

American History, 1492-1876



Above: Romare Bearden, *Odysseus Leaving Nausicaa* (1979).

The 20th century African-American artist Romare Bearden is here illustrating a scene from an ancient Greek epic, The Odyssey – but is he also presenting us with facets of the American experience, maybe even his own experience? Do we see a hint here of Columbus’ 1492 landfall in the “New World” – or of the Aztec royal delegation that greeted Cortez on the coast of Mexico in 1519? Are there hints here of other ships – other journeys – other “contacts”? Things to be remembered; things that must not be forgotten?

“The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.” So says a character on the opening page of 20th century Czech writer Milan Kundera’s 1979 novel The Book of Laughter and Forgetting.

As we consider the history of America and all its peoples, past and present, what should we remember, and why?

Best contact: email tfarnold@bsu.edu at any time with any questions or concerns.

Office hours MWF 3:00-4:00 and TR 10:00-12:00 + 2:00-4:00 or by appointment (don’t hesitate to ask).

Course description from the catalog:

“This course surveys the American historical experience through 1876. Students will examine key events, ideas, personalities and movements from before European exploration to the end of Reconstruction.”

This course is available for Dual Credit as BSU HIST 201.

Course goals:

To explore, with as much sophistication as possible, the American experience from the Columbian Exchange through the Centennial year of 1876.

To practice thinking, writing, and speaking with clarity, force, and conviction.

General class policies:

The course Canvas site is the essential organizing hub for this class, and includes a frequently updated weekly calendar and materials for discussion sessions. Students should routinely check the course Canvas site, at least before every scheduled class session.

Attendance will be taken according to the policies explained in the student handbook. Please promptly contact the instructor with any questions regarding the application of those policies.

Students are expected to make up work for any missed classes, either excused or unexcused. In the case of missing a scheduled lecture session, students should listen to the audio recording posted to the course Canvas site. In the case of missing a scheduled discussion session, students should contact the instructor to make up that discussion, either in person during office hours or, in exceptional cases, by submitting equivalent written work. In the case of a missing scheduled test, students are expected to make up that test in a timely manner, usually within a few days. In the case of an extended absence, or extraordinary circumstances, additional time or arrangements may be possible. If a student misses a graded class session, either a discussion or a written test, and that absence is unexcused, that grade is subject to a 50% penalty. Missed work that is not made up will be recorded as 0% in the course gradebook.

Students are expected to read and consider all discussion materials carefully and thoughtfully before class discussion sessions. Students are encouraged to take notes on all readings, as they see fit. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor for any help in mastering any course materials or questions.

Students are not allowed to use or access a laptop, tablet, or smart phone during class time. All such devices should be put away and out of sight for the duration of class. Computers are necessary and powerful tools for twenty-first century life, including school, but they are also too often a powerful distraction.

All non-class related books, materials, papers, etc. should be put away during class sessions.

Students are expected to be alert and attentive during all class sessions, and are expected to take notes.

Students are not expected to eat or drink during class. If an exception may be warranted for medical or other reasons, please communicate those circumstances to the instructor.

Students are not expected to ask to leave the room to use the bathroom during a class session. While it is a courtesy to excuse a person who politely asks to leave the room, it is equally courteous – and an expectation of professional life – that a person uses the bathroom before a scheduled meeting, if there is any anticipated need.

Of course, in case of need, a student should always be comfortable in politely asking to leave the room, and in case of an emergency any student will of course be excused and assisted as warranted.

Students are not expected to receive a phone call or similar interruption during class time. If an emergency interruption by phone call might be expected, please inform the instructor before class.

Grades will be posted to PowerSchool following a reasonable time for evaluation. Discussion grades will normally be posted within a few days of the last class session of each bi-weekly discussion evaluation period. In-class tests will normally be evaluated and the grades posted within ten days of the test date. Students will be informed in circumstances of delay. Students should regularly and routinely check their grades on PowerSchool, share those grades with parents or guardians, and promptly contact the instructor with any questions or concerns.

Academic dishonesty and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please review the student handbook for a full discussion of the relevant policies.

Students are encouraged to take advantage of any available extra credit assignments.

If circumstances warrant, alternate assignments, extended due dates, and other exceptions to stated policies can be arranged on a case-by-case basis after consultation with the instructor. All reasonable accommodation will be made.

Any student with a disability will be accorded appropriate accommodation, as arranged in advance.

As the semester develops, course topics and readings may be amended as the instructor sees fit. Therefore, be alert to all announcements and any revisions to the below course calendar.

This syllabus may be amended by the instructor at any time. In such cases, students will always receive timely prior notification of any changes.

Required syllabi statements:

1. Ball State University Beneficence Pledge:

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains outstanding faculty, staff, and students. Ball State is committed to ensuring that all members of the campus community are welcome through our practice of valuing the varied experiences and worldviews of the people whom we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as evident in our Beneficence Pledge. As a reflection of Ball State's commitment to respect, civil discourse, and the Beneficence Pledge, inclusiveness at the Indiana Academy emerges as one of the priorities of our living and learning community. We strive to exist together respectfully and compassionately, creating an environment where every member can thrive.

2. Indiana Academy wireless device policy:

Pursuant to Indiana Code 20-26-5-40.7, The Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities prohibits student use of wireless communication devices for non-instructional purposes in the classroom. As such, any and all portable wireless devices, that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, must only be used for academic purposes directly tied to the classroom activity or related educational task. Exceptions to this wireless device policy are eligible through academic accommodations, individualized education programs, or with instructor approval permitting the use of a wireless device for justification related to health, safety, and/or well-being.

The improper use of a wireless device in an active classroom setting is subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to; a verbal warning, temporary seizure of said device by a school official, an unexcused absence for the

class in question, written communication to parent/guardian, among other elevated consequences for repeated improper use.

3. Indiana Academy attendance policy:

Attendance is mandatory. Students may receive excused absences at the professional discretion of the school nurse, the associate director of mental health services, the associate director of college counseling and student engagement, the director of academic affairs, and the executive director of the Indiana Academy. Unexcused absences occur when students miss class without prior approval from the aforementioned designated school officials. Continued absences (both excused and unexcused) from Academy classes increase the likelihood of unsuccessful completion.

Alongside steady attendance, students are expected to maintain consistent healthy habits of decorum, respect, and kindness towards their classmates, instructors, and teaching assistants. When students fail to meet these classroom behavioral standards and academic habits, it is the expectation faculty engage appropriately to bring quick and immediate resolution. When students consistently fail to meet these behavioral standards and academic habits in the classroom, an administrative consequence ladder will be adopted, and recorded, in attempt to administratively address, engage, and rectify ongoing challenges.

4. Indiana Academy Humanities Division artificial intelligence (AI) statement:

The Humanities Division recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) provides some exciting new tools for academic work. However, AI also poses significant dangers for academic integrity. Passing off as your own any research, words, or ideas which you did not create is plagiarism. That is always the case whether the source is print, internet content, or generated by AI. It is vital to read the policies your individual humanities instructors have regarding AI, and ask them any questions you may have about the use of AI in their course.

5. Indiana Academy History Department content statement:

As with many history classes, the lectures, readings, and discussions [in this course] will include a range of topics that may be triggering, emotionally distressing, and difficult for some students. Engaging with topics such as slavery and human suffering is essential to this discipline. History seeks to understand the experiences and thought processes of former generations, whether for good or ill. Sometimes the language and word choices used by people in the past may be insensitive or politically incorrect today. Nevertheless, the goal of history is to understand the past within its own context and time. If a reading, image shown in class, or discussion is truly troubling to anyone, please do not hesitate to talk to your instructor. In such circumstances, an alternative reading [or other course material] can be assigned.

Evaluation overview:

8 bi-weekly discussion grades @ 50 points each	400
4 in-class tests @ 100 points each	400
total	800 points + any extra credit

Grading scale:

Percentage	Grade
.940-1000	A
.900-939	A-
.870-899	B+
.830-869	B

.800-829	B-
.770-799	C+
.730-769	C
.700-729	C-
Below 700	D*

Discussions:

Students will receive a discussion grade for every two weeks of the semester, from Week 1 through Week 16. Evaluation will be based on contributions to the in-class spoken conversation, particularly during scheduled seminar-style discussion sessions (typically on Wednesday and Friday).

Discussions will always be based on the relevant readings and other sources either posted to the course Canvas site or distributed in class. Weekly readings will be posted or distributed at the end of the previous week. In most cases, this means students will have several days to read and prepare – from Friday or Saturday of one week to the Wednesday and Friday of the following week. Sometimes, fresh, additional shorter-length source materials will be distributed or otherwise shared during seminar sessions themselves.

Further, more specific information on expectations for discussion preparation and participation, as well as evaluation, will be shared in the first days of the semester. Students should feel free to contact the instructor with any questions or concerns regarding discussion materials, topics, or student evaluation.

In-class tests:

There will be four in-class tests, roughly at the end of each month or four-week period of the semester. The format of these tests will be shared prior to the first test; the intention is for subsequent tests to follow the same format.

Further instructions and evaluation criteria will be provided prior to each test. Students should feel free to contact the instructor with any questions or concerns regarding these essays, including student evaluation and request for accommodation.

Textbook and readings:

Students need only acquire one book from the bookroom: James A. Henretta, et. al., *America* (3rd ed.). Students will never be expected to bring this textbook to any in-person class session. Background reading selections from this textbook will be indicated on the outline distributed for each weekly lecture session (usually on Monday).

Discussion readings and other materials will be provided by the instructor, in most cases as a pdf document posted to the course Canvas site, or as a link to an online text or image. Some materials will be distributed as hard copies in class.

Students need to be alert to the calendar below, as well as to the course Canvas site and all class announcements and syllabus changes, to be sure they are considering and preparing to discuss the correct source materials for a given day's class. The basic "homework" of this class is reading and carefully considering the assigned texts, images, and other source materials as preparation for in-class discussion.

Course calendar:

Part 1 (Weeks 1-4): Contacts and Consequences

Week 1: Remembering and forgetting

M Aug 11	Introduction
W Aug 13	Lecture
F Aug 15	Discussion

Week 2: The Columbian Exchange

M Aug 18	Lecture
W Aug 20	Discussion
F Aug 21	Discussion

Week 3: Colonial Intent

M Aug 25	Lecture
W Aug 27	Discussion
F Aug 29	Discussion

Week 4: Colonial Discontents

M Sept 1	No class, Labor Day
W Sept 3	Lecture
F Sept 5	Discussion

Part 2 (Weeks 5-8): Age of Revolution

Week 5: Independence

M Sept 8	Test 1 covering Weeks 1-4
W Sept 10	Lecture
F Sept 12	Discussion

Week 6: A New Political Settlement

M Sept 15	Lecture
W Sept 17	Discussion
F Sept 19	Discussion

Week 7: The American Revolution in International Context

M Sept 22	Lecture
W Sept 24	Discussion
F Sept 26	Discussion

Week 8: Competing Visions

M Sept 29	Lecture
W Oct 1	Discussion
F Oct 3	Test 2 covering Weeks 5-8

Part 3 (Weeks 9-12): The Young Republic

Week 9: Democracy

M Oct 6	No class, extended weekend
W Oct 8	Lecture
F Oct 10	Discussion

Week 10: Hearts and Minds

M Oct 13	Lecture
W Oct 15	Discussion
F Oct 17	Discussion

Week 11: The Peculiar Institution

M Oct 20	Lecture
W Oct 22	Discussion
F Oct 24	Discussion

Week 12: Manifest Destiny

M Oct 27	Lecture
W Oct 29	Discussion
F Oct 31	Test 3 covering Weeks 9-12

Part 4 (Weeks 13-17): A House Divided

Week 13: The Crisis of 1850

M Nov 3	Lecture
W Nov 5	Discussion
F Nov 7	Discussion

Week 14: The Crisis of 1860

M Nov 10	Lecture
W Nov 12	Lecture
F Nov 14	Discussion

Week 15: The Hard Hand of War

M Nov 17	Lecture
W Nov 19	Discussion
F Nov 21	Discussion

Thanksgiving break

Week 16: Reconstruction vs. Redemption

M Dec 1	Lecture
W Dec 3	Lecture
F Dec 5	Discussion

Week 17: America at the Centennial

M Dec 8	Lecture
W Dec 10	Discussion
F Dec 12	Discussion

Test 4 covering Weeks 13-17 during “final exam” slot, specific time and place to be arranged