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Work and Labor in the United States until 1877
Spring 2021 Syllabus

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

Professor Michael Merrill

Office Hours: By appointment

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DESCRIPTION: The early history of the United States is an important chapter in humanity's transition from older, patriarchal modes of settlement, with their various forms of slavery and coercion, to newer commercial modes of existence, with their various forms of freedom and consent. In the 17th and 18th centuries, European colonists and enslaved Africans evolved ways of living together on the North American eastern seaboard that would become the model for "democracy in America," with all its virtues and limitations. In this course, we explore the meaning of democracy, power, freedom, and equality in the context of the complex history of the diverse peoples of North America from the European conquest of the continent through the end of the US Civil War. Who are we? What is our message to the world? Is it the egalitarian, democratic aspiration of *e pluribus unum* (out of many, one)? Or, is it the belligerent, authoritarian desire of *super pluribus unum* (over many, one)? How did the formative first quarter millennium of European migration to and conquest of the Americas shape our democratic ideal? What failures of principle, policy and practice lie behind the current crisis?

THEMES

- A. 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.**
- B. **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.
- C. The US is the world's first fully modern nation founded on the political principles articulated by the champions of modernity, including, among English writers, Thomas Hobbes and Adam Smith.
- D. 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.
- E. 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.
- F. 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.
- G. We will ask, first, how democratic was American society before 1877; and, second, how free were its people? **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 six 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**, as described below.

REQUIREMENTS:

The *six 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.* A post is worth 10 points, but you must participate in your reading group 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 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 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 each week.* A 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 can earn a maximum of 100 points in this area and there are 12 weeks of writing group exercises. As a result, you can miss two weeks without explanation or penalty and still earn the maximum number of points available in this area.

- III. 100 Points:** *Participation in and summaries of four synchronous online discussions, two before the midterm and two the after midterm, as described below.* Each participation, including the required summary, is worth 25 points.

You are required to attend two reading group and two writing group discussions during the term, one before and one after the midterm. You will only receive points for participating if you post a summary of the discussion on your weekly group’s discussion page. Weekly reading group discussions meet on Zoom every Tuesday from 9:15 to 10:35 AM. Weekly writing group discussions meet on Zoom every Friday from 9:15 to 10:35 AM.

- IV. 100 points:** *Drafts of the Midterm and Endterm 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 endterm drafts of two other members of your writing group.

- V. 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.

VI. 100 points: Final Draft of Endterm 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 = 600 to 570 points	(570 > B+ > 550 points
B = 550 to 520 points	(520 > C+ > 500 points
C = 500 to 470 points	(470 > D+ > 450 points
D = 450 to 420 points	(420 > F

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 (16.7 percent): Up to 100 points, 10 points per week of activity

Writing Group Activities (16.6 percent): Up to 100 points, 10 points per week of activity

Class Participation (16.7 percent): Up to 100 points, 25 points per participation

First Drafts (16.6 percent): Up to 100 points, with 10 points for each required element

Midterm Essay (16.7 percent): Up to 100 points, with 20 points for each required element

Final Essay (16.7 percent): Up to 100 points, with 20 points for each required element

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

Final Grade = Reading Activities + Writing Activities + Class Participation + 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: Class meets on [Zoom Tuesday/Friday, 9:15 to 10:35 AM](#)

WEEK I:

Tuesday, January 19: (EVERYONE) Introduction to Course and Online Format

Friday, January 22: (EVERYONE) *When Civilizations Collide: Who Owes What to Whom?*

WEEK II:

Tuesday, January 26: [Reading] 1. Europe, Africa and American Colonization, 1492-1680

Friday, January 29: [Writing] *What is Democracy? What Is Equality?*

WEEK III:

Tuesday, February 2: [Reading] 2. Servitude, Slavery and the Southern Colonies, 1620-1760

Friday, February 5: [Writing] *Identifying Democracy, Part I: The Southern Colonies*

WEEK IV:

Tuesday, February 9: [Reading] 3. Family Labor and the Northern Colonies, 1640-1760

Friday, February 12: [Writing] *Identifying Democracy, Part II: The Northern Colonies*

WEEK V:

Tuesday, February 16: [Reading] 4. Toward Revolution, 1750-1776

Friday, February 19: [Writing] *Evaluating the American Revolution: Was It Justified?*

MIDTERM FIRST DRAFTS ARE DUE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19 BY 6PM

WEEK VI:

Tuesday, February 23: [Reading] 5. Revolution, Constitution and the People, 1776-1815

Friday, February 26: [Writing] *Was the 1787 US Constitution Democratic?*

WEEK VII:

Tuesday, March 2: [Reading] 6. The Consolidation of Slavery in the South, 1790-1836

Friday, March 5: [Writing] *Was the 1787 US Constitution Pro- or Anti-Slavery?*

WEEK VIII:

Tuesday, March 9: [Reading] 7. Northern Society and the Growth of Wage Labor, 1790-1837

Friday, March 12: [Writing] *What Is Freedom?*

MIDTERM FINAL DRAFTS ARE DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 12 BY 6 PM

WEEK IX:

Tuesday, March 23: [Reading] 8. Immigration, Urban Life and Social Reform, 1838-1860

Friday, March 26: [Writing] *Who Is Free? How Free Are They?*

WEEK X:

Tuesday, March 30: [Reading] 9. Slavery and the Crisis of Southern Society, 1836-1848

Friday, April 2: [Writing] *Who Fights Wars to Protect Slavery? Why?*

WEEK XI:

Tuesday, April 6: [Reading] 10. The West and the Conflict over Slavery, 1848-1860

Friday, April 9: [Writing] *Who Fights Wars to Abolish Slavery? Why?*

WEEK XII:

Tuesday, April 13: [Reading] 11. The Civil War: America's Second Revolution, 1861-1865

Friday, April 16: [Writing] *Could We Have Abolished Slavery Without Going to War (Hell)?*

ENDTERM FIRST DRAFTS ARE DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 16 BY 6 PM

WEEK XIII:

Tuesday, April 20: [Reading] 12. Reconstructing the Nation, 1865-1877

Friday, April 23: [Writing] *The Civil War Abolished Slavery. Did it Establish Freedom?*

WEEK XIV:

Tuesday, April 27: [Reading] 13. Westward Expansion and Industrial Growth, 1865-1877

Friday, April 30: [Writing] *Reviews and Reflections: How Democratic and Free Are We?*

ENDTERM FINAL DRAFTS ARE DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 30 BY 6 PM

Revised: January 8, 2021