

Survey of U.S. History I

Last Updated: Fri, 01/02/2026

Course prefix: HIST

Course number: 2111

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
31617

Instructor First Name: Christopher

Instructor Last Name: Lawton

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This is a course about an early America bathed not in the hazy soft light of folklore and imagined memory, but confronted head-on in its ambitious, boisterous, complex, contentious, messy, noisy, violent, fully human and full-bodied act of becoming. It is a course about arguments and uprisings, rebellions and revolutions, stunning successes and heartbreaking failures.

This semester we will explore the collisions and chaos of colonial settlement, multiple struggles for independence, and the improbable rise of a new nation founded on the proposition, radical for its time, that “all men are created equal.” Together we will try to understand the American past through examinations of art, class, culture, gender, geography, politics, race, and technology. We will also investigate how the grand ideals but unequal outcomes of the first American Revolution set the stage for a second in the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Course learning outcomes:

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the major cultural, economic, intellectual, political, and social events in American history from 1607 to the 1870s.
- Develop and apply historical methods for collecting, sifting, organizing, questioning, synthesizing, interpreting, and contextualizing a diverse array of complex material.
- Describe past events from multiple perspectives.
- Consider a variety of historical sources for credibility, position, perspective, and relevance.

- Explain and justify multiple causes of complex events and phenomena using conflicting sources.
- Recognize the ambiguity that history –and historical inquiry– requires.
- Generate substantive, open-ended questions about the past and develop research strategies to answer them.
- Craft well-supported historical narratives, arguments, and reports of research findings in a variety of media for a variety of audiences.

Required course materials:

This course will include multiple days when we engage in group discussions of key texts. These texts will also appear on exams. In advance of each class discussion, please

- plan adequate time to read, make brief notes about, and thoughtfully consider the material,
- write and upload a paragraph-length Canvas discussion post (approximately 150-250 words) responding to the specific discussion prompt,
- and, after posting your own paragraph, reply in a few thoughtful sentences to the post of at least one other student.

All assigned texts are available through our Canvas Reading List, at assigned websites, or on the slides for this course. Please see the course calendar for details.

Grading policy:

Exams

- Exam #1: 75pts
- Exam #2: 75pts
- Exam #3: 75pts
- Exam #4 (final): 100pts

Early American History Project [connected to an image or object at the High Museum of Art]

- Topics/Groups: 5pts
- Images of object + paragraph: 5pts
- Preliminary list of secondary sources: 5pts
- Annotated list of primary sources: 15pts
- Essay on secondary sources: 25pts
- Video script with discursive footnotes: 10pts
- 5-7-minute final video: 30pts
- Discussion posts on two other videos: 5pts

Participation

- Discussion posts for all assigned readings: 15pts
- Attendance and engaged participation: 15pts

Attendance policy:

Regular class attendance is required, will be checked daily, and will be necessary to succeed in this course. You must be here for the entire class period to be counted as having attended for that day. Everyone is allowed two no-questions-asked absences. More than two absences without approved written documentation will adversely affect your grade.

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.

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 Outcome:

- 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

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Citizenship 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 prepare for my responsibilities as an engaged citizen?

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

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history of the United States, the history of Georgia, and the provisions and principles of the United States Constitution and the Constitution of Georgia.

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

- Critical Thinking
- Intercultural Competence
- Persuasion