

America's Contested History I Syllabus

Instructor

Fred W. Beuttler, Ph.D

Quarter: Autumn

Start – end date: September 26 – November 14

Session day/time: Monday, 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm CST

Course Code and Section: HUAS90911, 22A1

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Course Overview

In this three-quarter sequence, we will examine the history of America, from the colonial period to the present, as “contested ground” over the origins and meaning of liberty and equality and the conditions for a just and stable democratic/republican society. Using some secondary source texts from different political perspectives, such as the *New York Times’ 1619 Project* and Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of America* contrasted with the more “patriotic” Wilfred McClay’s *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story*, combined with primary source readings, we will seek to find a common meaning in America’s historical development. This course is part of the American History Sequence at UChicago Graham.

Modality

Remote learning

The first quarter will examine the period from Discovery in 1492 to the election of 1800, the Winter quarter from 1800 until 1917, and Spring quarter from 1917 to the present. There are no prerequisites, and students can take one, two, or all three courses.

Required texts

Nikole Hannah-Jones, et al. *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*. NY: One World, 2021. ISBN 9780593230572

NYT 1619 Project.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>

Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States* Reissued edition, (Harper, 2015) ISBN-10 : 9780062397348 (any edition is fine – used too)

Wilfred McClay, *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story*, (Encounter Books, 2019); ISBN-13 : 978-1594039379

Primary source readings, emailed to students each week.

Books can be purchased online through the [University of Chicago Bookstore](#).

Course readings

Week	Author	Reading Assignment
Week 1	Hannah-Jones, Wood, McClay, Hillsdale	<p>Introduction: The Contested American Story/Stories</p> <p>N. Hannah-Jones, “America Wasn’t A Democracy ...”, 1619 Project</p> <p>G. Wood, et al. “Historians’ Letter on the 1619 Project”</p> <p>McClay, “Introduction: One Long Story”</p> <p>Hillsdale 1776 Curriculum, here: https://k12.hillsdale.edu/Curriculum/The-Hillsdale-1776-Curriculum/</p> <p>As this class is partly “teaching the controversy,” you may want to take a look at the Massachusetts HS history curriculum of 2018, which is part of the basis of Illinois’ curricular reform, here: https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/2018-12.pdf. If you jump to p.198 on the website, and then p.201, you will see the recommended primary sources.</p> <p>See also: http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/</p>
Week 2	McClay, Zinn, Hannah-Jones, De Las Casas, Mayflower Compact, and Tocqueville	<p>Discovery, Encounter, Invasion?</p> <p>McClay, c1 Beginnings: Settlement and Unsettlement”</p> <p>Zinn, c1 “Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress”</p> <p>Hannah-Jones, c1 “Democracy”</p> <p>De Las Casas, <i>A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies</i> (1552)</p> <p>Mayflower Compact (1620)</p>

Week	Author	Reading Assignment
Week 3	McClay, Zinn, Hannah-Jones, Massachusetts Body of Liberties, and South Carolina Act	<p>Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i>, vol. 1, c2, “Origins of Anglo-Americans”</p> <hr/> <p>Colonization: Jamestown and Puritan New England</p> <p>McClay, c2 “The Shaping of British North America”</p> <p>Zinn, c2 “Drawing the Color Line”</p> <p>Hannah-Jones, c2 “Race”</p> <p>Massachusetts Body of Liberties (1641)</p> <p>SC: An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes ... (1740)</p>
Week 4	McClay, Zinn, Hannah-Jones, Mather, Seward, and Woolman	<p>Restoration and Empire, 1660s-1760s</p> <p>McClay, c3 “The Revolution of Self-Rule”</p> <p>Zinn, c3 “Persons of Mean and Vile Condition</p> <p>Hannah-Jones, c3 “Sugar”</p> <p>C. Mather, <i>Magnalia Christi Americana</i> (Selections)</p> <p>S. Seward, “The Selling of Joseph”</p> <p>J. Woolman, <i>Journals</i></p>
Week 5	McClay, Zinn, Hannah-Jones, Paine, and Declaration of Independence	<p>Towards Revolution 1763-1776</p> <p>McClay, c4 “A War, A Nation, and a Wound”</p> <p>Zinn, c4, “Tyranny is Tyranny”</p> <p>Hannah-Jones, c4 “Fear”</p>

Week	Author	Reading Assignment
		T. Paine, <i>Common Sense, The Crisis I</i>
		Declaration of Independence
Week 6	Zinn, Hannah-Jones, Virginia Declaration of Rights, Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, and Iroquois Confederation Docs	<p>Winning Independence and the Critical Period</p> <p>Zinn, c5 “A Kind of Revolution”</p> <p>Hannah-Jones, c5 “Dispossession”</p> <p>Virginia Declaration of Rights</p> <p>Massachusetts Constitution of 1780</p> <p>Iroquois Confederation Docs</p>
Week 7	McClay, Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, US Constitution, and George Washington	<p>Constitution and Freedom</p> <p>McClay, c5 “The Experiment Begins”</p> <p>Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom</p> <p>US Constitution, Bill of Rights</p> <p>George Washington, Farewell Address</p>
Week 8	McClay, Hannah-Jones, and Olaudah Equiano	<p>America in the World: Between France and Britain</p> <p>McClay, c6, “From Jefferson to Jackson: The Rise of the Common Man”</p> <p>Hannah-Jones, c6 “Capitalism”</p> <p><i>Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano</i> (1789)</p>

Accessing remote courses

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If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak to a confidential resource who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Sexual Assault Dean on Call through the UChicago Safe App or at 773.834-HELP.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at zmel@uchicago.edu.