



Frederic Edwin Church, *Twilight in the Wilderness* (1860)

HIST2111 Syllabus

Survey of United States History I, Sections D&E, 3 Credits

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

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 major cultural, economic, intellectual, political, and social developments in American history from beginnings of colonization through the Civil War and Reconstruction.
- Analyze and explain multiple causes of complex events using conflicting sources.
- Generate substantive, open-ended questions about the past and develop research strategies to answer them.
- Develop and apply historical methods for collecting, sifting, organizing, questioning, synthesizing, interpreting, and contextualizing a diverse array of complex material.

Required Course Materials

As part of a semester-long group project, each student will identify, read, and write an essay responding to a relevant book of their choice. In general, books must be relatively recent works of scholarship, published by an academic press, and fit within the theme chosen by the group. All book choices must be approved by me.

This course will include multiple days when we engage in group discussions of key primary sources. All primary sources requiring written responses are available through our course Canvas Reading List. Titles are listed below; please see the course calendar for additional details.

- (excerpts from) John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624)
- John Winthrop, “Model of Christian Charity” (1630)
- Nathaniel Bacon, “Declaration of the People” (1676)
- (excerpts from) Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (1791)
- (excerpts from) Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)
- Thomas Jefferson et al., *Declaration of Independence* (1776)
- “Publius,” *Federalist 51* (1788)
- U.S. Constitution (1787) and Bill of Rights (1791)
- (excerpts from) George Washington, “Farewell Address” (1796)
- (excerpts from) Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836)
- Thomas Cole, “Essay on American Scenery” (1836)
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton, et. al., *Declaration of Sentiments* (1848)
- (excerpts from) Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (1849)
- William Lloyd Garrison, “Speech . . . relating to the Execution of John Brown,” *The Liberator* (1859)
- (excerpt from) Whitman, “I Celebrate Myself,” *Leaves of Grass* (1855)

Additional, shorter texts (excerpts from acts, charters, legislation, poems, proclamations, publications, sermons, and speeches, etc.) will be available on the slides for our course.

You will not need to write responses to texts on slides, but should be prepared to answer questions about them on exams.

Grading Policy

Students can earn up to 475 points this semester. Final grades are based on the number of points earned divided by 475 [A: 90%+, B: 80-90%, C:70-80%, D:60-70%]. Points may be earned as follows.

Exams [= 325 pts]

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

Semester-long Group Project [= 110 pts]

- Topics/Groups: 5pts
- Image + paragraph on chosen object at High Museum: 5pts
- Preliminary list of secondary sources: 5pts
- Annotated list of primary sources: 15pts
- Essay on secondary sources: 25pts
- Documentary script with discursive footnotes: 10pts
- 7-10-minute documentary film: 40pts
- Discussion posts on two other documentaries: 5pts

Participation [= 40 pts]

- Discussion posts for all assigned readings: 30pts
- Attendance and engaged participation: 10pts

Description of Graded Components

Exams

There will be four exams, each consisting of multiple-choice questions and an essay. Each exam will be drawn from lectures/readings/slides since the last exam, but the final will also include a cumulative essay question. Details will follow. Exams will be taken in class using Canvas, so please bring your laptop to class on exam days.

Groups

To make the most of our time together and space for everyone to have a voice, you will be part of a small group that engages in a semester-long research project. Please keep in

mind that you cannot succeed without working together. Please treat each other kindly and with integrity and professionalism. Please remember that it is a violation of the Georgia Tech Honor Code (see below) to submit work that is not your own.

Group Projects

Your projects will be evaluated on the merits of the whole, but to guarantee that every student participates fully and equally, you will earn individual grades for your individual component parts. These projects will require you to make *several* trips to the High Museum of Art. Details will follow.

- To reach the High on public transportation, take Marta from the North Avenue station to the Woodruff Arts Center (15 min).
- Admission to the High is approximately \$25. Free admission is available to everyone on the second Sunday and third Wednesday of each month (dates will be provided on course calendar). Lines can be long on free “Second Sundays,” so please plan accordingly. Bank of America cardholders can also gain free admission on the first full weekend of every month. Active military personnel and veterans always receive free admission, as well as a pass for one guest.
- Please see <https://high.org/special-offers/> for hours and details.

Readings/Discussion Posts

Thoughtful and precise analysis of the past requires that we give past generations the space and time to speak for themselves. This semester, we will do this by reading, writing about, and discussing one or more primary source texts per week. In advance of each due date/class discussion, please

- plan adequate time to read, make brief notes about, and thoughtfully consider the material,
- write and upload a 200–400-word Canvas discussion post citing and analyzing what you think are the most interesting/important specific points in the text and why,
- and, after posting your own paragraphs, reply in a few specific and thoughtful sentences to the post of at least one other student.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

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 Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Please keep in mind that we are bound by and agree to uphold the Georgia Tech Honor Code at all times. No exceptions. This means that you:

- must take exams entirely on your own,
- will not communicate with classmates during the open exam window, and will not make images of or in any way record or share exam questions,
- may not possess, verbally share information about, or use anyone else's tests or any other group's research, projects, written responses, or other graded coursework,
- must participate fully and equally in all group project work,
- may not include in any assignment anything that was not written directly by you without proper citation.

All individual work you submit should be your own and all group work you submit should only contain the authentic work of members of your group. This means you are prohibited from using AI in work that you submit, as those tools pull together the writings and research of others without credit or citation.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Core IMPACTS

[Core IMPACTS](#) is the University System of Georgia's General Education curriculum.

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

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can

have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Technology in the Classroom

I highly recommend turning off all technology while in class and taking notes by hand. If you would prefer to use your laptop or tablet, please know that you may use it in class for nothing other than taking notes. (I.e., please do not look at websites, play games, watch videos, communicate with others, engage in work for other courses, etc.) Phones are not allowed and should be silenced and stored during class. You may not record lectures or use AI to transcribe what is being said. Any violation of this policy will result in forfeiture of technology privileges for notetaking, meaning you will have to take notes by hand, on paper, for the remainder of the semester. *Please note that these restrictions do not apply to students who have accommodations with Disability Services that include written permission to record lectures.*

Civility

Quite simply, please be mindful, present, and courteous. Please remember that our team will function best if we treat each other respectfully and come to class ready to work. As noted above, please turn off all unnecessary technology while in class and do not or engage in any digital or other activities not related to our work.