Course Description:
This course will critically examine a number of major themes and scholarly disputes in early American history, from the pre-contact period to the mid-nineteenth century. Drawing from a number of scholarly disciplines, the class will investigate the historical impact and changing contexts of fear and violence, which set the tone for many of the ideas and actions that motivated people in the colonial, Revolutionary, and early national periods of American history. Specific themes will include crowd violence; wartime violence, atrocity, and “total war”; legal regimes, violent crime, and criminal punishment; rumors, propaganda, and the transmission of fear; domestic violence and sexual violence; slave revolts and the violence of the slave system; and the intersection of violence with themes of empire, intercultural encounters, colonization, and nation-making. Students will use these interrelated topics as their window into a relatively broad chronological period, and they will have opportunities to relate their own research interests to the overall theme of the course.

Please note:
The following syllabus is TENTATIVE ONLY, designed to give an early idea (before registration) of my ideas for readings and assignments. In some cases I have listed a broad range of readings that I am currently considering. This draft does not necessarily indicate specific assigned readings nor the amount of weekly reading (which I aim to keep reasonable). My goal is to post the final syllabus in early summer, with plenty of time for students to purchase books.

Writing assignments:
The principal writing assignment for this class will likely offer students a choice of an analytical research paper based on a limited primary source base OR a historiographical paper on a discrete subject, either of which would be designed to link the themes of the course with students’ own research interests. On a case-by-case basis, it may be permissible for students to pursue a paper that extends beyond “early America” either chronologically or geographically.

Other assignments:
The course will also include small assignments designed to facilitate reading, reaction, and discussion.

Also note:
After conceiving of this course, I came across the syllabus of Matthew R. Bahar of Oberlin College on “Violence and Terror in Early America.” Some of his ideas already aligned with my own, but I also derived inspiration from his syllabus and I wish to credit him here.

WEEK 1: Social Science Approaches to Fear & Violence

**WEEK 2: History of Emotions and Fear**

**WEEK 3: Colonial Beginnings**

**WEEK 4: Eastern Indian Encounters**
Andrew Lipman, “‘A meanes to knitt them togeather’: The Exchange of Body Parts in the Pequot War,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 65 (January, 2008): 3–28

**WEEK 5: The Witchcraft Scare**

**WEEK 6: Fear and Violence in an Expanding Empire**

**WEEK 7: Eighteenth-Century Encounters**

WEEK 8: Fear and Slave Revolt

WEEK 9: The Fearful Power of Rumor and Rhetoric

WEEK 10: Approaches to Crowd Violence in America

WEEK 11: Intimate Violence
WEEK 12: Sexual Violence

WEEK 13: The Culture of War
David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007)

WEEK 14: Fear and the New Nation