TRANSACTION SCHOOL – SYLLABUS FALL 2019

AMERICAN HISTORY TO 1877:

PEOPLE & POWER

Instructor: Dr. Michael Reagan  reagan@uw.edu

TA: Sophia Carey  slcarey@uw.edu

Course Description: Welcome to the Transition School and your first year on the UW campus. This course is designed to introduce you to both field of history as a discipline including specific critical thinking skills, and the content of American history; the people, events, and ideas that produced our world today.

The content of the course will cover the North American continent from pre contact to Reconstruction and the Gilded Age. This is a big expanse, and we will not be able to cover everything. Instead, we are going to focus on particular moments, themes, and ideas. As such, we will look at cultural and material factors in history, in particular the ideological, social, cultural, political, environmental, and economic forces that shape it. We will also work on developing arguments of historical causation. Above all we will be in a constant process of reading, writing, and asking questions.
Learning the methodology of history is important. Interrogating sources, developing analysis, and crafting your ideas are skills that take practice. They are the building blocks of critical thinking. They will undoubtedly help you in your future course work as a university student, but more than this, the process of history helps us develop essential skills that are broadly applicable. Ultimately, the process of historical discovery is also a process of self-discovery. It is a process of discovering your own ideas about our world, about how we got here, and what we can do to make it a better place. Therefore my hope is that as better historical and critical thinkers, you’ll be happier, stronger, and more engaged social and historical agents.

In addition to a substantial reading load, you will be writing essays based on primary source materials. Participation and engagement in class discussion is vitally important; the expectation is that every one of you has something to contribute, and the more you engage in the work of the class, the richer the class discussions will be. There will be a midterm exam and a final exam, occasional in-class writing assignments, and weekly reading responses. There will also be three short essays due throughout the quarter.

Finally, if we are to succeed in our goals for this course we must work together to create a collaborative, inclusive and respectful learning culture. I look forward to getting to know you and working together this year.

**Goals**

- To develop strong writing and critical thinking skills
- To develop the practice of asking productive, conceptual questions
- To learn how to participate effectively and contribute meaningfully to class discussion
- To practice and develop reading comprehension
- To understand the work of historical scholarship
- To develop effective study habits and to learn how to ask questions and get help
- To be an independent scholar and yet to be collegial with others
- To develop a basic introductory understanding of American history

**Expectations**

- To come to class each day prepared and ready to engage in the work
- To turn in all work complete and on time
- To provide fellow students with helpful feedback and constructive criticism
- To take responsibility for one’s own learning, and our collective learning environment
- To be respectful of others’ views even if profoundly different from your own

**Essays**

There will be three essays over the course of the term. These will range in length from around three pages to up to six. All work must be typed, double-spaced, with standard margins. Please use Chicago Style Format for your essays; there is a tutorial on the Chicago Style on the class Canvas site (via the UW Libraries tab). For the essays, rough drafts are not required for the first, but are required for the last two through a peer review process. You also will have the
An essay is not a solitary endeavor. The process of editing, revising, and rethinking can and should involve colleagues and teachers. Essays should be both posted on the Canvas site but also a physical copy must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day it is due. More information about the essays will be provided during the term.

**Weekly Reading and Discussion Assignments**

A central component of this course is discussion. It is important that our conversations revolve around your own questions and not just mine. As you are reading the material, not only should you be sorting through the ideas in the text, the way in which those ideas are expressed, and in general coming to an understanding of the text, but you should also be asking questions: what is the central argument or idea from a text? How does this writer’s ideas compare with another’s? What does the author’s argument reveal about the values and attitudes of the time? What is confusing about this text, what is problematic, what is beautiful? How does this text inform our understanding of the historical period we are studying?

Asking questions is the historian’s most fundamental task. Bringing one or two of those questions to the table in class discussion is your responsibility as a member of our community of scholars. To help facilitate this process, you will have weekly reading and discussion assignments. These assignments will be on the Canvas site, and you will be expected to turn yours in on Canvas; there is no need, with the reading responses, to provide me with a physical copy. Finally, there will also be occasional ungraded in-class writing assignments.

**Exams**

The midterm exam will be 50 minutes in length. You will be given study questions one week before the exam to help you organize your review; there will also be an in-class exam review. The exam will be similar to what you might expect in a freshman History course: short answers and an essay question, with some choice. This is an in-class exam. You will need to bring a “blue book” (sometimes called a “green book”) with you to write in. These are sold in many cafes and kiosks on campus. Let me know if you have documented test-taking anxiety or any other impairment that might affect your ability to take in-class tests, and we will work together to figure out a solution.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

The process of learning is hard, and sometimes students are tempted to take shortcuts in the form of plagiarism. However, any student who uses words, ideas, or sources without proper citation will be given a failing grade and reported for further action in line with the University’s policies. We will talk more about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. See the University’s policy here: [https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/plag.html](https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/plag.html)

**Use of the Canvas site**

We will be making use of Canvas, an on-line system that allows for easy transmission and organization of assignments and other materials. You will be sent an invitation to join the site, and thereafter will have access to the TS History Canvas. This is exactly like the Canvas site for
TS tutorials. You will turn in work and check the site for information. However, most of our communication will be via email or in person.

**Assignments and Grading Policies**

Transition School uses a unique 1-4 evaluative system that is designed to assess your readiness in your trajectory towards college-level work. At midquarter and at the end of the term, you will receive a progress report from each class which will contain both a narrative and a numerical assessment. This system is not meant to be translated into an A-F grading rubric, but exists purely as a guide in assessment of your work.

Within our class, I will be using a separate evaluative tool, the UW’s decimal grading system (0.0-4.0), for much of your assigned work. Exams and major papers will receive such a grade. The weekly reading responses will not – they will receive a plus, check, or minus, with comments. Late work is not accepted for a grade. If you need to ask for an extension of a due date, you must see me before the due date and make your case. Additionally, no electronic devices are allowed in the classroom, including phones, laptops, tablets, or other devices except by special permission.

**Religious Accommodations Policy** ([https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/)). Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. Students interested in requesting religious accommodations must contact the Transition School Principal in writing with their request within the first two weeks of the course. The written request should include the following information: Student Full Name, Course(s) that will be affected, Requested Accommodation, Date(s) Accommodation Needed.

**Textbooks**

Course Packet (available on the Canvas site and in hard copy)

**Class Schedule and Assignments**

**Week 1 Sept 25**

*Course Introduction*

Central Question: What is history? What is “America”?

Readings: How to Read for History

Jared Diamond excerpts from *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Smithsonian Document on Catawba illustration, (distributed in class)

Assignment: Due Friday, Sept. 27th – Weekly Reading Response

**Week 2 Sept 30**

Indigeneity, Empire, Conquest, and Colonialism

Central Question: Why did conquest happen?
Readings: John Locke, excerpts from *Two Treaties on Government*, Bartolome de las Casas, excerpts from *A Short Account*, Juan Gonzales, excerpts from *Harvest of Empire*,
Assignment: Due Thurs, Oct 3rd – Weekly Reading Response Paper

**Week 3 Oct 7**

**Slavery as System of Labor**

Central Question: Why did chattel slavery develop?
Readings: Edmund Morgan, excerpts from *American Slavery . . .*
Olaudah Equiano, excerpts from *An Interesting Narrative*,
John Harrower, excerpts from his diary,
Assignment: First Paper Assignment Due: Wednesday, Oct 9th
Due Thurs., Oct 10th – Weekly Reading Response Paper

**Week 4 Oct 14**

**Revolutions from Below and Above**

Central Questions: What caused the American Revolution?
Readings: Woody Holton, excerpts from *Forced Founders*,
James Madison, excerpts from *The Federalist Papers*,
Assignment: Due Thurs, Oct 17th – Weekly Reading Response Paper

**Week 5 Oct 21**

**Gender and the First Industrial Revolution**

Central Question: Why were women the first industrial workforce?
Readings: Michael Reagan, excerpt from *Band of Sisters*,
Harriet Hanson Robinson, excerpts from *Factory Girl*,
Assignment: Midterm Exam: Weds., Oct 23rd
Due Thursday, Oct 24th – Weekly Reading Response Paper

**Week 6 Oct 28**

**Race, Immigration, and Industrialization**

Central Question: What is race? What is the relationship between industrialization and racial formation?
Readings: Helen Zia, excerpts from *Asian American Dreams*,
Anti-Catholic petition
Assignment: Due Thursday, Nov 1st – Weekly Reading Response Paper

**Week 7 Nov 4**

**Slavery and American Capitalism**

How and why did slavery expand in the early 19th century?
Readings: Walter Johnson, excerpts from *River of Dark Dreams*,
John Brown, Last address,
Assignment: Second Essay Assignment Rough Draft Due Wednesday, Nov 6th
Due Thurs., Nov 8th – Weekly Reading Response Paper

Week 8 Nov 11
Slave Narrative and Resistance
Central Question: How do social movements develop? How does ideology operate in society?
Assignment: Second Essay Assignment Due Monday, Nov 11th
Due Thurs., Nov 15th – Weekly Reading Response Paper

Week 9 Nov 18
Civil War
Why did the Civil War happen? What led to emancipation?
Assignment: Due Thurs., Nov 21st – Weekly Reading Response Paper

Week 10 Nov 25
Reconstruction
Why did Reconstruction fail?
Massacre at Coushatta
Assignment: Final Essay Assignment Rough Draft Due Wednesday, Nov 27th
Due Sunday, Dec 1st – Weekly Reading Response Paper

Week 11 Dec 2
The Gilded Age
What explains the disparity between wealth and poverty in the Gilded Age?
Readings: Melvin Dubofsky, excerpts from *Time of Chaos*, Albert and Lucy Parsons on Industrial Chicago,
Assignment: Third and Final Essay Assignment Due Monday, Dec 2nd
Due Thurs., Dec 6th – Weekly Reading Response Paper

Final Week 12: Exam Date TBD