The United States in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World

With global expansion from the spread of warfare, commerce and credit, exploration, New World Colonization, technological innovation, and religious reformation and counter-reformation, the seventeenth century saw the spread of knowledge and experience of the world through human interaction in the form of conflict, economic exchange, and cultural creativity. Extensions of human geography and puzzling encounters with strange people, gods, material culture, and flora and fauna in exotic places, also formed the basis of a remarkable convergence of science, art and culture between east and west during this period. The purpose of this lecture course is to begin to map just a few of the major patterns in this enormous global process as they touch upon the various regions of Spanish, British, and French North America during the earliest period of settlement.

Lectures will take place on both Tuesday and Thursday, but Thursday’s lecture will be preceded by a 30-minute discussion of the weekly reading outlined on Blackboard at least one week before, and led by your Teaching Assistant (Mary Katherine Matalon).

Requirements: Midterm and Final Essay Examinations, one 2-page book review on Facing East from Indian Country, and a quiz on Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire. Review will be due one week after the book is scheduled on BB for discussion in class. Study questions will be provided at least a week before the exams.

The history department (and the University of Texas at Austin) has a zero-tolerance policy concerning plagiarism. Please read the department’s statement on its website on how to avoid plagiarism before writing your book reviews, so there will be no confusion about this important matter. Grading percentages are not written in stone but may be calculated roughly as follows: midterm (30%), final (40%), book review (20%), and quiz (10%). Please note: while there are no explicit percentages for class participation listed in this framework, enthusiastic engagement with the readings during discussions is expected and will be rewarded in the final grade. As a result, those of you who do not participate will suffer by comparison. Dates assigned to specific lectures listed on the syllabus are flexible as are the lectures themselves and may vary at the instructor’s discretion. Failure to complete any single assignment will constitute automatic failure for the entire course. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259.
Required Readings / Date and page selections TBA on Blackboard: Books available at Coop for purchase (but it may be worth it to shop around online) and on reserve (PCL):


Weeks 1-7—Part One: Dating and Updating British-Imperial History. Patterns in the British-American Transatlantic Tradition: Approximate order of lecture topics:

Spain and Columbus; Humanism and the New World

The nature of the Colonial Enterprise/ The landscape/ Europeans and Natives

Regionalism and Historiography in British, Spanish, and French Americas

The Southwest Borderlands

Puritanism and Personality in England and America

Witchcraft and Social Control in the Atlantic world

Slavery and Staple Crops: The British Caribbean and the Chesapeake

Midterm Exam (75 mins): Early March Date TBA by mid-February

Weeks 8-14—Part Two: Variations on the Imperial Update. Approximate order of lecture topics:


The Deep South: Georgia, South Carolina and Florida

Final Exam (3 hours): Saturday, May 14th, 2-5 pm.