments address the conceptual learning outcomes by exploring the relationship between historical arguments and primary sources. Students will be asked to analyze the primary source in the context of what they have learned each week. In many cases, class members will have the opportunity to look at some of the primary sources from the readings in greater depth in order to think about the relationship between historical arguments and the interpretation of primary source evidence.

Discussion Board (20%). Each week, a discussion board assignment will organize and synthesize the readings into a class-wide conversation. The discussion board meets the course’s critical learning outcomes by prompting students to raise questions and comments about the readings, how they fit together, and how we might use them to think about the historical events and actors described and explained in our readings.

Historiographical essay (15%). Students will complete a historiographical essay consisting of no fewer than 1,200 words, a more detailed prompt of which will be made available on Blackboard. Historiographical essays will examine at least one of the required books for this class (Taylor, American Colonies or White, Ar’n’t I a Woman?) or no fewer than three historical articles on a specific topic raised by the class, at least one of which must be drawn from the classroom syllabus. The essay will be due on Friday, June 26, no later than 11:59 p.m.

Final examination (25%). Students will complete and submit a comprehensive final examination on Thursday, July 2, no later than 11:59 p.m.

Grade scale (for grades submitted to transcripts):
A: 89.5-100
B+: 85-89.4
B: 79.5-84.9
C+: 75-79.4
C: 69.5-74.9
D: 59.5-69.4
F: 0-59.4
Calendar of readings and assignments

The calendar is organized into weekly modules.

- Each Sunday during the day or evening your materials for the week will be posted. Your course materials will include: 1) readings on Blackboard, 2) readings from the assigned textbooks (Taylor or White), 3) presentations (podcasts, lectures, and other media), and on some weeks 4) library media. Complete the readings on your own time, or as per the instructions for assignments and presentations.
- Each Monday morning you will receive announcements of the week’s assignments and expectations.
- Each Monday and Tuesday assessments of the previous week’s course work will be conducted.
- **Assignments will be due every Saturday no later than 11:59 p.m. unless otherwise specified on the syllabus or on Blackboard.**

**Week 1: May 26-May 31**

**Course readings and materials**

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<th>Textbook reading</th>
<th>Presentation topics</th>
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<td>Primary source documents: 1) John Mandeville, from <em>The Travels of John Mandeville</em> (1356); 2) Iroquois Creation Myth; 3) Aztec accounts of the conquest of Tenochtitlán from <em>The Broken Spear</em> (1522-1530s); 3) Michel de Montaigne, “Of cannibals” (1580); 4) Encounter-era maps (ca. 1300s-1600s) in Jill Lepore, “Mapping the New World”</td>
<td>Taylor, <em>American Colonies</em>, Part I: Chapters 1-3 (all)</td>
<td>1) Introducing the syllabus and course learning goals; 2) Native American Civilizations: The Western Hemisphere before European Contact; 3) Religious Conflict, Demographic Crisis, Technological Innovation, and Luck: The Context of Iberian Expansion; 4) African History, the Evolution of Racial Slavery, and the Making of the Atlantic World Economy</td>
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**Assignments**

- **Wiki** Contribute to the wiki **two times** in reference to Week 1 readings
- **Voicethread** Complete Voicethread assignment commenting on visual primary sources
- **Discussion Board** Contribute to Discussion Board on *American Colonies*

**Week 2: June 1-June 7**

**Course readings and materials**

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<th>Textbook reading</th>
<th>Presentation topics</th>
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Assignments

Wiki
Contribute to the wiki three times in reference to Week 2 readings

Voicethread
Complete Voicethread assignment commenting on visual primary sources

Discussion Board
Contribute to Discussion Board on American Colonies

Week 3: June 8-June 14

Course readings and materials
Blackboard readings
Primary Source Documents and Essays: “Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century America”

Textbook reading
Taylor, American Colonies, Part II: Chapters 9, 11-12; Part III: Chapters 13-16, 18
**Please note that you are encouraged to complete the entire book this week. However, Chapters 10, 17, and 19 are optional

Presentation topics

Assignments

Wiki
Contribute to the wiki three times in reference to reference Week 3 readings

Voicethread
No Voicethread assignment for Week 3

Discussion board
Discussion Board 1: The Salem Witch Trials
Discussion Board 2: Evaluating the argument in American Colonies

Week 4: June 15-June 21

Course readings and materials
Blackboard readings
Primary Source Documents: Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (1819)

Library media
Film: “Rebellion to Revolution” on American History in Video Database (libraries.rutgers.edu)

Presentation topics
1) The Boston Resistance and the Radical Roots of the American Revolutionary War; 2) Law and Order in the Revolutionary Era: Fugitive Slaves, Loyalist Agitators, and Tax Resisters; 3) Early Republican Culture and Politics
Assignments

Wiki
Contribute to the wiki **two times** in reference to Week 4 readings

Voicethread
Contribute to Voicethread on “Rip Van Winkle”

Discussion Board
Contribute to Discussion Board on Early American Republic and Culture

Week 5: June 22-June 28

Course readings and materials

Blackboard readings
Primary source documents and essays: 1) “Reform and the Great Awakening in the Early Nineteenth Century;” 2) “Nationalism, Sectionalism, and Expansion in the Age of Jackson”
Primary source document: 1) “The Cherokee Memorials” (1829); 2) William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-glass for the White Man” (1833)

Textbook reading
Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman* Introduction-Chapter 3

Presentation topics
1) Abolition, Reform, and Social Uplift Movements in the Antebellum Era; 2) Slave Rebellions and Resistance; 3) The Trail of Tears; 4) The Annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American War: The Expansion of Slavery and the Transformation of the Western Economy

Assignments

Wiki
Contribute to the wiki **one time** in reference to Week 5 readings

Voicethread
Contribute to Voicethread on Apess and the Cherokee Memorials

Discussion Board
*No discussion board exercise for Week 5*

Essay
The Historiographical Essay is due no later than 11:59 p.m. **June 26**

Week 6: June 29-July 2

Course readings and materials

Blackboard readings
Primary source documents and essays: 1) “Careening toward Civil War;” 2) “The Civil War”

Textbook reading
White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?*, Chapters 4-6

Assignments

Wiki
*No wiki contributions required for Week 6*. Students may contribute up to two times to replace a poor grade or a zero on any two articles missed during the semester.

Voicethread
*No Voicethread assignment for Week 6*

Discussion Board
*No discussion board exercise for Week 6*

Final exam
The final examination is due no later than 11:59 p.m. **July 2**