

**SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

HIS 572-02
CID#: 3956
Early National America
Credit Hours: 3.0
Spring Semester 2008

Instructor: Dr. Tom Cox

Office and On-Line Office Hours: AB4 473, 2:30-4:00 p.m. M/W or by appointment

Contact Info: Phone: 936-294-4804, FAX: 936-294-3938, thc001@shsu.edu

Course Description: This is an on-line course that examines American history from the 1780s to the Civil War. Although America today is the last remaining superpower, for much of its early history it was a small, relatively weak nation struggling to expand, grow, and develop its own identity. This era witnessed the creation of America's system of state and federal governments (embodied in the U.S. Constitution), several wars including the U.S.-Mexican War and Civil War, saw the rise of many of our national heroes (and villains), and saw the creation of a distinctly "American" culture with its own beliefs and values. Throughout the semester, students will study major topics like the creation of the U.S. Constitution, the political struggles of the 1790s, gender roles in the Early Republic, settler-Indian conflicts, and slavery and the Old South.

Learning Objectives: Throughout this semester, our course goals are to:

- Increase your knowledge of early American history from the 1780s to the Civil War.
- Continue to sharpen your critical thinking, writing, and speaking skills.
- Investigate the theoretical concepts and intellectual techniques used by professional historians

Readings: The following books are required reading for the course. Copies may be purchased at the Barnes and Noble Campus Bookstore, Bearkat Books, Kampus Korner or on-line through websites such as amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com. You may use any editions of the works listed below.

Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination*

Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government*

John S. Eisenhower, *So Far From God: The US War With Mexico, 1846-1848*

John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation*

Joseph Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*

Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*

Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution*

Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*

Class Format (Attendance): This is an on-line, graduate level course that differs in many ways from a traditional seminar class. Although on-line courses are flexible in terms of scheduling, they require both initiative and diligence from both professors and students in order to succeed. Although I do not take "attendance," students will have an opportunity on the dates listed in the table below to discuss the course readings and assignments on the discussion section of Blackboard. These discussions will provide excellent feedback on how to interpret the assigned readings and complete your written assignments. Although you will not receive a grade for these discussions *per se*, extra credit will be given to students that provide frequent, outstanding posts on the assigned readings.

Assignments: For this course students will be responsible for reading the eight books listed in the reading section, completing 2-3 book reviews for four of the eight assigned books, and writing a 15-20 page research paper on a historical topic that deals with early American history. All of these assignments must be submitted to the professor as e-mail attachments to thc001@shsu.edu

1. Book Reviews: Your book reviews will consist of short, 2-3 page critiques of you assigned readings. In particular, you will need to identify the author's main thesis in the book, the evidence they use to support their thesis, and the conclusions they draw from their work. You will then have to determine the validity of their argument and whether or not you agree with it, giving specific examples as to why or why not. Throughout the semester, the professors will provide specific book review assignments complete with specific questions to address in order to help take the guesswork out of your reviews. Book reviews must be neatly drafted and double spaced. Proper pronunciation, grammar, and attention to detail will play a role in the final grade for the assignment.

The table at the end of the syllabus provides deadlines for completing your book review assignments. Every two weeks the instructor will post book review assignments, a brief overview of the time period in question, and an article that provides historiographic background for the assigned readings on the assignments section of Blackboard. Assignments are due on the dates specified. If you miss a deadline for a book review, simply move onto the next assignment. Remember, you only have to write four out of eight book reviews. Extensions will not be given except under extraordinary, documentable circumstances. The professor will also post course updates on the Announcement section of Blackboard and e-mail this information to you as well, so it is a good idea to check Blackboard to keep on top of things.

2. Research Paper: *Your research paper will be due on Sun., May 11 by 5:00 p.m.* Although research papers may appear daunting, preparation and attention to detail can take a lot of guesswork out of the process. Keep in mind that you need to construct a 15-20 page paper that addresses some historical topic that deals with Early American history. Your papers may likewise take a variety of forms such as an in-depth examination of a particular historical event (the U.S. Constitution, the siege of the Alamo) or a historical trend (such as the rise of abolitionism or the spread of the Cotton Kingdom). Just make certain that your paper relates to the central time period under consideration. First, select a clear, concise topic that ideally both interests you and that is manageable given your current time constraints. Second, determine what sources you will need to complete the paper. Third, try to keep your paper length manageable. Fourth, your research paper should be typed and double-spaced with standard set margins and type. The professor will post additional research paper guidelines throughout the semester.

Grading: The final grade for this course will be based on four 2-3 page books reviews (worth 12.5% of the final grade each) and a 15-20 page research paper (worth 50% of the final grade) plus possible extra credit for excellent on-line discussions. My grading scale is as follows: A+=97-100, A = 93-96, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C=73-76, C- = 70-72, D = 60-69, F = 59 or lower. Pluses and minuses will be dropped on your final grade for the course.

Academic Honesty: In accordance with Sam Houston State University's Academic Policy Statement 810213, "all students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials." See <http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty> for more information.

Keeping On Top of Assignments: Before each Tuesday's class, I will post lecture outlines, key terms, study questions, and course updates for the upcoming week in the announcement and assignment sections of Blackboard. It's a good idea to consult Blackboard's announcement and assignment sections periodically for updates and changes to the semester schedule.

Americans with Disabilities Act: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any

academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If the student has a disability that may affect adversely their work in this class, then he or she needs to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how they can best be helped. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center. See <http://www.shsu.edu/~vafwww/aps/811006.html> and <http://www.shsu.edu/~vafwww/aps/documents/861001.pdf> for more information.

Religious Holidays: Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

“Religious holy day” means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Visitors in the Classroom: Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom, even a “virtual” classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor’s discretion whether or not he/she will be allowed to remain.

Instructor Evaluations: Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

Assignments: Students will need to complete two 5-6 page reaction papers based on the assigned readings. You will also be given an optional extra credit paper, also based on the assigned readings, due the last day of class before the final exam. All SHSU rules for plagiarism apply to these assignments. The professor will post specific assignment information including the grading system to be used, the types of citation required, etc. on Blackboard throughout the semester.

Required Supplies: Students are required to have access to computers with the appropriate software (i.e. e-mail, internet access, Microsoft Works, and adobe acrobat). Students are also required to buy the books stated above for the class and to secure copies of the additional, on-line readings for the course specified on Blackboard.

Classroom Conduct: Classes tend to run more smoothly if students and professors observe a few basic ground rules. Please be respectful of the professor and other students when participating in blackboard discussions and in your assignments. The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline can be found at <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>

Running Into Problems: Over the course of the semester, you may run into problems that range from falling behind in the course to medical or family related emergencies. If you find yourself in such a situation, please contact me as soon as possible so that we may address the matter directly.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES			
Reading Assignment	Book Review Assignment Posting Date	Dates for On-line discussions about reading assignments	Book Review Due Date
<i>Novus Ordo Seclorum</i>	Wed. Jan. 16	Wed. Jan. 16-Sun. Jan. 27	Sun. Jan. 27 by 5:00 p.m.
<i>Affairs of Honor</i>	Mon. Jan. 28	Mon. Jan. 28-Sun. Feb. 10	Sun. Feb. 10 by 5:00 p.m.
<i>American Sphinx</i>	Mon. Feb. 11	Mon. Feb. 11-Sun. Feb. 24	Sun. Feb. 24 by 5:00 p.m.
<i>Parlor Politics</i>	Mon. Feb. 25	Mon. Feb. 25-Sun. Mar. 9	Sun. Mar. 9 by 5:00 p.m.
<i>Cosmos Crumbling</i>	Mon. Mar. 10	Mon. Mar. 10-Sun. Mar. 23	Sun. Mar. 23 by 5:00 p.m.
<i>Trail of Tears</i>	Mon. Mar. 24	Mon. Mar. 24-Sun. Apr. 6	Sun. Apr. 6 by 5:00 p.m.
<i>So Far From God</i>	Mon. Apr. 7	Mon. Apr. 7-Sun. Apr. 20	Sun. Apr. 20 by 5:00 p.m.
<i>Ar'n't I a Woman?</i>	Mon. Apr. 21	Mon. Apr. 21-Sun. May 4	Sun. May 4 by 5:00 p.m.
Research Paper due by Sun., May 11 at 5:00 p.m.			