

## HISTORY 20 – TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

### HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES, 1607-1861

Professor Richard R. Beeman  
213 College Hall  
Email: [rbeeman@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:rbeeman@sas.upenn.edu)

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History 20 is the first half of the introductory course in American history at Penn. Although it is described in the catalogue as a “survey course,” it does not seek to cover every aspect of the American past, for the history of North America is too variegated to be encompassed within the space of a single course. It will seek to deal with some of the most important themes of American history – culture contact among Europeans, American Indians, and Africans; westward expansion; the ascendancy of democratic and egalitarian thought; the process of rebellion and nation-building; and the development of sectional conflict within the new nation – but many of the emphases within those subject areas will to some extent reflect the personal interests (and idiosyncrasies) of the instructor.

Learning Goals for the Course: The essential – and simple – goal of this course is to deepen your understanding and appreciation of the history of the United States of America from the time of its founding to the beginning of the Civil War. Along the way, I hope you will learn to read books and articles written on the subject with a more analytical and critical eye – to regard them not as revealed truth, but as interpretations that require your critical scrutiny. I also hope that you will develop both your writing abilities and your oral communication skills as you carry out the various assignments in the course. And, finally, I hope to introduce you to the stuff from which historians write history – primary sources; I hope you will gain some modest experience in reading those with a critical eye as well.

Course Requirements: The course has six component parts: assigned readings, lectures, discussion sections, two brief papers, at least one oral presentation, and examinations. No one of these parts can, by itself, convey the full meaning of the course. You are the only person in the course who will be doing all of these things at the same time: listening to and participating in the lectures, reading books, discussing those books in your recitation section, and writing papers and examinations. Your task is to integrate the six parts of the course so that you can develop your own points of view about the origins of American culture and nationality.

Required Reading: It is essential that you do all of the assigned reading if you are to master the subject matter of this course. All of the books listed below are available in

paperback at the Pennsylvania Book Center, 130 South 34<sup>th</sup> Street (Corner of Sansom and 34<sup>th</sup> Street).

Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed.

Edward Countryman, The American Revolution

Harry Watson, Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America.

Paul Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millenium.

Bruce Levine, Half Slave, Half Free.

In addition, I have assembled a substantial body of additional reading – reprints of scholarly articles and a selection of primary source materials – that you can locate on the course web site, within the category of “Course Documents.” The address of that web site is: <https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu/> Those readings are every bit as important as the books you will be purchasing. You may read them on the web site itself or print out hard copies of them on your own printer.

Finally, if you are uncertain about your basic preparation in American History, we recommend that you purchase a copy of the survey textbook by George Tindall, America: A Narrative History, Volume I or James Henretta, et. al., America's History . These books are typically available through any of the large mail-order retailers (e.g. Amazon.com). Alternatively, if you already own some other up-to-date college level textbook of American history, I suggest that you keep that handy.

We will hand out a tentative schedule of reading assignments during the first week of classes, although I would note that it will be TENTATIVE, as assignments may change from week to week depending on the pace of our discussions. It will be important for you to attend your recitation sections consistently in order to be fully informed about the weekly assignments.

Lectures: The lectures are designed to supplement the assigned readings. If I am successful in doing my job, the lectures should help you organize in your own mind some of the other materials that you confront in the course. You should remember, however, that the lectures are not intended to represent ultimate “truths” about this period of American history, but rather, represent my interpretations of the American past.

Papers: You will be asked to write two relatively brief papers. The first will be based on a portion of the required reading assigned in the course. The purpose of that paper will be to encourage you to read and evaluate the works of other historians critically. The second paper will be based on a collection of primary source materials that will be

gathered together for you and placed on the course web site. The purpose of that paper is to give you an opportunity to work first-hand with the actual materials – primary sources – from which history is written. Your recitation leader will spend considerable time giving you guidance respecting the format and function of each of these papers.

You may also be asked to write brief essays and “opinion pieces” in your recitation section. The format of those exercises will be determined by your recitation leader.

I would also note that, as an early American historian who has spent many years teaching at Benjamin Franklin’s university, I have become a firm advocate of Franklin’s maxims on Industry and Promptness, and therefore look upon late papers with extreme displeasure. Please do not disappoint either Dr. Franklin or Dr. Beeman. You are also advised to make an extra copy of your paper in order to avoid problems stemming from lost, mislaid, or misdelivered papers. It is also important that you observe scrupulously The University’s Code of Academic Integrity, as Franklin (and Beeman) are emphatic in their belief in Honesty.

Examinations: There will be two examinations – a midterm and a final. Each of the exams will be of the essay variety and will place heavy emphasis on your ability to integrate some of the diverse themes of the course.

Recitation Sections: Discussion sections are vitally important to the course, for it is there that you will have the opportunity to exchange your ideas and interpretations with fellow students and your discussion leader and to integrate the reading and lectures with your own thoughts. You will also be asked to give at least one oral presentation in your recitation section. Your teaching assistant, together with the staff of the University’s program in Communications Within the Curriculum, will help you prepare for that presentation.

Your recitation leaders will have the primary responsibility for grading your papers and exams and for setting the terms of the paper assignments. Regular attendance is expected and 25% of your final grade will be determined by the quality of your participation in the recitation sections. In addition to the regular meeting of your recitation sections, your TA’s and I will be encouraging you to participate regularly in on-line discussions of both the lectures and the reading on the course web site