Introduction

This course will cover the history of the United States from the American Revolution to the antebellum crisis preceding the Civil War. Students should note that this is a reading- and writing-intensive course. We will approach this era exclusively through biography.

Student Learning Outcomes

When the course is complete students will know:

• The major events in the United States of the period 1787 – 1854
• The ways in which individual lives shaped those events
• The arguments for and against slavery in the United States
• The outcomes of military engagements and how war helped create the United States
• The nature of interactions among red, black, and white people in shaping the early Republic

Course Materials

The first day of class students will be placed into a Reading Group designated A, B, or C. Each student must buy all the books in their assigned category. The books in each category are listed below.

Reading Group A


Reading Group B

2) Buckner F. Melton, Jr., Aaron Burr: Conspiracy to Treason ( John Wiley & Sons, 2002).

Reading Group C

Course Construction

The course is split into five chronological periods, 1787-1812; 1812-1820; 1836-1848; 1845-1854. In addition, the class will be split into three Reading Groups containing about ten students each. The first day of class you will be assigned to Reading Group A, B, or C. Those in Reading Group A will be required to buy and read the five Reading Group A books above. Likewise, those in Reading Groups B and C will have to buy and read the books in their categories. When we come to class each day, the three groups will split up and discuss their readings for 15 minutes, identifying themes each would like to discuss. Then, we will have a 45-minute, full-class discussion that reveals the history of the people in the young republic, the political and social circumstances they encountered, and the ways in which conflicts were resolved. The last 15 minutes of class I will reconstruct the product of our discussion to clarify chronology and historical detail, as well as reconciling the perhaps opposing points of view offered by the various authors under consideration.

You must buy the books and bring them to class. I have chosen books that should not be very expensive at the book store. And many of them are quite cheap on Amazon. You could also check Powells.com and Half.com. You should take notes on your reading, identifying what you find to be the important events, people, and places elemental to our understanding of the early United States.

At the end of each three week period, a 2- to 3-page book review about the book you read for that period will be due. This review should include the book’s thesis, the basics of its historical argument, and a brief discussion of the book’s content—its story, if you will. You should assume I’ve read the book. You should not offer a play-by-play account of the events recounted in the book. This is to be a critical analysis providing me with your interpretation of the book’s usefulness for the study of the early American republic. For exact dates, see the calendar below. Reviews should be composed in 12-point Times New Roman with normal margins. If you quote from the book, you will need to cite the author and page number. Please see the admonition against plagiarism in “Important Details” below.

There will be a final exam from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 12. It will ask you to tell the story of the early national period, including the perspectives of your authors. The final exam date is also on the calendar below.

Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five book reviews</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>(4 points per week; two points per class session)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
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As you can see, discussion is crucial to your success. It is impossible to pass the course if you refuse to speak. Discussion includes your participation in the daily preparation meeting with your Reading Group, but participating there will not assure full credit for discussion. I expect you to contribute to the general effort of recreating the history of this era by providing your insights into it gleaned from your reading. Questions as well as comments count toward discussion credit, so if you do not understand something, speak up about it. Your colleagues will appreciate it because they, too, seek clarity.
**Important Details**

- You can miss class four times. More than four absences reduces your grade by 5 points for each absence beginning with the fifth. Save your absences for illness or emergency.
- All assignments will be completed and submitted on schedule. Makeup work, except in the most extreme circumstances, is not acceptable. If such a circumstance can be anticipated, you **must** see me ahead of time. If it cannot, documentation will be required.
- The Writing Center can help you with construction of your essays. In addition, I will be happy to read drafts. The Writing Center (942-2093) is in the library (305C).
- **Plagiarism is the worst of academic crimes and will not be tolerated.** Plagiarism is representing someone else’s work as your own. If you plagiarize you will fail the course on the first offense. If you do not know what plagiarism is, please see me. ASU has an honor code that binds students and faculty to academic integrity. Please read it in the Student Handbook, [http://www.angelo.edu/forms/pdf/honorcode5.pdf](http://www.angelo.edu/forms/pdf/honorcode5.pdf), pp 30-34.
- If you have a documented disability or disorder that requires special consideration for you to complete the class successfully, please see me in my office at your earliest opportunity so we can arrange accommodations.
- Turn off your cell phones before class starts unless you’re waiting for an organ transplant or word about a close relative’s death. Inform me before class in either case.
- Do not check the cell phone you didn’t turn off for text messages during class. I will deduct 10 points from your grade each time I catch you doing so.
- You may not take notes on electronic devices—computers, iPhones, or cell phones.
- I will provide you with Blue Books for the final exam.

**Course Calendar**

**1787-1812**

**Week 1**
- August 29
  - Introduction to course
- August 31
  - Lecture on highlights of the period under consideration—this will be the only lecture this semester.

**Week 2**
- September 5
  - Discussion of Tecumseh, Madison, and Jefferson. How did their youthful experiences differ from one another?
- September 7
  - Discussion of Tecumseh, Madison, and Jefferson. As these men matured, what inspired them to leadership?

**Week 3**
- September 12
  - Discussion of Tecumseh, Madison, and Jefferson. What inflamed the passions of these men? What events led to those passions?
- September 14
  - Discussion of Tecumseh, Madison, and Jefferson. At the height of their powers, what were the most important events of the era? How did those events affect each man?
Week 4
September 19
Discussion of Tecumseh, Madison, and Jefferson. How did the people they led react to each man’s ideas?

September 21
Discussion of Tecumseh, Madison, and Jefferson. At the end of their lives, how were these men seen by their people and other people?

1812-1820
Week 5
September 26

September 28
Discussion of Decatur, Burr, and Beecher. Inspiration to leadership.

Week 6
October 3
Discussion of Decatur, Burr, and Beecher. Passions

October 5
Discussion of Decatur, Burr, and Beecher. Important events in their era.

Week 7
October 10
Discussion of Decatur, Burr, and Beecher. Reactions of people around them

October 12
Discussion of Decatur, Burr, and Beecher. End of life.

1820-1836
Week 8
October 17
Discussion of Andrew Jackson, Sam Houston, and Nat Turner. Youthful experiences

October 19
Discussion of Jackson, Houston, and Turner. Inspiration to leadership.

Week 9
October 24
Discussion of Jackson, Houston, and Turner. Passions.

October 26
Discussion of Jackson, Houston, and Turner. Important events in their era.

Week 10
October 31
Discussion of Jackson, Houston, and Turner. Reactions of people around them.

November 2
Discussion of Jackson, Houston, and Turner. End of life. Spring Break
1836-1848

Week 11
November 7
November 9
Discussion of Lincoln/Douglas, Stanton, and Polk. Inspiration to leadership.

Week 12
November 14
November 16
Discussion of Lincoln/Douglas, Stanton, and Polk. Important events in their era.

Week 13
November 21
Discussion of Lincoln/Douglas, Stanton, and Polk. Reactions of people around them and ends of careers (or lives).
November 23
No Class—Thanksgiving break

1845-1854

Week 14
November 28
Discussion of Celia, Henry Clay, and Dred Scott. Youthful experiences.
November 30
Discussion of Celia, Clay, and Scott. Inspirations (is Celia a leader?)

Week 15
December 5
Discussion of Celia, Clay, and Scott. Passions.
December 7
Discussion of Celia, Clay, and Scott. Important events in their era.

Final Exam: 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 12