

University of Pennsylvania
Department of History

History 11
Deciphering America: Telling Moments in American History
Fall 2015

Professors Kathleen Brown and Walter Licht

This course examines American history from the first contacts of the indigenous peoples of North America with European settlers to our own times by focusing on a few telling moments in this history. The course treats thirteen of these moments and each unit begins with a specific primary document, historical figure, image or cultural artifact to commence the delving into the American past. Some of these icons are familiar, but the ensuing deciphering will render them as more complicated; some are unfamiliar, but they will emerge as absolutely telling. The course meets each week for two fifty-minute team-taught lectures and one recitation session. Course requirements include: ten “before” journal and ten “after” journal entries (instructions for the journal entry exercise are posted on the course’s CANVAS website as “Protocol for Journal Entries”); a take home mid-term exam to be submitted in class on October 14; a final in-class exam during the final exams period; and punctual attendance and full participation in recitations. All readings listed below will be discussed in recitation sections and can be accessed on-line on the course’s CANVAS website; no books have been ordered or placed on reserve.

Grading:

Journal Entries: 40% (See Protocol for Journal Entries)

Mid-Term: 15%

Recitation Attendance and Contribution: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

Schedule of Lectures and Weekly Reading Assignments

August 26: Course Introduction

Recitation Sections will be held this week

UNIT 1: Disease: Demographic Crises of Early America

August 31: Conquest and Disease

Readings: William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation (1634)
 “Vaccinate for Smallpox?” (1721)
 Elizabeth Fenn, “Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffrey Amherst,” Journal of American History, 86 (March 2000): 1552-1580
 Sheldon Watts, Epidemics and History: Disease, Power and Imperialism,
 “Smallpox in the New World and in the Old,” “The Secret Plague, Syphilis,”

UNIT 2: Slavery: The Mobilizing of Labor in Early America and the Construction of Racial Difference

September 2: Servitude, Slavery, and Households: The Mobilizing of Labor in Early America

September 9: Slavery: The Construction of Racial Difference

Readings: Stephanie Smallwood, Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora, “The Political Economy of the Slave Ship” and “Turning American Commodities into Slaves”
 David Eltis, The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas, “Europeans and African Slavery in the Americas”
 “‘As much land as they can handle’: Johann Bolzius Writes to Germany About Slave Labor in Carolina and Georgia, 1750”

UNIT 3: Imperial Wars: The Seven Years War and the American Revolution

September 14: Imperial Wars: The Seven Years War

September 16: The American Revolution: The First Successful Colonial War Against Empire

Readings: Eric Hinderaker and Peter Mancall, At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America, “Clash of Empires” and “Backcountry Revolution”
 Wayne Lee, Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865,
 “‘One Bold Stroke’: Washington and the British in Pennsylvania”
 “Washington as Public Land Surveyor”
 George Washington Diaries, 18 February 1786 (list of slaves for the Mansion House and River Farm)
 Declaration of Independence

UNIT 4: The New Nation

September 21: Constitutionalism

September 23: Expansion

Readings: The Constitution
 Amy Greenberg, Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire,
 “The New Frontier as Safety Valve”
 Excerpts from James Monroe’s address to Congress (1823)
 Kathleen Brown, “A New World Order”

SUNDAY September 27: West Philadelphia Walking Tour

UNIT 5: Philadelphia, 1830-1860: The Antebellum City

September 27: Industrialization in Antebellum America

September 30: Center of Reform

Readings: The West Philadelphia Community History Center, “The History: Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2” <<http://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/wphila/>>
 David Montgomery, “The Shuttle and the Cross: Weavers and Artisans in the Kensington Riots of 1844,” Journal of Social History, 5 (Summer 1972): 411-446
 Excerpt from Lucretia Mott, “The Law of Progress,” Speech delivered at the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, New York, May 9, 1848

UNIT 6: The Civil War

October 5: The Civil War: Causes and Course

October 7: The Civil War: The Question of Emancipation

Readings: Eric Foner, “Our Lincoln,” The Nation, (January 26, 2009)
 Eric Foner, “The Emancipation of Abraham Lincoln,” New York Times, December 31, 2012
 David Brion Davis, “How They Stopped Slavery: A New Perspective,” New York Review of Books, June 2013
 “Louisiana and Black Suffrage”

OCTOBER BREAK: October 7-9 no sections but students may post a journal entry

UNIT 7: Reconstruction and the Agrarian South and West

October 12: Reconstruction

October 14: The Agrarian West and the Dawes Act

Readings: 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution
 Hannah Rosen, Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South, “City Streets and other Public Places” and “A Riot and Massacre”
 Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, “Debt Peonage in the Cotton South After

the Civil War,” The Journal of Economic History, 32 (September 1972): 641-669
 Dawes Act (1887)

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE IN CLASS OCTOBER 14

UNIT 8: Labor, Capital, and Building a New America

October 19: The Rise of the Corporation

October 21: Labor and Capital in Conflict: The Anthracite Coal Strike

Readings: Walter Licht, Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century, “Explosions: Social Unrest in the Late Nineteenth Century and the Remaking of America”
 Preamble of the Knights of Labor (1886)
 The Omaha Platform of the People’s or Populist Party (1892)

UNIT 9: Progressivism

October 26: The Political Dynamics of Progressive Era Reform

October 28: Race, Imperialism, and Reform, 1880-1920

Readings:

Paul Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910,” *The Journal of American History*, 88 (March 2002): 1315-1353
 Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House, “Immigrants and their Children”
 Eileen Boris, “The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the ‘Political’,” in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of the Welfare State
 Mai Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924,” *The Journal of American History*, 86 (June 1999): 67-92

UNIT 10: Prosperity, Depression, and the New Deal

November 2: Boom and Bust

November 4: The New Deal

Readings: Peter Temin, Did Monetary Forces Cause the Great Depression?, “The Fall in the Demand for Money”
 Alan Brinkley, “The New Deal and the Idea of the State,” in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980
 Studs Terkel, Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression, excerpts by Frank Czerwonka, Louis Banks, and Diana Morgan

UNIT 11: World War II and Post-War America

November 9: War II, the Shifting Place of the U.S. in World Affairs, the Cold War and the 1950s

November 11: Race, Sex and Family in World War II and the Post-War U.S.

Readings: Mary L. Dudziak, "Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative," Stanford Law Review, 41 (November 1988): 61-120
Howard H. Chiang, "Sexuality and Gender in Cold War America," in Caroline S. Emmons, ed., Cold War and McCarthy Era: People and Perspectives (2010)

UNIT 12A: Protests and Backlashes: Challenges to the Liberal Consensus from the (New) Left and (New) Right

November 16: The Liberal Consensus

November 18: The New Left and the Protest Movements of the 1960s

Readings: "The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society"
Tom Hayden, "Participatory Democracy: From Port Huron to Occupy Wall Street," The Nation, April 16, 2012: 11-23
Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham"
Malcolm X, "You Can't Hate the Roots of a Tree, and Not Hate the Tree" (speech, 1965)

UNIT 12B: Protests and Backlashes: Challenges to the Liberal Consensus from the (New) Left and the (New) Right

November 23: Backlashes and the Rise of Conservatism

Readings: "The Sharon Statement of Young Americans for Freedom"
Lewis Powell, "Confidential Memorandum: Attack on American Free Enterprise System"
Phyllis Schafley, "Interview with the Washington Star, January 18, 1976"
Paul Weyrich, "Building the Moral Majority," Conservative Digest (August 1979): 18-19

Journal entries for Unit 12 include all three lectures in this unit and both sets of readings

Sections Not Held This Week Due to the Thanksgiving Break**UNIT 13: The Topsy-Turvy Nature of American Economy and Society in Our Own Times**

November 30: Shifting Sands: Socio-Demographic and Economic

December 2: Human Rights, "Private Life," and the State

Readings: Stephen High and David W. Lewis, Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization, “From Cradle to Grave: The Politics of Memory in Youngstown, Ohio”

Peggy Pascoe, What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America, “Lionizing Loving” and “Conclusion: The Ghost of the Past”

December 7: Professors Brown and Licht