

# AMERICAN HISTORY TO 1877

## HIST 2700 Fall 2006

M W F 9:30-10:20 am

Course website:

[www.usu.edu/history/faculty/mcinerney/classesmcinerney.htm](http://www.usu.edu/history/faculty/mcinerney/classesmcinerney.htm)

### Professor Daniel J. McInerney

Office: Main 323 Office Hours: M W F 10:45 am – 11:45 am

[I will meet with students outside of regular office hours *if* you make an appointment beforehand.]

Phone: 797.1283 E-mail: [danielj@hass.usu.edu](mailto:danielj@hass.usu.edu) (please include a *specific* "SUBJ" line)

**Graduate Assistant:** Charley L. Smith Office: Main 323

### COURSE GOALS

HIST 2700 is a survey of early American history designed to develop:

- historical thinking,
- the critical examination of primary sources,
- careful and thoughtful reading, and
- clear, coherent, and meaningful writing

The course examines events in American history from early native cultures to Reconstruction. We will explore these topics in several different ways, through lectures, descriptive histories, documents from the period, and contemporary studies of the past.

My intention is to familiarize you with:

- the general outline of events in American history,
- the ways in which people who lived through these events perceived their world,
- the ways in which historians analyze the record of the past, and
- the ways in which historians continually debate the meanings of the past.

In other words, the course serves as a general introduction to the scholarly study of the American experience--and of history in general. I hope it will fill some gaps in your knowledge, clarify your perceptions of the past, make you aware of important interpretive debates, and, most importantly, demonstrate what it means to analyze a people historically.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, class material can be made available in braille, large print, and audio format upon request.

*This syllabus defines your responsibilities as well as the course arrangements that I am obliged to maintain. If you do not think you can meet the stated requirements, I advise dropping the class.*

## REQUIRED BOOKS

- Daniel J. McInerney, *A Traveller's History of the USA* (Interlink)
- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (Vintage)
- Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Dover)

## CLASS WORK

Grades from 13 weekly quizzes and 3 essay exams form the basis of your final grade.

- *Weekly quizzes*: Each Friday, at the *beginning* of class, you will be given a quiz based on that week's reading assignment in the *Traveller's History*. Each quiz poses five multiple choice questions drawn from that week's reading in the *Traveller's History*. Each quiz is worth 10 points.

At the end of the semester, the lowest three quiz grades are dropped. The remaining ten grades are added up, with 100 as the highest possible sum.

- *Essay exams*: You will take a total of three essay exams:
  - Essay Exam I covers lecture material PLUS Ulrich's *Midwife's Tale*  
-date: Monday, October 2
  - Essay Exam II covers Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*  
-date: Monday, November 6
  - Essay Exam III covers lecture material since Exam I  
-date: Monday, December 11

- *Final grade*: Ten highest quiz scores + scores from Essay Exams I, II, and III.

At the end of the semester, if your total comes to:

- 400-360 points, your final grade will be in the A range
- 359-320 points, your final grade will be in the B range
- 319-280 points, your final grade will be in the C range
- 279-240 points, your final grade will be in the D range
- 239- 0 points, your final grade will be F

## IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT TESTING AND GRADES

ON QUIZZES, there are *NO* make-ups given. . . no “early” quizzes given . . . no late quizzes given. No exceptions, no exemptions, no excuses. Get the point?

If you are not present for a quiz, a grade of zero will be recorded. Hopefully, that will be one of your three lowest grades that I drop at the end of the semester.

ON ESSAY EXAMS, I maintain a strict policy on make-ups.

1. A make-up exam will be given **ONLY** for an urgent, compelling, and *documented* medical reason.
2. You must see me *immediately* about this absence, providing written verification of the reason for your absence. NOTE: A phone message or an e-mail alone won't do; you must see me personally **and** have documentation for your absence with you. No proof? No test.
3. Make-up essay exams will be more difficult than the regularly-scheduled exam.
4. There will be **ONE** day and **ONE** time period for all make-up essay exams:  
Saturday, Dec. 2, 9:00-9:50 am.

INCOMPLETES: A grade of "incomplete" is given only for special, extenuating circumstances, not for poor performance.

KEEP all quizzes and exams that are returned to you (in case any questions arise concerning your grades.)

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

I expect students to abide by the policies on academic honesty outlined on page 110 of the Fall '06 Schedule of Classes. Review this statement of University policy on cheating, falsification, and plagiarism.

## IN CLASS

I do not take attendance. Recognize that it pays to show up regularly.

- In class you hear the particular points of a lecture as well as the general context in which those points are raised. One without the other usually leads to problems on exams.
- In class you can ask for a clarification of confusing issues (rather than stumbling on a problem just before a test).
- By attending regularly, you do not depend on someone else's notes--notes that might turn out to be awful.
- In class you can work on a skill that the non-attender never develops: note-taking abilities. You cannot sharpen this talent just by *copying* notes but only by doing the work yourself: being a good listener, becoming familiar with material in its full form, and learning to discern, organize, and inter-relate the critical components of an argument. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of these skills inside and outside the university.
- In very practical terms, there are many announcements and note sheets in class that you will miss by not being present.
- If you miss class, I do *not* provide my notes to you.

## CONCERNING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

In class, I expect you to focus your attention on lecture and discussion material. Chatting with neighbors, reading newspapers, answering a ringing phone, and nodding off to dreamland are all pleasant activities--but during class they are rude and distracting. Worse still, they break down the *mutual* respect between students and teacher that I wish to maintain.

If you have no interest in the day's topics, don't bother showing up.

If you must talk, read, sleep, or make a call, do it outside the classroom. Inside, such behavior has no place--and it *will* result in a grade penalty.

If you are late for class, enter the room quietly and take a seat right by a door.

General rule? You show up on time; I end the class on time.

If you have a cell phone, pager, or beeper, turn the ringer off. If you forget to do so, please do not answer your phone during class.

If you have a question about lecture material during class, ask. You can figure out for yourself the importance of clearing up any possible confusion over lectures. Your comments and questions also benefit fellow students who might hesitate to raise the very same issues.

ESSAY EXAM: FOUR-PART EVALUATION SCALE

**PERTINENCE** of information (material in the essay directly relates to — and covers — the central issues posed in the question) **20%**

A	B	C	D	F	_____
20-18	17-16	15-14	13-12	11-0	

**ACCURACY** of information (essay statements are correct, verifiable, and precise; *in addition*, essay conforms to the basic rules of sentence and paragraph construction, grammar, and spelling) **20%**

A	B	C	D	F	_____
20-18	17-16	15-14	13-12	11-0	

**ORGANIZATION** of information (essay exhibits a clear and logical progression in its argument; statements made in a straightforward, understandable, and persuasive manner) **20%**

A	B	C	D	F	_____
20-18	17-16	15-14	13-12	11-0	

**EXPLANATION** of information (satisfactory and sufficient explanation of the problem under review; essay defines and explores key terms / concepts / issues / ideas related to the question; essay reflects the complexity and depth of the material under review; essay answers the “why” and “because” questions) **40%**

A	B	C	D	F	_____
40-36	35-32	31-28	27-24	23-0	

**TOTAL POINTS** .....

A	B	C	D	F
100-90	89-80	79-70	69-60	59-0

Remember that your paper will lose points for problems such as:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-factual or chronological errors</li> <li>-omission of key information</li> <li>-vagueness in answers</li> <li>-poor organization</li> <li>-confusing or contradictory arguments</li> <li>-creating an essay that <i>raises</i> more questions than it answers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-incorrect statements</li> <li>-omission of key explanations</li> <li>-wandering away from the question</li> <li>-writing an outline rather than an essay</li> <li>-grammatical/spelling errors that prevent a reader from making sense of your statements</li> <li>-mentioning (but not explaining) key issues</li> </ul> |
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**READING GUIDE FOR LAUREL THATCHER ULRICH,  
*A MIDWIFE'S TALE***

Ulrich's elegant, Pulitzer-Prize winning study is a fine example of what historians can do with the "raw material" of a primary source document. To look quickly and casually at the diary of Martha Ballard, one might think it offers little if anything of interest to historians. The diary appears to be filled with minute, mundane, and insignificant information about a small town in a small corner of America. But Professor Ulrich examines the material with care, skill, and historical sensitivity. She "teases out" meanings and perspectives that would easily escape a cursory review. "The problem," she argues, "is not that the diary is trivial but that it introduces more stories than can easily be recovered and absorbed" (25). In other words, the diary is not empty and inconsequential but overflowing with information and insight.

You may wonder how you will be able to make sense of a diary written by an "unknown" woman. Ulrich takes care of this problem. Part of the book is composed of extracts from Ballard's diary; most of the pages, however, are filled with Professor Ulrich's commentary on Ballard, her words, and her world. See pages 34 and 35 for Ulrich's statements on the organization and approach of her book.

Ulrich has built her study around an introduction, ten chapters, and an epilogue. Each chapter cites portions of Ballard's diary and examines how those entries illuminate a particular problem or issue or theme.

Read the work in preparation for an essay exam. On what issues should you focus your attention? Examine the following questions carefully.

What does the Ballard diary reveal about:

- midwifery
- notions of medicine prevalent at the time
- "social medicine"
- women's "place" in Revolutionary society
- the "social web"
- religious debates
- marriage customs and sexuality
- the structure of family and home life
- the emerging "professionalism" in medicine
- the "Malta War"

**READING GUIDE FOR HARRIET JACOBS,  
*INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL***

Harriet Jacobs endured a harrowing life as a slave in the antebellum South, went into hiding, made her way north, and wrote of her experiences in the book assigned in this class. The work is brief, straightforward, and engaging. It ranks as one of the key documents in American history because of its reflections on the slave experience—particularly from a woman's perspective. And it remains a widely-read and revealing account of African American life in nineteenth-century America.

As you read through Jacob's account of her life, pay particular attention to the following topics which the author addresses throughout the book:

-What kinds of hardships did Jacobs endure as a slave?

-According to Jacobs, who bore responsibility for the problem of slavery? Did Southerners and the South bear full and sole blame for the slave system?

-What were Jacobs's views of slaveholders?

-How did Jacobs manage to carve out some semblance of humanity and hope for herself while she was caught in the slave system?

-What were the various forms of resistance to the slave system in which Jacobs engaged?

-Did Jacobs see herself as a solitary, independent figure, one who acted in the way one might expect of a "rugged individual" and a "self-made" person? Or did Jacobs view herself in different terms?

-Consider the ways in which Jacobs discussed "freedom." In *her* view, was freedom something genuine and substantial? Or was freedom—for African Americans, slave or free—simply an illusion or a charade?

**INITIAL READING ASSIGNMENTS (later assignments will be posted on the course web site)**

Aug. 28 –Sept. 1:

Begin *A Midwife's Tale*

*Traveller's History*: pp. 1-18. Focus on:

- key geographical features of the present U.S.
- varieties of native cultures
- core values of native cultures
- reasons for European voyages and colonization
- consequences of contact between Indians and Europeans
- nature of Spanish colonization

quiz 1, Sept. 1

Sept. 4-8:

Continue *A Midwife's Tale*

*Traveller's History*: pp. 18-30. Focus on:

- key characteristics of French colonization
- key characteristics of English colonization
- Pilgrim, Puritan, and Quaker settlements
- material conditions of English colonies
- solutions to labor shortages
- nature of slave labor
- conflicts with native peoples

quiz 2, Sept. 8

Sept. 11-15:

Continue *A Midwife's Tale*

*Traveller's History*: pp. 31-47. Focus on:

- American colonists and the English: differences and similarities
- colonial political practice
- economic system imposed by the home country
- religious similarities & differences between colonists and the home country
- reasons for Britain's reorganization of empire
- measures taken by British government
- reasons for colonial protest

quiz 3, Sept. 15

Sept. 18-22:

Continue *A Midwife's Tale*

*Traveller's History*, pp. 47-60. Focus on:

- how colonists moved from resistance to open rebellion
- strengths and weaknesses of Britain and its American colonies
- the Revolution in the *North* . . . in the *Middle Atlantic* . . . and in the *South*
- creating a peace treaty

quiz 4, Sept. 22

Sept. 25-29:

Complete *A Midwife's Tale* for exam on Monday, Oct. 2

*Traveller's History*, pp. 61-72: Focus on:

- forming—and reforming—state governments
- the reasoning behind the Articles of Confederation
- the Confederation's strengths and weaknesses
- debates over another form of national government
- criticism of the proposed Constitution
- arguments justifying the proposed Constitution
- putting the proposed Constitution up for a vote

quiz 5, Sept. 29