This course introduces Ph.D. students to the historiography of the U.S. through the Civil War and prepares students for the First Written Examination or an outside field in US history. One of our primary concerns will be periodization. To what extent should the colonial period be considered a prologue to U.S. history? What’s more important, the origins of distinctly modern or American developments—the making of the United States—or the distinctly early dimensions of seventeenth and eighteenth century North America? What is the status of the Revolution and the Civil War, and the political history that drives or used to drive the narrative of U.S. history between these events, amid transformations otherwise seen as social, cultural, economic? Is there a coherence or continuity to U.S. history beyond the particularities of the early republic or Civil War periods? Are there explanations, or themes, that that cut across centuries and thus can organize the larger story? Another important theme of the course is space, within and beyond the places that became the United States during this period and afterwards. Is U.S. history the story of provinces or regions becoming a nation-state, or of sections of regions converging or diverging? What weight should be given to the local in a moment when historians are reassessing the international or even global nature of early modern as well as modern history? Should “Atlantic” and “continental” approaches change the narrative? Can empire or empires provide a more compelling and honest as well as capacious history while allowing for the different experiences of different groups in different places?

The books and articles we shall discuss include prizewinning narratives, classics that are still in print after decades, recent monographs born as dissertations, leading and lauded (and this year, a brand-new) syntheses, and historiographical essays. An important part of what we will be doing is attempting to read these in light of each other. The reading is extensive, in recognition of the five credits this course carries and its status as a prerequisite for the first qualifying examination. Our goal is to prepare for the exam, of course, but also to prepare to teach this period at the college level and to lay a substantial foundation for future research and teaching in any specialty and period of U.S. history.

Instead of a seminar paper or historiographical essay, each student will write several papers of approximately 1000 words stating the main interventions (historiographical, methodological, structural, theoretical) of a particular assigned book, while also summarizing (by reading available scholarly reviews) the critical response to the book. These papers will be circulated to the entire class on Wednesdays by 7:00pm via email and will serve as jumping off points for our Thursday seminar discussions. These papers will rotate equally among students, in accordance with a schedule determined on the first day of class.

Schedule of readings/discussions
Books with a + are available electronically via the GC library. Articles and book chapters will be posted on Blackboard.

WEEK ONE (Aug. 29): Introduction
Daniel Walker Howe, What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848
[Note: class does not meet on Thurs., Sept. 5; classes follow a Monday schedule]

Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men who Made It* (1948), intro & chaps. 1–6 (pp. v–163)

Required Reading:

WEEK FOUR (Sept. 26): Organizing Early America

WEEK FIVE (Oct. 3): Indigenous and Continental Approaches to Early America
Karin Wulf, “Vast Early America: Three Simple Words for a Complex Reality,” *Humanities* 40,
WEEK SIX (Oct. 10): Atlantic and Imperial Approaches to Early America

WEEK SEVEN (Oct. 17): Questions about the Long Revolutionary Era
Barbara Clark Smith, *The Freedoms We Lost: Consent and Resistance in Revolutionary America* (2009)


WEEK NINE (Oct. 31): “Early Republic” Democracy, Nationalism, Political Culture
Edward Pessen, “We are all Jacksonians, We are all Jeffersonians; or, a Pox on Stultifying Periodizations,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 1 (1981), 1–26


WEEK TEN (Nov. 7): Women and Men at Home, in Public, and on the Move
Rachel Hope Cleves, Charity and Sylvia: A Same Sex Marriage in Early America (2014)
Annette Gordon-Reed, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: an American Controversy (1997; 2000)

WEEK ELEVEN (Nov. 14): Progress and Polity in Antebellum America

WEEK TWELVE (Nov. 21): Slavery Revisited, Capitalism Revisited, Embodied

[Note: class does not meet on Thurs., Nov. 28; CUNY is closed for Thanksgiving]

WEEK THIRTEEN (Dec. 5): The Causes of the Civil War
Gary Gallagher, The Union War (2012)
James Oakes, The Scorpion’s Sting: Antislavery and the Coming of the Civil War (2014)
Scott Hancock, “Crossing Freedom’s Fault Line: The Underground Railroad and Recentering
African Americans in Civil War Causality,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2 (June 2013), 159–92

**WEEK FOURTEEN (Dec. 12): The Course of the Civil War**
Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (2009)
Yael A. Sternhell, “Revisionism Reinvented? The Antiwar Turn in Civil War Scholarship,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3 (June 2013), 239–56

**Tuesday, Dec. 17: FIRST WRITTEN EXAMINATION**