

## **HIST 2610-007: United States History to 1865**

University of North Texas, Fall 2025  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30am–10:50am  
ESSC 255

Instructor: Dr. Samuel Fullerton  
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Wooten Hall 265

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10:00am–12:00pm, and by appointment

This course explores the early history of the United States from its origins as a multipronged European colonization effort on the distant shores of North America to the bloody conclusion of the American Civil War in 1865. Although we will examine that history from many different angles, our primary focus will be on the political debates that molded it. In particular, this course will argue that the most significant factor shaping North American life between c.1600 and 1865 was its fundamentally quarrelsome character: this place and its peoples were driven, that is to say, by a spirit of discussion and disagreement that was always heated, frequently impolite, and often quite violent. To put it simply: the history of the United States, then and now, can best be described as a series of long and complicated arguments.

Generally, our class meetings will take the form of interactive lectures on the topics detailed in the course schedule below. Additionally, on Thursdays, we will also discuss that day's assigned primary source readings as they relate to the topic at hand. (The one exception to this general rule will be Week 15, when we'll discuss reading material on Tuesday rather than Thursday.) Regular attendance and careful reading, in addition to a strong performance on the various written assignments described below, is essential to achieving a satisfactory grade for the course.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Students will develop a historical understanding of the origins and early history of the United States.
- Students will practice reading, writing, and thinking like historians through a variety of in-class exams and analytical writing assignments.
- Students will reflect on what it means to practice history-writing and consider how the study of the past continues to shape our collective present.

### **Teaching Assistants**

The following graduate students will serve as graders and course content guides throughout the semester. Feel free to reach out to them with questions via email or during their regularly scheduled office hours. The letters listed after each TA's name indicate which students they will be grading (i.e., by first letter of last name); I (Prof. Fullerton) will be grading the **T-Z** section.

**Alex Chanaa** (grading last names **A-F**)

[alexchanaa@my.unt.edu](mailto:alexchanaa@my.unt.edu)

Office: **TBD**

Office Hours: **TBD**

**Grace Kola-Balogun** (grading last names **G-L**)

[GraceKola-Balogun@my.unt.edu](mailto:GraceKola-Balogun@my.unt.edu)

Office: **TBD**

Office Hours: **TBD**

**Paul McDaris** (grading last names **M-S**)

[paulmcdaris@my.unt.edu](mailto:paulmcdaris@my.unt.edu)

Office: **TBD**

Office Hours: **TBD**

### **Required Texts**

The following texts are required for this course:

- *Containing Multitudes: A Documentary Reader of US History to 1877* [CM below]
- [\*The American Yawp\*](#) [TAY below]

The first is purchasable from the UNT bookstore, and the second is freely available online. All other course reading materials will be provided to you for free via our course Canvas page.

### **Course Assignments and Grading**

Your final course grade is calculated according to the weighted assignment categories described below. Please also note the “Participation” category, which does not count as a formal component of your graded work for this class but exists so that I can reward you for speaking up in lecture.

#### *Introductory Course Survey (5% of your total course grade)*

Via our course Canvas page, I will provide you with a virtual link to a short, anonymized survey in which you will input some basic information about your current degree program and career goals as well as your familiarity with, and interest in, history. Completing this survey by midnight on Tuesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, will earn you full credit for this portion of your course grade; it will also help me to weed out any rostered students who are not actively attending class.

#### *Three (3) In-class Written Exams (15%/25%/35% each = 75% of your total course grade)*

At three different points during the semester – including during our final exam slot – you will take a multi-part, in-class blue book exam that is designed to test your cumulative knowledge of the course content that we have explored thus far in the course. Each exam will consist of the same three parts (i.e. short ID questions, primary source analyses, and analytical essays), although the volume and difficulty of the questions will increase as the semester progresses. We will spend at least two days during the semester reviewing for these exams, and I will provide study guides to aid you in preparing for them. More information to follow.

#### *Signature Assignment: Analytical Essay (20% of your total course grade)*

For the “Signature Assignment” in this iteration of HIST 2610, you will write a medium-length (4-6 pages) analytical essay, based on a prompt distributed by me sometime after our first in-class exam, in which you will compare and contrast a selection of the primary sources that we’ve read together as well as a new text chosen from one of our two course texts. In that essay, I

expect you to respond to the prompt with an original argument, using evidence from the readings, in the style mandated by the Guide to Written Assignments (available on Canvas). The essay is due at 11:59pm on Thursday, November 6<sup>th</sup>; please note that I have also given you the day off from lecture in order to focus on writing.

### *Participation (Bonus)*

In a class of this size, it is not feasible for me to track participation points fairly or comprehensively without wasting enormous amounts of time on record-keeping. However, I do expect to hear from you during lecture, and as a result, I will do my best to award bonus points to those students who contribute to our in-class conversations on a routine basis. Once accrued in bulk, those points will be tallied and added to your final grade as a small bonus.

### **Course Policies and Procedures**

The following course policies apply both in and outside of the classroom. Please note that changes to the course calendar may occur, especially in the event of unforeseen [campus closures](#) (which will be communicated to you by Eagle Alert). Additionally, the instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus at any time during the semester.

### *Academic Integrity:*

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any form in this class. If you are caught while engaging in academically dishonest activity (including unauthorized use of generative AI technology – see below), you will receive a failing grade for the relevant assignment and you will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. If I suspect that you have submitted work for grading that is not wholly your own, I reserve the right to call you into my office for an in-person conversation about the submission in question. Failure to demonstrate your mastery of the submitted material in those discussions will be taken as evidence of an integrity violation, and I will alter your grade accordingly. Students are responsible for learning to recognize what constitutes academic dishonesty; ignorance is not an excuse. For further information, see UNT's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

### *Accommodations:*

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](#) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

### *Attendance and Participation Policy*

Per UNT's [Student Attendance Policy](#), I expect you to attend class diligently, to read all assigned texts carefully, and to participate in class regularly. While I do not track day-to-day attendance in a formal sense, it is well worth your time to show up regularly: on this front, please note the participation component described in the previous section, which I will employ as much as possible to reward those who come to class and speak up. On that note, do make sure that you have access to the assigned readings in class in case you need to reference them during lecture.

### *Course Resources:*

In order to make this class as accessible and enjoyable as possible, I will provide you with an array of additional resources through Canvas to aid in reviewing, essay-writing, and exam prep. They include a "Guide to Written Assignments," which provides a formatting guide, an introduction to Chicago-style citations, and a few helpful hints for writing argumentative historical essays, as well as a "Course Lecture Questions" document, updated daily, which collects all of our central lecture themes in one convenient place. Additionally, all lecture slides will be made available on Canvas, as will a variety of other important course and campus resources. Please note that these materials are intended to supplement our time together in class rather than to replace it; if you do not show up regularly to lecture, they will almost certainly not save you from a poor grade.

### *Late Assignments:*

All overdue writing assignments – i.e. the Signature Assignment due on Thursday, 11/6 – will be penalized with a **25%** grade deduction per day late. Generally, I will not accept late submissions more than **three days** after the announced deadline except in cases of medical emergency and/or those falling under the approved categories identified in UNT's attendance policy. It is not possible to make up in-class exams unless the absence falls under those same categories.

### *Statement on Generative AI:*

Generative AI technology has made an outsized impact on the shape of higher education since its public debut in November 2022. Although I recognize that this new toolset may offer many wonderful opportunities for doing good in the world, I also believe that it does not necessarily enhance your ability to achieve the course objectives laid out in this syllabus; in fact, if employed uncritically, it is much more likely to do the opposite by robbing you of the opportunity to do hard, meaningful analytical thinking on your own. Accordingly, while you may use GenAI tools for studying, source-hunting, or brainstorming purposes, I expect that all graded work submitted for evaluation in this class will be written entirely your own words. Any unauthorized use of GenAI in that context will be treated as an academic integrity violation.

Further information related to course content and other campus resources is available on Canvas.

## Course Schedule and Weekly Readings

### Week One: Setting the Stage

Tuesday (8/19): Course Introduction

*Also due (11:59pm):* **Introductory Course Survey**

Thursday (8/21): Thinking Like An Historian

*Reading:* [“Introduction”](#) (*TAY Reader*)

“Interpreting the Past Through Primary Sources” (*CM*)

“History and Careers” (Canvas module)

### Week Two: Origin Stories

Tuesday (8/26): 1491

Thursday (8/28): Creating (and Confronting) the “Black Legend”

*Reading:* [“Journal of Christopher Columbus”](#) (*TAY*)

“Cabeza de Vaca Describes Encounters...” (*CM* #1.4)

[“Bartolomé de Las Casas Describes...”](#) (*TAY*)

### Week Three: The British Arrive

Tuesday (9/2): The Starving Time

Thursday (9/4): Building a “New” England

*Reading:* “English Colonists at Plymouth...” (*CM* #3.4)

[“John Winthrop Dreams...”](#) (*TAY*)

### Week Four: Drawing Lines

Tuesday (9/9): Reinventing Slavery

Thursday (9/11): Contesting the Frontier

*Reading:* “William Wood Describes...” (*CM* #2.3)

[“Thomas Morton Reflects...”](#) (*TAY*)

“Iroquois Proposal” (*CM* #3.5)

### Week Five: Exam Week I

Tuesday (9/16): Exam Review

Thursday (9/18): **In-Class Exam #1**

### Week Six: Highs and Lows

Tuesday (9/23): Print and Public Life

Thursday (9/25): Declension and Revival

*Reading:* “Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn” (*CM* #4.1)

“Jonathan Edwards Sermon” (*CM* #4.3)

### Week Seven: Imperial Frictions

Tuesday (9/30): The Seven Years’ War

Thursday (10/2): The Boston Tea Party

*Reading:* “The Stamp Act Congress” (*CM* #5.1)

“The Boycott Agreement...” (*CM* #5.2)

[Hewes, “A Retrospective on the Boston Tea Party”](#) (*TAY*)

### **Week Eight: Breaking Free**

Tuesday (10/7): The American Revolution

Thursday (10/9): Confederation or Constitution?

*Reading:* "The Articles of Confederation" (CM #6.1)  
"Ben Franklin's Final Speech..." (CM #6.3)  
["Constitutional Ratification Cartoon"](#) (TAY)

### **Week Nine: Starting Anew**

Tuesday (10/14): Gender, Sexuality, and the Family

Thursday (10/16): Democracy, Partisanship, and Scandal

*Reading:* [Washington, "Farewell Address"](#) (TAY)  
"Madison Hemings...Recounts..." (CM #7.2)

### **Week Ten: Exam Week II**

Tuesday (10/21): **In-Class Exam #2**

Thursday (10/23): Growing Pains

*Reading:* ["Creek Headman Alexander McGillivray..."](#) (TAY)  
"Thomas Jefferson Gives..." (CM #12.2)  
"William Clark Describes..." (CM #12.3)

### **Week Eleven: Contesting Slavery**

Tuesday (10/28): The Rise of "King Cotton"

Thursday (10/30): Debating American Abolitionism

*Reading:* ["Maria Stewart Bemoans..."](#) (TAY)  
"Sojourner Truth Advocates..." (CM #10.3)  
"The American Anti-Slavery Society..." (CM #13.1)

### **Week Twelve: Expansion, Displacement, and Spatial Transformation**

Tuesday (11/4): Industrialization, Urbanization, and Labor

Thursday (11/6): Writing day. **No class.**

*Reading:* None.  
*Also due (11:59pm):* **Signature Assignment.**

### **Week Thirteen: Conflict and Connection**

Tuesday (11/11): Telegraphs, Railroads, and Steamships (Oh My)

Wednesday (11/13): Blood, Gold, and Tears

*Reading:* "Cherokee Women Argue..." (CM #12.4)  
"Cherokee Leader John Ross Disputes..." (CM #12.5)  
"Cherokee Leader Elias Boudinot Argues in Favor..." (CM #12.6)

### **Week Fourteen: American Crucible**

Tuesday (11/18): The Sectional Crisis

Thursday (11/20): The Republic at War

*Reading:* ["Civil War Songs"](#) (TAY)  
"Abraham Lincoln Delivers..." (CM #14.1)  
"Harry Smith's Memories..." (CM #14.4)

**11/24 – 11/30: Thanksgiving Break. No class.**

**Week Fifteen: Recrimination and Reconciliation**

Tuesday (12/2): Appomattox and Beyond

*Reading:* [“Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address”](#) (TAY)

[“Mississippi Black Code”](#) (TAY)

Thursday (12/4): Final Course Review

**In-Class Exam #3** (i.e. the final exam) to be held in **ESSC 255** on **Thursday, December 11<sup>th</sup>**, from **8:00am–10:00am**.