

History 3060 Early America
Syllabus / Prof. Hoffer / Fall 2006

This semester we will survey together early American history from the pre-contact period through the Revolution. In lectures I will provide a chronological account of the encounter of diverse peoples, the development of colonial institutions, and the movement toward American independence. The readings correspond to the lectures. In our discussions we will link topical themes to chronological narrative. Welcome.

Grades will be based on two hour examinations with multiple choice and short essay questions, and a final essay question examination. Informed and regular participation in class discussion can raise a borderline grade.

The books required for the course are: Hoffer, The Brave New World: A History of Early America 1/e and Kupperman, comp., Major Problems in American Colonial History, 2/e. Both are paperbacks and can be purchased at the university bookstore.

The readings are not heavy so I expect you to read carefully. Here are some hints to make your reading more effective: Hoffer's Brave New World is a textbook, heavy on detail and wide in scope. But it has a theme or thesis that it is trying to prove, which makes it a little different from most textbooks. You'll find the thesis statement in the introduction to the book. Keep it in mind as you read each week's assignment. In the course of the latter task, 1) underline or highlight the key ideas in each paragraph. Often the topic sentence will suffice. 2) Ask yourself: What is the argument in each section of the chapter you are reading? Can you put that argument or thesis into your own words? How does it fit the overall thesis of the book as stated in the Introduction? 3) Be alert to the difference between key facts, that is, major causes or consequences of events, and illustrative details and stories. You have to know the former. The latter are there for your enjoyment.

The Kupperman book is an anthology, a collection of primary sources (letters, reports, etc. written long ago by people living in the historical period we are studying) and secondary sources (essays by historians and others describing the past). To read the primary sources: 1) ask yourself: Who is the author, and what is his or her intended audience for the piece? 2) What is the overall message—what point was the author trying to convey? 3) What kinds of literary or rhetorical devices does the author use to make the point? 4) What kinds of evidence does the author marshal to support the argument? To read the secondary sources, use the same methods you used to read Hoffer.

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The university requires the following statements on the syllabus: All academic work must meet the standards contained in A Culture of Honesty. Each student is responsible [for informing] ...themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

A tentative list of topics, readings and assignments appears below. All assignments are subject to change. I'll announce changes in class.

Week 1: The problem of defining early America. Read: Hoffer, introduction.

Week 2: Native Americans. Read Hoffer, Ch. 1; Kupperman, Ch. 2

Week 3: European and African backgrounds. Read Hoffer, Ch. 2, Kupperman, Ch. 1.

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Week 4: Spanish America. Read Hoffer, Ch. 3; Kupperman Ch. 6
Week 5: Empire in the North. Read Hoffer, Ch 4. First examination
Week 6: Southern colonies. Read Hoffer, Ch. 5; Kupperman, Chs. 3 and 9.
Week 7: A New England. Read Hoffer, Ch. 6; Kupperman, Ch. 4.
Week 8: Middle colonies. Read Hoffer, Ch. 7; Kupperman, Ch. 7.
Week 9: Critical period. Read Hoffer, Ch. 8; Kupperman, Ch. 5.
Week 10: Empires. Read Hoffer, Ch. 9; Kupperman, Ch. 12. Second examination
Week 11: Colonial people and places. Read Hoffer, Ch. 10; Kupperman, Ch. 10.
Week 12: Colonial cultures. Read Hoffer, Ch. 11; Kupperman, Ch. 11.
Week 13: Colonial economies. Read Hoffer, Ch. 12; Kupperman, Ch. 14.
Week 14: French and Indian War. Read Hoffer, Ch. 13; Kupperman, Ch. 13.
Week 15: Revolutionary crisis. Read Hoffer, Ch. 14 and Epilogue.
Week 16: Final Examination