EVERYDAY LIFE IN EARLY AMERICA
JULY 22–28, 2012
YALE UNIVERSITY
NOTE: TENTATIVE SCHEDULE, SUBJECT TO CHANGE

INSTRUCTOR:
JOHN DEMOS, Samuel Knight Professor of History, Yale University

GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE STAFF:
JOHN McNAMARA, Master Teacher

REQUIRED READINGS:
2. Selected Readings

COURSE REVIEW:
The seminar will explore central themes and questions relating to everyday life during the colonial period of American history (roughly 1600–1775). An opening pair of units will treat the life cycle as typically experienced in that era—first, around its terminal points (birth and death), then through its various intervening stages. The remaining units will form a trio, comprising inner-life experience (psychology), interpersonal behavior (sociology), and concern with the supernatural (religion, magic, witchcraft, and related matters of cosmology).

Our larger goal is to develop a detailed sense of life on the ground among ordinary folk in this long-ago time and place. Our main focus will be New England—and the history that remains evident in its natural and built landscape—but, wherever possible, reference will be made to other colonial venues as well. Morning sessions will combine lectures with discussion. Afternoon activities will include field trips, library visits, and additional discussion. (The field trips, in particular, will serve to connect us with the material dimension of early American life—the houses, furnishings, gardens, and other surviving artifacts.) A schedule of topics for the morning meetings appears below; it includes readings to be reviewed in conjunction with each unit.
**SCHEDULE:**

Unless otherwise designated, all meals will be held at Calhoun College Dining Hall, and all lectures will be held in Rosenfeld Hall. See daily schedule for times and any alternate locations.

**Sunday, July 22**
3:30 P.M. – 5:00 P.M. Arrive in New Haven. Register and check in at the Swing Dorm, Yale University
5:30 P.M. – 7:00 P.M. Reception in Swing Dorm Courtyard
7:00 P.M. Rosenfeld Hall: Introductory Session

**Monday, July 23**
First unit: The Life Cycle: Birth and Death in Early America
Main themes and questions: the biological, medical, and (especially) social dimensions of childbirth; midwives and doctors, morbidity and mortality, illegitimacy, legal ramifications, concepts, and values; the biological, medical, and social dimensions of death; funeral practices, gravestones, dying as “dramatic performance,” and entrance to the afterlife.

7:30 A.M. – 8:15 A.M. Breakfast
8:30 A.M. All conference attendees must meet with Yale ITS in the Swing Computer Room, 2nd floor, to get Net IDs created for access to Yale’s computer system and personal print accounts.
9:15 A.M. – 10:30 A.M. Lecture, John Demos
10:30 A.M. – 10:45 A.M. Gilder Lehrman Introduction: John McNamara
10:45 A.M. – 11:00 A.M. Break
11:00 A.M. – 12:15 P.M. Discussion groups
12:15 P.M. Depart from Swing Dorm to Historic Deerfield
   Box lunches and drinks will be provided.
4:30 P.M. Depart from Historic Deerfield to Yale University
6:30 P.M. – 7:00 P.M. Dinner

**Readings:**

**Tuesday, July 24**
Second unit: The Life Cycle (continued): Stage and Sequence
Main themes and questions: bounding and defining the “ages of life” (contrasting colonial patterns with current ones): the crisis of infancy; parents to the rescue; childhood and youth, mainly as preparation; coming of age, gradually; midlife as personal culmination; the ambivalent status of the elderly, veneration and resentment.

7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M. Breakfast
9:15 A.M. – 10:30 A.M. Lecture, John Demos
10:30 A.M. – 11:00 A.M. Break
11:00 A.M. – 12:15 P.M. Discussion groups
12:15 P.M. – 2:00 P.M. Coordinator Session
2:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M. Lunch
6:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M. Dinner

**Readings:**

**Wednesday, July 25**

Third unit: The Inner World: Struggles of the Self

Main themes and questions: individual and group character; the management of emotion; anger (socialized and unsocialized); self-esteem and/or self-doubt; links to the punishment system; the criteria of a “good person”; the harmony/hostility axis; shame, guilt, and personal agency; the question of “modern personality”; and change over time.

7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M. Breakfast
9:15 A.M. – 10:30 A.M. Lecture, John Demos
10:30 A.M. – 10:45 A.M. Break
10:45 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. Coordinator Session
12:00 P.M. Depart from Swing Dorm via Peter Pan bus for the Hempstead Houses and the New London Historical Society, New London, CT
Box lunches and drinks will be provided.
5:00 P.M. Depart for New Haven
6:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M. Dinner

**Readings:**

**Thursday, July 26**

Fourth unit: The Interpersonal World: Getting Along with Others

Main themes and questions: living spaces: homes, neighborhoods, villages, central-points; family ties, and the question of emotion (how much? how deep? how tender?); friendship as instrumental and/or affective; “the interpersonal was personal”: density in pre-modern human relationships.

7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M. Breakfast
9:15 A.M. – 10:30 A.M. Lecture, John Demos
10:30 A.M. – 10:45 A.M. Break
11:00 A.M. – 12:15 P.M. Discussion
12:15 P.M. – 1:30 P.M. Lunch
1:30 P.M. – 1:30 P.M. Lecture, Gabrielle Guise
2:30 P.M. – 2:45 P.M. Break
2:45 P.M. – 4:45 P.M. Coordinator Session
5:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M. Dinner

**Reading:**
Friday, July 27
Fifth unit: The Invisible World: Religion, Magic, Witchcraft, and “Wonders”
Main themes and questions: the nearness and importance of the supernatural; the intervening boundary; death and dying (revisited), signs, and “providences”; witchcraft and witch-hunts; up to and including Salem; history as cosmology; religion and science: the Boston smallpox controversy; looking toward the future

7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M.  Breakfast
9:15 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.  Lecture, John Demos
10:30 A.M. – 10:45 A.M.  Break
11:00 A.M. – 12:15 P.M.  Discussion
12:15 P.M. – 1:30 P.M.  Lunch
1:30 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.  Coordinator Session
4:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.  Coffee break
4:30 P.M.  Depart from Swing Dorm for trip to Professor Demos’s home in Tyringham, MA
6:00 P.M.  Farewell dinner
9:30 P.M.  Depart for New Haven

Readings:

Saturday, July 28
9:00 A.M.  Continental breakfast
11:00 A.M.  Check out of Swing Dorm