

North American Borderlands

Last Updated: Tue, 11/18/2025

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 2052

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
34959

Instructor First Name: Elena

Instructor Last Name: Ryan

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

Introduction to the history of early Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California in the Spanish Colonial period. This course also introduces the history of the Northern borderlands, especially the Great Lakes during the French and British colonial period.

Course learning outcomes:

Over the course of the semester, successful students will:

- Build historical knowledge of the history of the colonial era borderlands. Students will be able to recall key events and define relevant terms.
- Students will be able to describe changes over time, summarize historical movements, and discuss source material.
- Students will be able to analyze, compare, and contrast historical sources and moments in borderlands history.
- Students will be able to formulate historical arguments and present their findings.

Students will demonstrate these learning objectives through their class participation, discussion posts, the midterm, the final, reading quizzes, a writing assignment, and one final presentation.

Required course materials:

All required readings will be available on Canvas or through the GT library.

Grading policy:

1000 total points possible

300 points: Participation

The participation grade includes attendance/in-class participation, reading notes, and discussion posts.

1. First, students will be graded on their level of participation in discussion. Because not all students are equally comfortable with sharing their insights, visits to office hours and participation in small group discussions in class will also factor into the spoken half of the grade. Good participation is not simply talking a lot but rather adding to the discussion productively which always requires strong preparation. This will amount to half the participation grade.
2. Secondly, students are expected to do each class meeting's assigned readings *before* that class meets. They will access the readings through Perusall, adding 5 comments throughout the text. Students may respond to one another's comments toward their total of 5 comments.
3. Finally, the written responses are meant to be an exercise in critically engaging the reading. Though brief (500 words), they ought to go beyond the level of summary to analyze the readings, connect them to each other and the broader course, and ask a few questions that are not merely factual or clarifying. These responses will be due every week by 24 hours before the week's second meeting submitted via Canvas. Each student may skip any three weeks without giving the instructor notice.

150 points: In-Class Midterm

This test will ask students to remember and define terms highlighted through the first half of the semester, identify events and explain their significance in short answer questions, and analyze events and sources in context in two long answer questions and will be administered halfway through the term.

150 points: Discussion Leading

Students will lead discussion in groups once per semester, walking the class through sources and leading the source analysis and discussion through questions that invite exploration.

200 points: Reading Quizzes

Four brief readings quizzes throughout the semester will assess students' completion of the assigned reading. Each quiz will ask students to identify the author and date of a primary source and answer questions about sources assigned for the homework.

200 points: Primary Source Project & Presentation

Students will choose a single source or body of closely related primary sources (e.g. multiple issues of the same newspaper or entries of the same diary) pertaining to Borderlands history. Over the course of the semester, students will draft an 6-8pp paper with the following components:

1. Introduction
 1. Historical question
 1. Statement of historical argument
 1. Context
 2. Argumentation based on the sources
 3. Conclusion

Each student will give a 15 minute presentation on their findings during the last two weeks of class. Students are required to meet with the instructor at least once over the course of the semester in office hours to discuss the topic and argument. Topics and historical questions must be approved by the instructor two weeks before the semester's end.

Attendance policy:

Each unexcused absence will result in a loss of 10 participation points. Arriving late will result in a loss of participation points proportionate to the amount of class time missed. Excused absences are any absences cleared with the instructor at least 24 hours in advance and with the appropriate documentation.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Intellectual exchange is a critical element of a vibrant scholarly community. To protect the integrity of that community, students are required to cite every instance in which they borrow from or refer to another's idea, language, or other element of another's work. Students are welcome to study with one another, share study guides, visit the Writing Center, and seek additional feedback from the instructor. Students are also encouraged to draw from the whole body of readings, lectures, discussion posts, and sources assigned as part of this class *so long as* all references, quotations, allusions, summaries, or paraphrases are properly cited giving credit to the original author or speaker. Students found to be using AI in graded assignments will be considered in violation of the academic integrity policy. Students suspected of AI use who are unable to provide prior drafts or proper references may be subject to failing the assignment in question. All cases of academic dishonesty will be immediately referred to Student Judicial Affairs. Students with questions are welcome to contact me or to consult the Georgia Tech Honor Code, found here: <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code>.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion