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Work and Labor in the United States until 1877
Fall 2020 Syllabus

Thursday, 3:55 to 5:15 PM and 5:35 to 6:55 PM

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DESCRIPTION: The first 250 years of the English colonies in North America (from their founding to the end of Reconstruction in 1877) witnessed both heroism and cruelty, conflict and creativity, innovation and conformity. The early history of the United States is an important chapter in humanity's relative recent transition from older, patriarchal forms of settlement and co-existence, with their various forms of slavery and coercion, to newer commercial modes of existence, with their various forms of freedom and consent. The way of life pioneered on the North American eastern seaboard in the 17th and 18th centuries was the model for what became "democracy in America." After the United States became a global super power, it sought to export this model to the rest of the world. Today, there are abundant signs both at home and abroad that the democratic aspiration of *e pluribus unum* (out of many, one) is being replaced by a more authoritarian *super pluribus unum* (over many, one), or America First! Now is thus an excellent time to be taking stock of the United States' formative first quarter millennium: how did these years shape the American democratic ideal; and what failures of principle, policy and practice sowed the seeds of its current crisis of confidence?

THEMES

- A. Societies, like individuals, are moved in the first instance by emotions. Reason only comes later, in feelings' wake.
- B. Social institutions exist to contain, channel and control our emotions, the principal of which are fear, anger and love (not necessarily in that order): indeed, one goal of institutions is to ensure their proper ordering across individuals and groups.
- C. This course will explore the history of the United States to 1877 from the perspective of the principal emotions driving its inhabitants' efforts to survive and flourish.
- D. It will distinguish **three general, ideal-type human adaptations to life on Earth: tribal, patriarchal and commercial.**
- E. The tribal coincides with kinship-based, hunting-and-gathering, transhumant and sedentary horticultural societies, all of which are also condescendingly referred to as "primitive."
- F. The patriarchal coincides with the militarized, territorial, agrarian societies formed after the Neolithic Scientific Revolution, also known as traditional, feudal, or monarchial.
- G. The commercial coincides with modern societies, those created by and after the Early Modern Scientific Revolution, as the imagined products of a supposed "social contract."
- H. Modern commercial societies differ in fundamental ways from their tribal and patriarchal predecessors. For example, they seek to control nature rather than be controlled by it.

- I. We do not yet know if the transition from traditional to modern societies will succeed. **No modern society has yet established itself as a sustainable, well-regulated system.**
- J. **Instead, all modern societies are parasitic on the Earth.** Whether a sustainable commercial system can develop that is symbiotic rather than parasitic remains an open question.
- K. The US is the world's first fully modern nation: the first to be founded on the political principles articulated by the champions of modernity, principally, among English writers, Thomas Hobbes and Adam Smith.
- L. Hobbes' *Leviathan* argues that modern societies, because they consist of relatively autonomous, competitive, free but insecure individuals, require a dominant central authority to which all citizens will unquestioningly submit.
- M. Smith's *Wealth of Nations* argues that modern societies, because they have such immense powers at their command, need to respect, to the furthest extent possible, the "natural liberty" that citizens invariably choose for themselves when free to do so.
- N. The history of the US to 1877, as the first nation modern democratic society, is in part the story of a continuing effort to reconcile these incompatible principles.
- O. We will ask, first, how commercial was American society before 1877; and, second, how democratic?
- P. The answer to the first question involves looking at its 19th-century transition to "capitalism"—i.e., to a commercial society controlled by or in the interests of capitalists.
- Q. We will note, however, that capitalism was not the only option on offer, nor is it today.
- R. We will also explore the tribalism and patriarchalism that the American democratic project sought to displace (e.g., slavery, institutional racism, sexism and classism, etc.) and note the ways in which they continued to prosper in its commercial setting.
- S. The answer to the second question involves looking closely at what democracy is, and then gauging the extent to which it was realized.
- T. We will look at democracy from two standpoints: inclusion and participation.
- U. A democratic society means including everyone (excepting children or others in its care or custody), and in meaningful ways.
- V. In a democratic society, power is shared with everyone, so that all may live lives of their own choosing, to the extent possible, and participate in making the decisions that affect their ability to do so.
- W. In this context, then, we want to look both at who is included in the body politic, and also at how they are included—i.e., the ways in which power is effected, distributed and used.
- X. And, finally, we want to explore how democratic is American society and whether Americans are in fact free? **What is democracy? What is freedom? Can they be lost?**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will have met the following objectives:

Core Curriculum: (SCL, HST, WCr and WCd)

- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems and other forms of social organization (Goal M)
- Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study particular questions or situations, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments. (Goal N)
- Explain the development of some aspect of society or culture over time. (Goal K)
- Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence and arguments. (Goal L)
- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience, and respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, &/or supervisors through successive drafts & revision. (Goal S)
- Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources. (Goal T)

School of Management and Labor Relations:

- Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry-level professional. (Goal I)
- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation. (Goal IV)

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations. (Goal 1)
- Make an argument using contemporary or historical evidence. (Goal 4)

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION: Rutgers welcomes students with disabilities into all its educational programs. To receive consideration for one or more reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office on the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation to support your request for accommodations. For additional info, go to: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors as early in your courses as possible and discuss the accommodations with them. To begin this process, please complete the form found at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

PROCESS: This course has **two streams, three components, and five requirements**.

The *two streams* are: (A) an online *Reading Group*; and, (B) an online *Writing Group*.

The *three components* are: (1) *reading* chapters of the required text, *Who Built America?* vol. I; (2) *participating* in weekly small writing and reading group activities; and, (3) *writing* a first and

final draft of two papers, one on **Democracy** and one on **Freedom**, and both described more fully below.

REQUIREMENTS:

The *five course requirements*, with the maximum number of points possible for each, are:

- I. 100 points: Critical summaries of the assigned reading posted to Canvas each week.**
Each post is worth 10 points, but you must participate in your reading group that week to receive them.

To participate in your reading group, you must: (a) post an excerpt of your summary to your group discussion page, (b) “like” the posted summary of someone else in your group, and, (c) briefly explain why you liked it.

You are also expected to lead two reading group discussions during the semester. *If you do not lead a group, you will be penalized 10 points for each time you do not do so, for a maximum penalty of minus 20 points. These points may be made up by reading more chapters.*

You can earn a maximum of 100 points in this area and there are 12 weeks of reading. As a result, you can miss two weeks of reading without explanation or penalty and still earn the maximum number of points available in this area.

- II. 100 points: Considered responses to the Writing Group exercise posted to Canvas each week.** *Each post is worth 10 points, but you must participate in your writing group to receive them.*

To participate in your writing group, you must: (a) post a response to the writing group discussion question(s) on your group discussion page, (b) “like” the posted response(s) of someone else in your group, and, (c) briefly explain why you liked them.

You are also expected to lead two writing group discussions during the semester. *If you do not lead a group, you will be penalized 10 points for each time you do not do so, for a maximum of penalty of minus 20 points. These points may be made up by completing more activities.*

You can earn a maximum of 100 points in this area and there are 12 weeks of reading. As a result, you can miss two weeks of writing group activities without explanation or penalty and still earn the maximum number of points available in this area.

- III. 100 points: Drafts of the Midterm and End-of-Term Essay posted to Canvas at least three weeks before the finished drafts are due.** At the direction of your instructor, you are required to write a first draft of each of the five distinct elements of the required essays.

These drafts will be reviewed by the instructors and be peer reviewed by two other members of your writing group. Each completed draft element of the essays earns 10 points. A completed draft of each essays containing all five elements earns 50 points.

You are also expected to read and comment on the midterm and end-of-term drafts of two other members of your writing group. Two weeks of writing group activities will be devoted to these reviews.

IV. 100 points: Final Draft of Midterm Paper posted to Canvas. *How democratic were the British North American colonies before the American Revolution and how democratic was the system of government formed by the ratification of the US Constitution in 1787?*

A draft of an original essay on the above topic. The essay must have all the 5 distinct and required elements of the midterm essay, as listed on the assignment page. The instructors will review these drafts for these elements, each of which earns 20 points. A completed draft, containing all five elements, earns 100 points. Incomplete drafts earn fewer points.

V. 100 points: Final Draft of End-of-Term Paper posted to Canvas. *An essay on freedom in the United States before and immediately after the Civil War that describes which Americans were free and which were not free and why.*

A draft of an original essay on the above topic. The essay must have all the 5 distinct and required elements of the end-of-term essay, as listed on the assignment page. A completed draft, containing all five elements, earns 100 points. Incomplete drafts earn fewer points.

GRADING SCALE: Points are awarded on the basis of expended effort rather than achieved excellence. There are no good or bad, right or wrong responses. There are only responses that have been attempted, where an effort has been made, and responses that have not been attempted, where no effort has been made. Grades are based on the following scale.

(A+ = 500	A = 499 to 475 points
(475 >	B+ > 460	B = 460 to 425 points
(425 >	C+ > 410	C = 410 to 375 points
(375 >	D+ > 365	D = 365 to 350 points
		F < 350 points

There are fourteen weeks of class September 3 through December 10, for twelve of which there will be required readings. Points may thus be earned as follows:

Reading Group Activities (20 percent): Up to 100 points, 10 points per week of activity

Writing Group Activities (20 percent): Up to 100 points, 10 points per week of activity

First Drafts (20 percent): Up to 100 points, with 10 points for each of the required elements

Midterm Essay (20 percent): Up to 100 points, with 20 points for each of the required elements

Final Essay (20 percent): Up to 100 points, with 20 points for each of the required elements

Final grades are calculated on the basis of the following formula.

Final Grade = Reading Activities + Writing Activities + First Drafts + Midterm Essay + Final Essay

REQUIRED TEXT:

Clark, Hewitt, Brown, Jaffee, *Who Built America? Vol. 1* (Third Edition, ISBN 9780312446918)

Copies of each chapter are available as PDF files on Canvas, but used copies are quite inexpensive online, if you desire a tangible version. If you do not already have a copy, you may download Adobe Reader at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK I:

Thursday, September 3: INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE COURSE AND FORMAT

WEEK II:

Thursday, September 10: Europe, Africa and American Colonization, 1492-1680

WEEK III:

Thursday, September 17: Servitude, Slavery and the Growth of the Southern Colonies, 1620-1760

WEEK IV:

Thursday, September 24: Family Labor and the Growth of the Northern Colonies, 1640-1760

WEEK V: **MIDTERM ESSAY FIRST DRAFTS ARE DUE**

Thursday, October 1: Toward Revolution, 1750-1776

WEEK VI:

Thursday, October 8: Revolution, Constitution and the People, 1776-1815

WEEK VII:

Thursday, October 15: The Consolidation of Slavery in the South, 1790-1836

WEEK VIII: **MIDTERM ESSAY FINAL DRAFTS ARE DUE**

Thursday, October 22: Northern Society and the Growth of Wage Labor, 1790-1837

WEEK IX:

Thursday, October 29: Immigration, Urban Life and Social Reform in the Free Labor North, 1838-1860

WEEK X:

Thursday, November 5: The Spread of Slavery and the Crisis of Southern Society, 1836-1848

WEEK XI:

Thursday, November 12: The Settlement of the West and the Conflict over Slave Labor, 1848-1860

WEEK XII: **END-OF-TERM ESSAY FIRST DRAFTS ARE DUE**

Thursday, November 19: The Civil War: America's Second Revolution, 1861-1865

WEEK XIII: Thursday, November 26 [No Class]: HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

WEEK XIV:

Thursday, December 3: The Civil War: America's Second Revolution, 1861-1865

WEEK XV: END-OF-TERM ESSAY FINAL DRAFTS ARE DUE

Thursday, December 10: Reconstructing the Nation, 1865-1877

Revised: September 6, 2020