

American Colonies: A Continental History

Professor Alan Taylor

Spring 2024

Course Description

This course examines Spanish, French, Dutch, and British encounters with Native peoples of North America during the initial centuries of colonization: 1492–1800. The course combines the “Atlantic” approach to early America with a “continental” approach that accords dynamism and agency to Native peoples and enslaved African peoples in their relations with colonizers. The course defines colonial America broadly, extending beyond the British colonies of the North American coast to include New France, New Spain, and the West Indies.

Course Readings

1. Berkin, Carol. *First Generations: Women in Colonial America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1996.
2. DuVal, Kathleen, and John Duval, eds. *Interpreting a Continent: Voices from Colonial America*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
3. Lepore, Jill. *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*. New York: Vintage, 2006.
4. Mulcahy, Matthew. *Hubs of Empire: The Southeastern Lowcountry and British Caribbean*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.
5. Taylor, Alan. *American Colonies*. New York: Penguin, 2001.
6. Weber, David J. *The Spanish Frontier in North America: The Brief Edition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards
- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page paper or project of appropriate rigor

Learning Objectives

- Compare (and explain) the different approaches to Native peoples adopted by the French, Spanish, and British colonizers.
- Understand the environmental and cultural impact of colonization on Native peoples

and their land.

- Learn how and why British American society diverged during the eighteenth century from the seventeenth-century origins of English America.
- Learn how and why Britain prevailed in the imperial wars with France and Spain.

Class Schedule

Week One: February 8: First Encounters

Readings

- Taylor, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2
- Weber, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2
- Duval and Duval
 - Christopher Columbus to Luis de Santangel (1493)
 - The Requerimiento (1533)
 - Rock Painting, Pecos River Valley (1500s)

Assignments

- Discussion Board One
 - First post due: Sunday, February 11
 - Second post due: Wednesday, February 14
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Week Two: February 15: New Spain

Readings

- Taylor, Chapters 3 and 4
- Weber, Chapters 3–5
- Duval and Duval
 - Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's Shipwreck off the Texas Coast (1528–1536)
 - Pedro de Castaneda de Navera on the Search for the Seven Cities of Cibola (1540)
 - Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales's Account of the Conquest of Florida (1565)
 - Antonio de Otermín Describes the Pueblo Revolt (1680)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Two
 - First post due: Sunday, February 18
 - Second post due: Wednesday, February 21

- Short Paper One due: Wednesday, February 21
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Three: February 22: New France

Readings

- Taylor, Chapter 5
- Duval and Duval
 - Jacques Cartier's First Voyage (1534)
 - Jacques Marquette on Descending the Mississippi River (1673)
 - Montagnais Indians on Their First Encounter with the French (early 1500s)
 - Samuel de Champlain on Founding Quebec (1608)
 - Great Law of the Iroquois League (1300s)
 - María de Jesús de Ágreda and Catherine Tekakwitha (1600s)
 - Marie de L'Incarnation to Her Son (1667)
 - Father Jacques Gravier Describes Indian Conversions at the Illinois Mission (1694)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Three
 - First post due: Sunday, February 25
 - Second post due: Wednesday, February 28
 - Final Project/Paper Question due: Wednesday, February 28
 - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final project or paper will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing.
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Week Four: February 29: The Chesapeake

Readings

- Taylor, Chapters 6 and 7
- Berkin, Chapter 1
- Duval and Duval
 - John Smith on the Powhatans (1607–1616)
 - Virginia Codes Regulating Servitude and Slavery (1642–1705)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Four
 - First post due: Sunday, March 3
 - Second post due: Wednesday, March 6
 - Short Paper Two due: Wednesday, March 6
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Five: March 7: New England

Readings

- Taylor, Chapters 8 and 9
- Berkin, Chapter 2
- Duval and Duval
 - John Winthrop on Founding New England (1630)
 - John Eliot's Translation of the Bible into the Massachusetts Language (1663)
 - Deodat Lawson Describes Events at Salem (1692)
 - Anne Bradstreet's Prologue to *The Tenth Muse* (1650)
 - Benjamin Franklin Becomes a Printer (1714–1723)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Five
 - First post due: Sunday, March 10
 - Second post due: Wednesday, March 13
 - Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due: Wednesday, March 13
 - Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor's feedback AND
 - Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final project/paper.
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Week Six: March 14: West Indies

Readings

- Taylor, Chapter 10
- Mulcahy, Prologue and Chapters 1–3
- Duval and Duval
 - Hans Sloane Observes Jamaica (1687–1689)

- François Froger's Plan of Fr. St. Jacques, Gambia (1695)
- Olaudah Equiano on Encountering Europeans (1740s)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Six
 - First post due: Sunday, March 17
 - Second post due: Wednesday, March 20
 - Short Paper Three due: Wednesday, March 20
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Seven: March 21: Carolina

Readings

- Taylor, Chapter 11
- Mulcahy, Chapters 4–6
- Duval and Duval
 - Creek Leaders Meet the Trustees of Georgia (1734)
 - Eliza Lucas to Mrs. Boddicott (1740)
 - Afro-Floridians to the Spanish King (1738)
 - George Whitefield Admonishes Southern Slaveholders (1740)
 - Advertisement for a Slave Sale, Charleston (1770s)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Seven
 - First post due: Sunday, March 24
 - Second post due: Wednesday, March 27
 - Short Paper Four due: Wednesday, March 27
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Eight: March 28: Middle Colonies

Readings

- Taylor, Chapter 12
- Berkin, Chapters 3 and 4
- Duval and Duval

- Thomas Campanius Holm's Engraving of New Sweden (1640s)
- New Netherland Act Emancipating Certain Slaves (1644)
- Laws for the Province of Pennsylvania (1682)
- Mary Christina Martin's Case before the German Society of Pennsylvania (1772)

Assignments

- Project/Paper Preview due Wednesday, April 3
 - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper
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Week Nine: April 4: Revolutions

Readings

- Taylor, Chapter 13
- Berkin, Chapter 5
- Lepore, Prologue and Chapters 1–4
- Duval and Duval
 - Runaway Advertisements (mid-1700s)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight
 - First post due: Sunday, April 7
 - Second post due: Wednesday, April 10
 - Short Paper Five due: Wednesday, April 10
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Ten: April 11: Transformations

Readings

- Taylor, Chapters 14 and 15
- Berkin, Chapter 6
- Lepore, Chapters 5–7 and Epilogue
- Duval and Duval
 - Venture Smith, Account of Slavery and Freedom (1700s)

- Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773)

Assignments

- Rough Draft due: Wednesday, April 17
 - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
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Week Eleven: April 18: Heart of the Continent

Readings

- Taylor, Chapters 16 and 17
- Weber, Chapters 6–8
- Duval and Duval
 - Henri Joutel's Account of the Murder of La Salle (1687)
 - Saukamappee on the Coming of Horses, Guns, and Smallpox (1700s)
 - Spiritual and Temporal Guidelines for a Texas Mission (Late 1700s)
 - Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz Describes French Conflict with the Natchez (1729)
 - Louisiana's Code Noir (1724)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Nine
 - First post due: Sunday, April 21
 - Second post due: Wednesday, April 24
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Week Twelve: April 25: Empires

Readings

- Taylor, Chapters 18 and 19
- Weber, Chapters 9–11
- Duval and Duval
 - Susannah Johnson Recalls Her Captivity (1754–1757)
 - George Washington Recalls His Defeats at Fort Duquesne (1754–1759)
 - Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's Journal of the Seven Years War (1756)
 - Pontiac's Speech to an Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Huron Audience (1763)

- Ohio Indians Talk to the British (1764)
- Father Junípero Serra Writes from San Diego (1770)
- Captain James Cook's Third Voyage (1776–1780)
- Catherine the Great's Response to a Petition to Establish a Russian Colony (1788)

Assignments

- Final Project/Paper due: Wednesday, May 1
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Course and Program Policies

It is the responsibility of students to know, understand, and abide by course and program policies.

For a full overview of program policies, review the Gettysburg College–Gilder Lehrman Institute Student Handbook.

Course correspondence

Correspondence with faculty and administrators should be formal. Include a subject line, addressee, and closing. Put the name and number of your course in the subject line.

Plagiarism and AI

This program uses Turnitin to check for instances of plagiarism and AI. Plagiarism and papers composed fully or in part by AI will not be tolerated. This includes self-plagiarism. A student caught plagiarizing or composing papers with AI for the first time may receive a zero on the assignment. A student caught plagiarizing or composing with AI for a second time may be permanently removed from the program.

Your section professor will set the policies for use of AI for research or purposes other than composing your papers.

Late work

Assignments should be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on the due date unless otherwise specified by your section professor. If you think you will be unable to submit an assignment on time, it is your responsibility to contact your section professor to ask for an extension before the assignment's due date. Late assignments will be docked 5% if less than a week late, 10% if one week late, and an additional 10% for each subsequent week.

Grading scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade	Grade Points
A	95%–100%	4
A-	90%–94%	3.67
B+	87%–89%	3.33
B	84%–86%	3
B-	80%–83%	2.67
C+	77%–79%	2.33
C	74%–76%	2
C-	70%–73%	1.67
D+	67%–69%	1.33
D	64%–66%	1
D-	60%–63%	.67
F	0%–59%	0

Assignment Descriptions

Short Papers (25% of grade – 5% per short paper)

Students will complete five short papers. Each should be approximately 500 words long. The purpose of these papers is not to merely summarize weekly readings but to demonstrate that you have read them analytically and contextually. Students have the option of responding to a prompt created by their section professor or to one of their own design. Prompts should reflect the themes discussed in course readings. If you need help getting started, you can complete one of the options listed below.

Complete a thesis identification - Select one of your assigned readings and focus on identifying the thesis as well as the evidence the authors use to support that thesis.

Complete a primary source evaluation - Evaluate a primary source from the Gilder Lehrman Collection or elsewhere. Primary sources must be relevant to that week's readings. Keep the following questions in mind:

- Who is the author of this document?
- Who was their intended audience?

- How might both author and audience impact the content of the document?
- For what reason was this document created?

Complete a book review - Focus on one of the secondary sources assigned in this course and critique it. Keep the following questions in mind:

- What is the author's argument?
- Does the author adequately support their argument?
- Are you convinced of their argument? If not, why not?
- How does this source fit into the larger discussion of its topic?

Discussion Board Posts (18% of grade – 2% per discussion board)

Students will interact in nine discussion boards in this course. Discussion boards are led by section professors, who will provide specific instructions for participation in their section. You are required to make at least one post to each discussion board and respond to **at least two other students**.

Question-and-Answer Sessions (15% of grade – 5% per reaction)

Throughout the semester the lead professor of each course will conduct five Q&As. Students **MUST** attend at least three of these sessions for each course they are taking. **In order to receive credit for attending each Q&A, you must complete a 1–2-paragraph Q&A Reaction within 24 hours of participation.** Note: If you cannot attend three of the five Q&As, you may receive credit by viewing archived Q&As and completing a 500-word review of topics covered for each missed Q&A. **Makeup assignments must be completed within two weeks of the missed Q&A.**

Final Project/Paper (42% of grade)

For the final assignment of each course, you will choose to complete either a research project or 15-page research paper. Research projects are a public-education tool designed for the general population, teachers, and/or students of varying ages. Sample projects include (but are not limited to) vodcasts and podcasts, documentary editing and transcription, websites, annotated readers, walking tours, or museum exhibits. Lesson plans *will not* be accepted. A 5-page paper narrative must accompany the project. Your section professor must approve research projects.

The research paper can be a traditional position paper that uses original research to prove a thesis statement or a historiography paper that critically examines how American historians have interpreted the same event differently and why shifts in historical debates may have occurred.

Both final assignment options require you to ask an open-ended historical question (something that does not have an easy yes or no answer) that you do not yet know the answer to. You will then use the research process (pulling from a variety of resources, mostly primary source documents) to explore that question and create a thesis-driven

answer. Regardless of whether you choose to pursue a project or paper, finals are scaffolded throughout the semester. This method breaks up a large grade into smaller constituent grades and allows time to incorporate instructor feedback into assignments.

Scaffolded Assignments

- Final Project/Paper Proposal (2%)

In roughly 1–2 pages, you should outline the main question, topic, or purpose of your final project or paper. This should include a description of the project or paper you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic (answer the questions who, what, where, and when), a brief description of your research plan (this does not need to be super specific, but should outline how many weeks you plan to research, if you need to schedule research trips or if your sources are published or available digitally, and when you plan to begin writing) and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing (what is the significance of this topic? What does it add to our historical knowledge? Are you filling a gap that other historians have overlooked such as considering race, ethnicity, or gender?)

- Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (3.5%)

This assignment will give you the opportunity to incorporate the feedback you received on the first draft of your proposal. In addition to incorporating your section professor's comments, you will also submit a proposed bibliography listing five sources you plan on utilizing in your research for your final product. Each of these sources should be followed by a brief summary (3–5 sentences) of the source and what it will contribute to your research process.

- Project or Paper Preview (5%)

This will give you the opportunity to show the progress you have made on your final project or paper and get some early-stage feedback from your section professor. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in. For a final paper, this should be roughly the first five pages of what will ultimately be your final submission.

- Rough Draft (10.5%):

For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in. For a final paper, this should be, at minimum, the first ten pages of what will ultimately be your final submission.

- Final Product (21%):

Final Project: Much like the final paper option, a final project is meant to prove that you have mastered the content covered by this course. We encourage you to be

creative in your approach to this project, though it should be equivalent in rigor and workload to a final paper.

Final Paper: Final papers should be at least fifteen pages in length. These can take the form of research papers or historiography papers.

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