

## HIST 715 Vast Early America

Spring 2018  
T 9-11:30  
Omohundro Seminar Room

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What, where, and when is “early America?” The Omohundro Institute has long described its purview as “the history and cultures of North America from circa 1450 to 1820 [and] related developments in Africa, the British Isles, the Caribbean, Europe, and Latin America,” but even this may be too limiting. The intensely and complexly interrelated histories of the peoples of four continents over four centuries demand a broad perspective, even while we want to know ever more detail about developments on the ground. Multiple languages—native, European, African—and different kinds of sources ask for different kinds of investigation and skill. How can we see it all?

This seminar attempts to survey the breadth of this vast early American field. To appreciate this vastness, we will read widely in the chronological, geographical, disciplinary and methodological diversity of the field. There is no way to do this entirely satisfactorily—there may be too much older literature, too little breadth, or too little grounding and too much reach. The point is to try, and in the effort to appreciate the task.

The course is explicitly historiographical. A common core of readings will be supplemented by additional readings as listed on the syllabus for each week. The goal is to build a picture not only of the field’s general framework, but also of some of the animating methodological and interpretive issues. We will not move chronologically, but rather explore various places and times in context, both in terms of the historical past and developments in the history of early America. This means reading books that have inaugurated specific developments in the field, looking to understand their position in their own time as well as subsequently.

### **Course Reading**

Each week includes “common” readings (one, sometimes two books, often an additional essay) and additional readings. The latter category offers three opportunities for engaging with and understanding the historiographical development of arguments and methods: weekly, every student should be familiar with at least one of these readings of their choice; the first paper (a review); and the second paper (an historiographical essay). Do not mistake the common readings for the most important or the most influential. Rather, I built this list with an eye to how the common and additional readings might represent key areas of critical inquiry. There are deep historiographical traditions and emerging debates suggested here by single works. They should, collectively, give you a frame of reference for an incredibly rich and dynamic field.

Book chapters will be included as either links or PDFs on the Blackboard site; journal articles can be found via JSTOR or Project MUSE. The following books, in their entirety, are included in the common readings:

Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (2007)

Timothy Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (2005)

Kathleen Duval, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (2006)

Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Empire, 1560-1660* (2008)

Michele McKinley, *Fractional Freedoms: Slavery, Intimacy and Legal Mobilization in Colonial Lima* (2017)

Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial* (1975)

Jean O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (2010)

Andrew O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (2000)

Sarah Rivett, *Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (2011)

Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (2007)

Laurel Ulrich, *Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary* (2000)

David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640* (2016)

Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (2012)

Gordon Wood, *Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (1969)

### **Course Requirements**

Participation	45%
Paper # 1	25%
Paper # 2	30%

The most important responsibility of each student in this course is to participate fully and productively in the work of the seminar. A seminar is an intellectual community—at least for the duration of the term, and hopefully beyond. Every seminar member must be committed to reading and engaging with the course materials. Having read the assigned material every person brings a useful perspective to the table, and must be willing to share it.

To further facilitate discussion in class, we will use Blackboard’s discussion forum. There, *by 6PM of the Sunday preceding each class meeting*, each student will post 2 questions/comments in that week’s forum. More detail on the format for discussion questions is in the description for the Jan. 30 forum.

For the first class meeting, Jan. 23, note information about the comparative archives project on Blackboard.

Both papers assignments require thinking and writing historiographically. Historians write for many reasons, primary among them is to contribute to the field of historical knowledge. We do this by reference to other scholars’ work, acknowledging the collaborative labor of knowledge production. Historiography, done best, reflects both the history of history and the relationships among historical works. (And it’s fascinating—honest.)

For the first paper, due at any time between February 23 and March 9, students will write a review of a book on the “also” list. The review will offer an assessment of the book (evidence and argument) and its position within the literature. How to assess this position? Review what the author is aiming to do, and how the author sees their work contributing to larger arguments. I do not expect your review to be definitive, but rather a first effort at grappling with a corner of the field. This essay should be 5-7 pages in length, and make use of notes as necessary. For models, see reviews in the *William and Mary Quarterly* and *Reviews in American History*.

The second paper, due May 1, should consider collectively the historiographical relationship(s) within and among one cluster of works—core and additional readings, as well as an additional one or two books or key essays that you identify. This essay should be 8-10 pages and include notes.

*All writing assignments should be submitted to me by email, as a PDF.*

### **Course Schedule**

**Jan. 23** Introduction: The Archive of Vast Early America  
(Student posts on comparative archives’ histories)

Light reading: Student posts on comparative archives

Wulf: <https://blog.oieahc.wm.edu/for-2016-appreciating-vastearlyamerica/>

Wulf: <https://blog.oieahc.wm.edu/discoverability-edwardian-style/>

Piker: <https://blog.oieahc.wm.edu/getting-lost/>

- Also: Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995)  
 Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2010)  
 Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (UPenn, 2016)  
 Stephanie Smallwood, "The Politics of the Archive and History's Accountability to the Present," *History of the Present* (2016), 117-132  
 Jean O'Brien, "Historical Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies: Touching on the Past, Looking to the Future," in Andersen and O'Brien, *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies* (2017)

**Jan. 30** Geographies: Continental Early North America

Common: Barr, *Peace Came in the Shape of a Woman*  
 Barr and Countryman, "Maps and Spaces, Paths to Connect, and Lines to Divide" (PDF on Blackboard)

Also: Martin Bruckner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (2006)  
 Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (2012)  
 Elizabeth Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A history of the Mandan People* (2014)  
 Paul Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* (2013)

**Feb. 6** Comparative Imperial Projects

Common: Games, *Webs of Empire*  
 Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*

Also: Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review* (2006), 741-757  
 John Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Spain and Britain in America, 1492-1830* (Yale UP, 2006)  
 Elijah Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery" *American Historical Review* (2007), 764-786

Pernille Roge, 'La Clef de commerce': The Changing Role of Africa in France's Atlantic Empire," *History of European Ideas* (2008), 431-43.

Allan Greer, "Commons and the Enclosure in the Colonization of North America," *American Historical Review* (2012), 365-386.

Lauren Benton and Richard Ross, "Empires and Legal Pluralism: Jurisdiction, Sovereignty, and Political Imagination in the Early Modern World" in *Legal Pluralism and Empires: 1500-1850* (NYU, 2015).

**Feb. 13** Slavery and Slavery's Diasporas

Common: Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*

Also: Sue Peabody, *There are no Slaves in France: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Regime* (Oxford, 1996)

Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Harvard, 1998)

Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Gender and Reproduction in the New World* (UPenn, 2004)

Alex Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants Across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (LSU, 2008)

Vincent Brown, *The Reapers Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Harvard, 2008)

Matthew Restall, *The Black Middle: Africans, Mayas and Spaniards in Colonial Yucatan* (Stanford, 2009)

Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (OI, 2013)

**Feb. 20** Epistemologies: Religion and Natural Science

Common: Rivett, *Science of the Soul*

Christopher Parsons, "The Natural History of Colonial Science: Joseph-François Lafitou's Discovery of Ginseng and its Afterlives" *WMQ* (2016)

Also: Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Harvard, 1992)

Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (OI, 2006)

James Sweet, *Domingo Alvarez, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (UNC, 2011)

Susan Juster, *Sacred Violence in Early America* (UPenn, 2016)

Ann Little, *The Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright* (YaleUP, 2016)

James Delbourgo, *Collecting the World* (2017)

**Feb. 27** Law and Legal Practice

Common: McKinley, *Fractional Freedoms*

Also: Tomlins and Mann, *The Many Legalities of Early America* (OI, 2001)  
 Lauren Benton and Richard Ross, *Legal Pluralism and Empires: 1500-1850* (NYU, 2015).  
 Mary Sarah Bilder, *Madison's Hand: Revising the Constitutional Convention* (Harvard, 2015)  
 Ann Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness: Pardos, Mulattoes and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Stanford, 2015)

**Mar. 6** **SPRING BREAK**

**Mar. 13** American Republics

Common: Ulrich, *Midwife's Tale* and Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*

Also: Carroll Smith-Rosenburg, "Dis-covering the Subject of the Great Constitutional Debates, 1786-1789," *Journal of American History* (1992), 841-73.  
 David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (OI, 1997)  
 Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (UPenn, 2008)  
 Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (Liveright, 2017)  
 Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (New Press, 2017)

**Mar. 20** Middle Ground, Native Ground

Common: Kathleen Duval, *Native Ground*

Also: "Forum: The Middle Ground Revisited," *William and Mary Quarterly* (2006) 3-96.  
 Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (UPenn, 2006)  
 Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (YaleUP, 2009)  
 Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Illinois UP, 2009), Ballantyne and Burton, "Introduction, the Politics of Intimacy in an Age of Empire";  
 Michael McDonnell, "Il a Epousé une Sauvagesse": Indian and Métis Persistence Across Imperial and National Borders"

Robert Morrissey, *Empire by Collaboration: Indians, Colonists and Governments in Colonial Illinois Country* (UPenn, 2015)

Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (YaleUP, 2018)

**Mar. 27** Political Economies and Politics of Trade

Common: Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*

Also: Peter Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (OI, 2004)

Seth Rockman *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery and Survival in Early Baltimore* (JHU Press, 2008)

Nicholas Robins, *Mercury, Mining and Empire: The Human and Ecological Cost of Colonial Silver Mining in the Andes* (Indiana UP, 2011)

Will Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752* (OI, 2013)

Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, "Gender's Value in the History of Capitalism" *Journal of the Early Republic* (2016)

**Apr. 3** Cultures and Politics of (whose?) Things

Common: White, *Wild Frenchmen*

Also: Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Cornell UP, 2008)

David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (Yale UP, 2009)

Cécile Fromont, *The Art of Conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo* (OI, 2014)

Zara Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World*, (Yale UP, 2016)

Cathy Matson, "Putting the Lydia to Sea: The Material Economy of Shipping in Colonial Philadelphia," *William and Mary Quarterly* ( 2017), 303-332.

**Apr. 10** Atlantic Revolutions

Common: O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*

John R. McNeill *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean* (Cambridge, 2010) Part III "Revolutionary Mosquitoes"

Also: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (OI, 2004)

Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (Yale UP, 2009)

Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*  
(Cambridge UP, 2014)

Janet Polasky, *Revolutions Without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (Yale UP, 2016)

**Apr. 17** American Revolution?

Common: Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*  
Michael McDonnell and David Waldstreicher, "Revolution in the *Quarterly*? A  
Historiographical Analysis" *William and Mary Quarterly* (2017), 633-66

Also: Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Harvard UP,  
1967)  
Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (OI, 2009)  
Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*  
(Penguin, 2011)  
Claudio Saunt, *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776*  
(W.W.Norton, 2015)  
Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the  
American Revolution* (OI, 2016)

**Apr. 24** How do we get to which early America?

Common: O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*

Also: James F. Brooks, *Mesa of Sorrows: A History of the Awatovi Massacre* (W.W.  
Norton, 2016)  
Christine Delucia, "Fugitive Collections in New England Indian Country:  
Indigenous Material Culture and Early American History Making at Ezra  
Stiles's Yale Museum," *William and Mary Quarterly* (2018), 109-150.

**May 1** Final Papers Due