For the past twenty years or so, Early Americanists have turned with increasing attention to the practice of cultural history. There have been different reasons for this movement, which is built on solid empirical foundations laid by demographers and social historians beginning in the early 1960s. One contributing element was surely the history of early American religion, always interested in what sermons and doctrinal reform meant for clergy and laity alike. Another element came from cultural anthropology, with its interest in specific communities and the textual webs of symbolic meaning that tied families to families, and individuals to one another. American art and material culture offered its concern with social aesthetics and questions of exchange value. Still another set of connections came as the walls between early American literature and early American history--disciplinary fences, as it were--started to crumble. But no matter the perspective taken, these approaches intersect in reconstructing the symbolic meanings that held colonial societies together and, on occasion, signaled their transformation.

This semester we will be examining key moments in the emergence of Early American Cultural History, works that explore pivotal interdisciplinary methods and theoretical approaches as well as offering new models for historical narrative itself. And while most of our readings and discussion will explore changes in early American culture between 1600 and 1785--or roughly from the period of imperial exploration and initial settlement to the Revolutionary settlement--some aspects of early national and antebellum culture will fall within consideration. The required texts for the course include the following, available at House of Our Own Books, 3920 Spruce St. (phone 215-222-1576):


There are three requirements for this course upon which your grade will directly depend. The first is constant attendance and oral participation; you can miss no more than two classes without your grade dropping a letter grade (illnesses with note from physician excepted). The second requirement is an in-class oral report on the works of a scholar not included on the syllabus; these presentations will likely be done in pairs, and will commence in week 3 (Sept. 25). I will make recommendations for each week. The final requirement for the course is a seminar paper, due in my history department mailbox one week following the last class (due Dec. 11). There are in fact three parts to this final project. The first is an annotated bibliography and working statement of your paper's hypothesis, due in class on Oct. 9, which will be graded. The second part is your in-class final report of research, in the final (1 or 2) weeks of the class. The final component is the paper itself. I expect a final essay of at least 10-12 pages, with footnotes following. During the first three or four weeks of the course, each of you will meet with me to help decide on your research project.

1. Sept. 11. Introduction to course: colonial culture

   Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*.

   Moore, *Black Robe*.
St. George, *Conversing by Signs*, pp. 1-203.

5. Oct. 9. The voices of colonization: Surinam


*Alabi's World*, pp. 166-278, and look over the extensive "Notes and Commentary", pp. 279-432.

Saunt, *A New Order of Things*.

St. George *Conversing by Signs*, pp. 205-205-398.

10. Nov. 6. Regulating the performative self.
Bushman, *Refinement of America*.

11. Nov. 13. Where does refinement get you?
Isaac, *Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom*.

12. Nov. 20. NO CLASS- THANKSGIVING BREAK

13. Nov. 27. Mythologies of production/ begin class reports
Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun*.
People to consider for reports

Nina Dayton
Bruce Mann
David D. Hall
Peter Hulme, Colonial Encounters
Michael Warner
Sandra Gustafson
Jon Butlert
John Demos
Boyer and Nissenbaum
David ShieldsPatricia Seed
Inga Clendinnen
Rhys isaac
Greg Dening
Laura Rigal
Philip Round