

**History 7001 Colloquium in American History**  
**Prof. Peter C. Hoffer**  
**Fall 2007**

The faculty introduced colloquia to the graduate core in 1981. The purpose of these required courses is to acquaint students with a wide variety of high quality historical works in a particular field so that, in the course of time, students can become teachers at the college level. (In the meantime, it helps prepare students for the preliminary exams.) Our topic is American history from its beginnings to the end of the Civil War.

Coverage of the rapidly changing historiography of such an extensive field would be impossible. Even an selective topical approach—the approach we will adopt—leaves out a number of exciting subjects and superb works. So how are we to make our cut? Because the goal of graduate education is to train you to both teach substance and critical thinking (aka method) we will use this colloquium to learn more about approaches as well as the subject matter of early American history. Each week we'll look at books that demonstrate particular strategies of argument, use of evidence, and style, so that you can apply them to your own work.

I've tried to pick outstanding books that feature innovations in method or approach. Each can serve as a model for you as you pursue your career. Everyone reads the assignment every week and comes prepared to discuss what they have read. Ideally, all I do is start us off, ask a few leading questions, moderate the flow of discussion, and close the session. Participation in discussion is an important part of your grade.

I assign four short (10 pages) essays, I call them “think pieces,” on topics that we will determine together in class. For these, please use appropriate history (Chicago Manual of Style/footnote or endnote) scholarly apparatus.

The university requires the following statements on the syllabus: *All academic work must meet the standards contained in A Culture of Honesty. Each student is responsible [for informing himself or herself] ...about those standards before performing any academic work. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.* In plain terms, feel free to discuss your work with your classmates, but do your own research, reading, and writing. Do not plagiarize from printed sources. Fully annotate your dependence on any source, in or out of copyright, and use direct quotations with proper citations rather than close paraphrase. Cite everything you use that is not common knowledge.

A tentative list of weekly readings follows. Each week we'll do one book (in the order in which they appear) or a portion of the book, as indicated below. It's a lot of reading—try to read for craft (how the author does it) as well as substance. I've ordered the books for you, and they will remain a part of your personal library as you move through your studies here. Welcome aboard.

**Week One: Modernization**

Jon Butler, Becoming America

**Weeks Two-Three: The Brave New World: The Concept of Encounters**

Daniel Richter, Facing East from Indian Country (2001); James Brooks, Captives and Cousins (2002)

**Weeks Four-Six: Making the South Southern**

Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom (1975); Philip Morgan, Slave Counterpoint (1998), pp. 1-317; Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia (1982).

**Weeks Seven-Eight: Why a Revolution?**

T.H. Breen, The Marketplace of Revolution (2004); Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (1967)

**Weeks Nine-Eleven: Places and People in the New Nation**

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife's Tale (1990); Alan Taylor, William Cooper's Town (1995), pp. 1-294; Christine Heyrman, Southern Cross (1997)

**Weeks Twelve-Fourteen: Civil War Stories**

James M. McPherson, For Cause and Comrades (1998); Drew Gilpin Faust, Mothers of Invention (1996); Edward Ayers, In the Presence of Mine Enemies (2003).

**Week Fifteen: Summing Up**