

## History 181: U.S. History I

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### Course information:

Tuesday & Thursday, 12noon-1:15pm  
McGuinn, 334

### Course description:

This course will convey significant information about early American history; help you acquire skills such as reading old texts, writing about them, and participating in discussions; and introduce you to history as a form of knowledge and way of thinking. Accordingly, I will lecture for 50 minutes of every class, with the remaining 25 minutes left for reflection and discussion. Shorter texts I will bring to class. Longer texts, listed below and available for purchase at the book store, I will expect you to have read before class.

### Required Texts

Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft* (Dover)  
Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography and Other Writings* (Penguin)  
Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple and Lucy Temple* (Penguin)  
Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and other Political Writings* (Oxford Classics)  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature and Selected Writings* (Penguin)  
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Bedford)  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Bedford)

### Assignments & Grading

1. Essay (40 percent). Your major assignment is to write one essay, 8-10 pages in length, on one of two subjects. You may compare the autobiographies of Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass. Or you may compare the portrait of New England society in Cotton Mather's *On Witchcraft* with that of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter*. Your essay is due at the conclusion of the course.
2. Class attendance and oral discussion (35 percent). There are no excused absences other than those relating to hospitalizations and family emergencies verified by your class dean. No more than three excused absences are permissible in any event. Once in class, your active, informed participation in discussions is crucial.
3. Journal (25 percent): As one of the goals of this course is to enlarge and refine your historical imagination, so you will keep a journal consisting of your responses to the readings and lectures. What has surprised you? Intrigued you? Angered you? This is a free-form assignment, designed to help you organize your thoughts, practice your writing, and focus on topics of particular

interest. You may write as little or as much as you wish on any given topic, so long as your journal totals no fewer than 15 pages by the end of the semester, does not reproduce your essay, and includes your reflections on the writings of Susanna Rowson, Thomas Paine, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. During the course I will ask you to submit your journal for my perusal, and, at the end, I will ask you to submit it.

*How to fail this course:* Neglect to turn in all your written assignments. Or, miss more than four classes. Or, submit work that is not your own. You cannot copy any material from any source, including the internet, and claim it as your own.

*How to annoy the instructor (and cheat yourself):* Read the assigned material and write your journal entries in a great hurry, in order to feign interest and satisfy the requirement. Neglect to turn off your electronic devices. Laptops, cellphones, tape recorders, and the like, cannot be used during class.

*How to succeed in this course:* Attend class, showing up on time, ready to discuss the subject. Make a good faith effort in your journal and paper. Ask questions.

### Schedule

Sept. 7. Introduction

Sept. 9: Reformation. The Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony

Sept. 14: Witches and Devils in Massachusetts. reading: Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft*

Sept. 16 : The metamorphosis of Virginia

Sept. 21: The Quakers of Pennsylvania.

Sept. 23: Colonists and Indians: Narratives of Conquest and Captivity on the Frontier

Sept. 28: Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, and the Great Awakening

Sept. 30: What is an American?

Oct. 5: Enlightenment in the colonies

Oct. 7: The American Dream. reading: Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*

Oct. 12: no class. Columbus Day.

Oct. 14: Revolution! reading: Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

Oct. 19: Home rule, and who rules at home--a conservative Constitution?

Oct. 21: Seductions of new society. reading: Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple*

Oct. 26: Bankers, confidence men, and counterfeiters

Oct. 28: The new west: tall-tales and tricksters

Nov. 2: Another Great Awakening

Nov. 4: Self-Reliance. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature and Selected Writings*

Nov. 9: Looking forward. The New Immigrants

Nov. 11: Looking backward. Reading: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

Nov. 16. Slavery and secession in the south

Nov. 18: The rise of the abolitionists. Reading: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Nov. 23/25: no class. Thanksgiving

Nov. 30: War!

Dec. 2: Lincoln at Gettysburg

Dec. 7. Reconstruction

Dec. 9. Reprise. Essay and Journal are due today