

HIST 241
Early America



Dr. James Paxton

Comenius 306

**Office Hours: Tuesday 8:40–11:00; Thursday 8:40–11:00; or by
appointment**

jpaxton@moravian.edu

610-625-7897

Course Description

Welcome to 241: Early America. For many Americans, colonial history is synonymous with the thirteen English-speaking colonies that became the United States. But colonial America was a large, crowded, and diverse place that stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific and from Hudson's Bay in the north to the tip of South America. Within this arena, Native, English, Spanish, French, Dutch, Russian, Swedish, and African peoples met, intermingled, and jostled for power. The impossibility of conveying New World societies in all their complexity and variety forces us to focus on a limited number of actors and a narrow range of themes, such as American exceptionalism, the nature of cultural contact, and the rise of racism and race slavery. This broadly comparative course will explore common themes in English, French, and Spanish speaking North America. It will focus on the evolving relationships between America's founding people, Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans, and the societies they created together.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will have enhanced your abilities to:

- Locate, evaluate, and use secondary sources.
- Identify major schools of thought and historiographical debates that have shaped historians' understanding of the colonial period.
- Use writing conventions appropriate to the discipline of history.
- Become familiar with the main events and themes in colonial American history.
- Understand the role of Native peoples and Africans in the development of New World societies.
- Develop clear and effective oral and written communications skills.

Required Texts

Philip Otterness, *Becoming German* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

Timothy Breen and Stephen Innes, *Myne Owne Ground* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, & the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Required texts are available in the Moravian College bookstore. Additional readings are available on JSTOR or will be placed on reserve in Reeves Library and the History Department Common Room.

Attendance

While there is no formal penalty for missing classes, students are strongly encouraged to attend all classes. Success in the course depends upon comprehension of the lecture material and participation in class discussions. Lateness will not be tolerated.

Please turn off or mute all electronic devices in the classroom.

Grade Distribution

Scavenger Hunt	2%
Topic	3%
Bibliography	5%
Essay 1	10%
Essay 2	15%
Reading Logs (10x2%)	20%
Participation	20%
Final Exam	25%

The participation grade will reflect the quality and quantity of your contributions to class. It is not an attendance grade.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

In this course, you will undertake two different types of writing, each with a particular set of conventions and each for a different audience.

Major Assignments

1) Review a movie or documentary or compare two movies pertaining to the colonial or revolutionary period. The paper should be three to four pages long and written in formal academic prose. A list of approved movies and subjects will be handed out in class.

2) Write a ten-page historiographical essay. A historiographical essay provides comment and analysis on a number of works pertaining to one subject. Do not summarize the contents of the books. Instead, write a coherent essay with a thesis that assesses how historians have interpreted the topic over time. You will choose an appropriate subject in consultation with the instructor. You must utilize at least five books or an equivalent number of articles.

I have placed two collections of historiographical essays on reserve in Reeve's Library. Once you have chosen a topic, you should consult the appropriate essay.

Morgan, Gwenda, *The Debate on the American Revolution* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007). A collection of essays on various aspects of the American Revolution.

Daniel Vickers, ed. *A Companion to Colonial America* (Blackwell, 2003). A collection of essays on various aspects of the American Revolution.

Reading Logs. Throughout the semester you will be keeping weekly reading logs in which you identify and evaluate the thesis, arguments, and evidence of articles and books you read. I will hand out forms which you can use to model your logs. I will read every log entry to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading and take them seriously. In terms of format and style, logs may be less formal than the essays. They will be graded for content, regularity, and willingness to engage with ideas, rather than for stylistic concerns such as spelling and grammar. Nonetheless, I do expect you to proofread your

reading logs before handing them in. Reading logs are due at the **beginning** of class. Late logs will not be accepted. Logs will receive a grade of 3-, 3, 3+.

Late Policy

Papers turned in after the beginning of the class on which they are due will be assessed a penalty of 5% for the first day they are late and 2% for each day thereafter. I do not accept late reading logs. They must be turned in at the beginning of the class in which they are due. Computer and printing problems are not acceptable reasons for lateness. I do **not** accept essays or logs via email.

Academic Dishonesty

According to the Moravian College Student Handbook, the following constitutes plagiarism: “as the use, deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgment.” Plagiarism will result in the offender receiving zero in the course. Please consult the Student Handbook for fuller details.

Students with Disabilities

Students with physical, learning, or medical disabilities should speak to me and contact Laurie Roth, Director of the Learning Center, to arrange the appropriate accommodations. Please make these arrangements in the first weeks of the semester.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction: The Historiography of Early America

Aug. 29

Week 2: Old Worlds and New

Sept. 5

COMMON READING

Otterness, *Becoming German*, 1-77.

Neal Salisbury, "The Indians Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans," *William and Mary Quarterly* (July 1996): 435-58. JSTOR

- Reading Log Due
- Library Visit

Week 3: Natives and Newcomers

Sept. 12

COMMON READING

James H. Merrell, "Indian History During the English Colonial Era," in Daniel Vickers, ed., *A Companion to Colonial America* (Blackwell, 2003), 118-137.

BLACKBOARD

Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience." *William and Mary Quarterly* 40 (1983): 528-559. JSTOR

Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 178-198. BLACKBOARD

- Reading Log Due
- Scavenger Hunt Due

Week 4: New World Societies

Sept. 19

COMMON READING

Otterness, *Becoming German*, 78-170.

AND READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 122-146. BLACKBOARD

W.J. Eccles, "Institutions and Environment" and "Society and the Frontier," in *The Canadian Frontier, 1535-1760* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), 60-102. BLACKBOARD

- Reading Log Due
- Topics for Historiographical Essay Due

Week 5: Slavery and Freedom, Part 1

Sept. 26

COMMON READING

Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on Mainland British North America," *American Historical Review* 85 (1980): 44-78. JSTOR
Oscar Handlin and Mary Handlin, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," *William and Mary Quarterly* 7 (1950): 199-222. JSTOR
Edmund Morgan, Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *Journal of American History* 59 (1972): 5-29. JSTOR

Week 6: Slavery and Freedom, Part 2

Oct. 3

T.H Breen and Stephen Innes, *Mine Owne Ground: Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). Entire book.

- Reading Log Due
- Bibliography of 10 books due

Week 7: Witchcraft

Oct. 10

COMMON READING

John Demos, "Communities: The Social Matrix of Witchcraft," *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (1982), 275-312.

BLACKBOARD

Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (New York: Vintage, 1989), ch. 4.

BLACKBOARD.

Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 3-12; 295-304. BLACKBOARD

- Reading Log Due
- Bibliography Due

Week 8: Britain's Other Colonies

Oct. 17

Michael Craton, "Reluctant Creoles: the Planters' World in the British West Indies" in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1991), 314-362. BLACKBOARD

Jack P. Greene, "The Continuing Connection Between Barbados and South Carolina," in Philip D. Morgan, ed., *Diversity and Unity in Early North America* (London: Routledge, 1993), 245-53. BLACKBOARD

- Reading Log Due
- Essay One (Movie Review) Due

Week 9: Women

Oct. 24

COMMON READING

Mary Beth Norton, "The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America," *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 593-619. JSTOR

AND TWO OF THE FOLLOWING

Lyle Koehler, *A Search for Power: The "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), BLACKBOARD

Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experiences of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *WMQ* (Oct. 1977): 542-71. JSTOR

Jan Noel, "New France: Les femmes Favorisees," in C.M. Wallace and R.M. Bray, eds., *Reappraisals in Canadian History: Pre-Confederation* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Allyn and Bacon), 44-71.

- Reading Log Due

Week 10: The Imperial Crisis

Oct. 31

COMMON READINGS

Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 27-42. BLACKBOARD

AND READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

Edmund S. Morgan. *The Birth of the Republic, 1763-1789* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 14-27.

T.H. Breen, "Baubles from Britain: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (1988), 73-104. JSTOR

AND READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 44-59.
BLACKBOARD

Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 30-41. BLACKBOARD

- Reading Log Due

Week 11: Origins of the American Revolution Part 1

Nov. 7

Holton, *Forced Founders*, 1-129.

- Reading Log Due

Week 12: Origins of the American Revolution Part 2

Nov. 14

Woody Holton, *Forced Founders*, 131-220.

- Reading Log Due

Week 13

Nov. 21

- Final Paper Due

Week 14: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS

Nov. 28

Week 15: The Meaning of the Revolution

Dec. 5

COMMON READING

Edmund S. Morgan, "Conflict and Consensus in the American Revolution," *Essays on the American Revolution* (1973), 289-309. BLACKBOARD

AND TWO OF THE FOLLOWING

Alan Taylor, "The Divided Ground: Upper Canada, New York, and the Iroquois Six Nations, 1783-1815," *Journal of the Early Republic* (2002): 55-75.

BLACKBOARD

Birte Pfleger, "'Miserable Germans': and Fries's Rebellion: Language, Ethnicity, and Citizenship in the Early Republic," *Early American Studies* 2 (Fall 2004): 341-361. BLACKBOARD

BLACKBOARD

David Waldstreicher, "Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism," *Journal of American History* (June 1995): 37-61. JSTOR

- Reading Log Due

Author:
Title:
Thesis:
Supporting Arguments:
Evidence:
Assessment:

LIBRARY SCAVENGER HUNT

1. Find a dissertation written by a faculty member in the department of history.
2. Locate a book written by Philip Morgan.

Essay One: Movie Review

Complete one of the following assignments.

Assignment 1

The way movies, television, and the internet depict past people and events powerfully shape popular perceptions of history. While some director's tout their movie's authenticity, they are usually referring to costuming, set designs, and lighting rather than any attempt on their part to render characters as complex, three-dimensional beings. This assignment asks you to critically assess movies as sources of history. Watch and compare *Black Robe* with either *The Mission* or *Last of the Mohicans*. How do these movies depict Native Americans? What possibilities do these movies hold out for co-operation between Europeans and Natives? In what ways do these movies replicate old stereotypes either about European settlers and/or Native peoples? What have the directors done or failed to do to make this movie an "accurate" portrayal of the past?

Assignment 2

Documentaries seem to have little in common with the books and articles historians employ in their own work. Documentary filmmakers rely on images and narration to convey their understanding of the past. Unlike academic books and articles, they seek to entertain as well as inform. Nevertheless, documentaries, like books, have a thesis or main argument. Through the selected use of images and quotations, directors seek to make their view of the past persuasive. As viewers, we must critically assess Watch either the PBS documentary *The War that Made America* or the HBO miniseries *John Adams*. What is the thesis or argument that drives these two filmic accounts of colonial and revolutionary America? Why, for example, do the directors believe that their subject was so important?

Word of Warning

This essay is a critical assessment of the movies and documentaries as sources of history. It is not a movie review. Do not tell me how many thumbs up (or down) the movie received, assess the acting, special effects, the realism of the action or dullness of the plot.