

**University of Pennsylvania**  
**Department of History**



History 441  
North American Colonial History  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
at noon  
Spring Semester 2016

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**A General Overview of the Course**

This course explores North American history from the earliest contacts between Europeans and Native Americans in the fifteenth century to the eve of the American Revolution in 1763. Undergraduate and graduate students will attend the same lectures but participate in separate discussion sections, with separate reading lists and course requirements.

We begin with two assumptions. First, we will assume that, because the setting for the story is the place that was eastern North America, our cast of characters should include the many different men and women who struggled to control that place—Europeans from several nations, Native Americans from various cultures, Africans uprooted from diverse societies.

Second, we will assume that the story of the interactions among these many characters must be told on its own terms, rather than as a mere prelude to “real” American history. None of the people who contended for control of the continent—not even those of English descent—dreamed for a moment that their purpose was to create an independent nation called the United States of America. We will try, then, to read the past forward, rather than backward, in order to appreciate something about the diverse lives of colonial North Americans.

**Readings (subject to change)**

The list of books below is tentative, but will give a sense of the scope of what we will be reading. In addition, several scholarly articles and a number of original source documents are required. The latter will be made available on-line to students registered for the course.

Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin, 2002)

Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000)

Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000)

Susan E. Klepp and Billy G. Smith, eds., *The Infortunate: The Voyage and Adventures of William Moraley, an Indentured Servant*, 2d ed. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005)

Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004)

## Course Requirements

**Exams:** A mid-term take-home essay will determine approximately 25%, and a final take-home essay approximately 30% of your grade. Each essay will call for a synthesis of assigned readings and material covered in class.

**Review Essay:** You will choose a scholarly historical monograph as the subject of a 2500-word critical review essay that will also convey some of your generalizations about the course as a whole. Detailed instructions will be distributed later in the semester. This essay, determining about 30% of your grade, is due at our final class meeting.

**Discussion:** Approximately every third class meeting will be devoted entirely to discussion of the assigned readings. This crucial part of the course determines about 15% of your grade. Quality of contributions to discussion, not quantity, is the key factor. Quality can take many forms, but it is difficult to achieve without regular attendance and active participation. Unexcused absences from scheduled discussions will substantially affect your grade.

**E-Mail Reactions to Readings:** To help you prepare for discussion and to provide a way for you to show your involvement outside the classroom, a significant portion of your discussion grade will be based on e-mail responses to the readings. Prior to at least 6 of our 8 scheduled discussion sessions, you must send an e-mail message, in which you summarize in a sentence or two the thesis or theses of the reading assignment and then fill at least one computer screen with reactions and comments. Occasionally, you will be asked to deal with a particular issue, but in most cases these very informal messages should stress your own initial ideas about the readings and how they relate to broader issues being covered in class.