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 concerns will be periodization. In what ways should the colonial period be considered a prologue to U.S. history? 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? When does a division of history into periods or eras help or hinder? Is there a coherence or continuity to the “first half” of U.S. history beyond the particularities of the colonial, revolutionary, early republic, antebellum/Civil War periods? What explanations can 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 as well as expanding? 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 “vast,” “atlantic” or “continental” approaches change the narrative of national development? 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?

Finally, does a renewed appreciation for particularity, for oppression, for group experiences be reconciled with any national narrative? Can we do better than turning a narrative of national progress that othered early America as primitive (or as prelapsarian) into one of illiberal consensus and continuity? To put it differently: if one of the achievements of the literature of US history has been its debunking, critical, myth-breaking ventures, are there limits to those strategies and genres, and where might they be found or transcended?

We will take several deep dives into classic and recent debates and examine how these debates absorb, reflect, and refract these continuing opportunities and dilemmas in the field.

**Written Assignments:**
The books and articles we shall discuss include narrative histories, classics that are still in print after decades, recent monographs born as dissertations, syntheses, analytical 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, your written work for the course will consist of weekly (2-3 page) responses to the readings. I will provide prompting questions that will help us work toward the kinds of writing and analysis the faculty will expect for the examination. These informal short essays will be due Thursdays by 10:00pm via email and may serve as jumping off points for our Thursday seminar discussions.

**Schedule of readings/discussions**
Books with a + are available electronically via the GC library, or (with a *) at NYPL. This semester the course will have a dedicated e-reserve site maintained by the library, instead of physical book reserves. Some articles and book chapters will be posted on Blackboard.

1. **Fri. Aug. 27**  **Introduction: History, Historians, the Nation, and the Present**
   Annette Gordon-Reed, *On Juneteenth* (2021), Preface, ch. 1, 3, Coda (pp. 11-14, 17-29, 57-73, 139-41).

→ Sept. 3 no class

Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men who Made It* (1948), intro & ch. 1-6 (v-163 in older eds.)


Benjamin L. Carp, “Edmund S. Morgan and the Urgency of Good Leadership,” *Reviews in American History*
44 (Mar. 2016), pp. 1-18
(Mar. 2018), 1-17.


→Read one and skim the other:
James H. Merrell, “Second Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 69
(July 2012), 451-512.

5. **Oct. 1  Re-organizing Early America, I: Time and Space, Atlantic and Continental**

Allan Greer, “Commons and Enclosure in the Colonization of North America,” *American Historical Review* 112 (2012),365–86
Karin Wulf, “Vast Early America: Three Simple Words for a Complex Reality,” *Humanities* 40, 1 (winter 2019), online

6. **Oct. 8  Re-organizing Early America, II: Imperial Approaches, Local Perceptions, and Change**

+Richter, *Before the Revolution*, ch. 9-12, pp. 212-323
7. Oct. 15  Re-Organizing and Particular Places: Imperial New York Stories
→ Read two of the following:

AND

Richter, *Before the Revolution*, ch. 14-16 & Epilogue, 346-422


8. Oct. 22 A Long Revolutionary Era and its Long Historiography


9. Oct. 29 Early Republic Democracy, Nationalism, Political Culture and Periods

*John L. Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson* (2010)*

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.


10. Nov. 5 The State and the States: Early Republic Governance, Citizenship, and Expansion

*Bether Saler, *The Settler’s Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America’s Old Northwest* (2014)*


11. Nov. 12  Slavery Revisited, Capitalism Revisited, Embodied

12. Nov. 19  Women and Men at Home, in Public, at Work, and on the Move
"Politics In and Of Women’s History in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 37 (Summer 2016), 313-57.
[ intro by Carole Lasser and short pieces by Ginzberg, Cohen, Hartigan-O’Connor, Stanley, J. Morgan]
→ Read also either:
+Rachel Hope Cleves, *Charity and Sylvia: A Same Sex Marriage in Early America* (2014)
→ No class Nov. 26


14. Dec. 10  New Approaches to the Civil War
→ Read either:
→ And either:
→ And also:
Yael A. Sternhell, “Revisionism Reinvented? The Antiwar Turn in Civil War Scholarship,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2 (June 2013), 239-256
Kevin M. Gannon, “The Civil War as a Settler-Colonial Revolution,” *Age of Revolutions* blog, Jan. 18, 2016