

American History, 1492-1876



Above: Charles Wilson Peale, The Exhumation of the Mastodon 1806 (Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore).

A curious scientist as well as a talented artist, Peale here presents us with a heroic interpretation of his 1801 excavation of a mastodon skeleton in New York State. At the time of discovery, this specimen was the largest land animal known, living or extinct. For Peale and for many other contemporary Americans – including President Jefferson – the “American behemoth” hinted at great possibilities for a new and ambitious United States; prospects rooted in the long-ago Pleistocene. By digging up and finding meaning in the deepest history, Peale (and Jefferson) found evidence with which to define the America of their own time – and propose a particular future for their country as well.

Following this example, what can we discover and declare, when we excavate the American past?

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

Office hours MWF 2:00 – 4:00 pm and Tue + Thu 10:00 am – 12:00 noon 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.

Class policies:

The course Canvas site is the essential organizing hub for this class, including announcements and other instructions. Weekly “Art and America” threaded discussions will be hosted on the class Canvas site, and most of the course discussion readings will be found on that site as well. For all these reasons, students should regularly and routinely check the course Canvas site.

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 free to use a laptop, tablet, or phone for class purposes at any time. Some discussion readings and other materials will be online or distributed as a pdf document. Students may read or view these on a device, or print them out as hard copies, as they see fit. In any case, students are expected to be able to refer to any assigned text, image, or other source material under discussion.

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

A generous time allowance will be provided for all online threaded discussions and for all essays (“papers”). If you need extra time, please ask. Reasonable accommodations will be provided should circumstances warrant.

In the case of online discussion posts, a grade of 0% may be entered if a required discussion post contribution is not made by the time that discussion topic is closed, and no accommodation or extension has been granted. Normally, “Art and America” discussion topics will be opened on Monday and closed on the Friday of a given week.

In the case of missed essay assignments, a grade of 0% may be entered if no essay is received by the final due date, and no extension has been granted. Any 0% grade may be replaced upon submission of work, with an appropriate grade penalty for lateness, and after discussion with the instructor to determine acceptance and any appropriate penalty.

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 or final online discussion thread pertaining to a given topic or week. Essays will normally be evaluated and the grades posted within a week of submission. 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 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 calendar of readings and threaded discussions.

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. Indiana Academy Mask Policy:

The Indiana Academy will follow [Ball State University's mask policy](#) (see Section IV). Based on current CDC guidance recommending the wearing of face masks for all people—regardless of vaccination status—in public indoor settings in communities where the rate of coronavirus transmission is high or substantial, all employees, students, and campus visitors are required to wear a mask while inside any University building. This requirement is effective on August 9, 2021. Fully vaccinated people are not required to wear masks outdoors.

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated for COVID-19 are required to wear face masks while inside campus buildings and outside when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

If a student declines to wear a face mask as required, the student will be referred to the Director of Academic Affairs or the Director of Residential Affairs. If the situation occurs in a classroom or other academic setting, it is considered a classroom management issue, and the teacher will remind the student of the requirement and give the student a chance to comply with it prior to referring the matter to the Director of Academic Affairs or the Director of Residential Affairs. Wearing masks is crucial to preventing the spread of COVID-19 to others.

2. Ball State University diversity and inclusion statement:

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge and through university resources found at <http://cms.bsu.edu/campuslife/multiculturalcenter>.

3. 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:

16 weekly discussion grades @ 25 points each	400
4 written essays @ 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 each week of the semester, from Week 1 through Week 16. Evaluation will principally be based on contributions to the in-class spoken conversation, particularly during scheduled seminar-style discussion sessions (typically on Wednesday and Friday). Weekly discussion grades will also reflect written contributions to the online “Art and America” discussions hosted on the course Canvas site.

Discussions will always be based on the weekly 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 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.

Essays:

Students are required to write four essays, one for each of the four parts of the class (see course calendar below). There will be new prompts each week (on Friday), so students have more than one option (and due date) for writing each essay. These essays are not research papers – the questions will always pertain to the discussion readings and other source materials.

In most cases, essays are due in one week, on the following Friday. However, the Week 14 essay option will not be due until the Friday after Thanksgiving break. Also, the Week 16 essay option may be due sooner than one full week, because of exam week end-of-semester scheduling.

The exact due date time is always 5:00 pm on the given day. Completed essays may be turned in during class time, or may be placed in Dr. Arnold’s faculty mailbox by 5:00 pm on the due date. Students must always provide a hard copy, if at all possible (contact Dr. Arnold if an exception is warranted).

Further instructions and evaluation criteria will be provided with each specific essay option assignment. Students should feel free to contact the instructor with any questions or concerns regarding these essays, including student evaluation.

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: Natural History

M Aug 16	Introduction	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
W Aug 18	Lecture	
F Aug 20	Discussion	Week 1 essay option posted

Week 2: The Columbian Exchange

M Aug 23	Lecture	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
W Aug 25	Discussion	
F Aug 27	Discussion	Week 2 essay option posted; Week 1 option due

Week 3: Colonial Intentions

M Aug 30	Lecture	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
W Sept 1	Discussion	
F Sept 3	Discussion	Week 3 essay option posted; Week 2 option due

Week 4: Colonial Discontents

M Sept 6	No class, Labor Day	
W Sept 8	Lecture	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
F Sept 10	Discussion	Week 4 essay option posted; Week 3 option due

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

Week 5: Independence

M Sept 13	Lecture	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
W Sept 15	Discussion	
F Sept 17	Discussion	Week 5 essay option posted; Week 4 option due

Week 6: A New Political Settlement

M Sept 20	Lecture	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
W Sept 22	Discussion	
F Sept 24	Discussion	Week 6 essay option posted; Week 5 option due

Week 7: The American Revolution in International Context

M Sept 27	Lecture	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
W Sept 29	Discussion	
F Oct 1	Discussion	Week 7 essay option posted; Week 6 option due

Week 8: Competing Visions

M Oct 4	Lecture	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
W Oct 6	Discussion	
F Oct 8	Discussion	Week 8 essay option posted; Week 7 option due

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

Week 9: Democracy

M Oct 11	No class, extended weekend	
W Oct 14	Lecture	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
F Oct 16	Discussion	Week 9 essay option posted; Week 8 option due

Week 10: Hearts and Minds

M Oct 18	Lecture	New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas
W Oct 20	Discussion	
F Oct 22	Discussion	Week 10 essay option posted; Week 9 option due

Week 11: The Peculiar Institution

M Oct 25 Lecture New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas

W Oct 27 Discussion

F Oct 29 Discussion Week 11 essay option posted; Week 10 option due

Week 12: Manifest Destiny

M Nov 1 Lecture New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas

W Nov 3 Discussion

F Nov 5 Discussion Week 12 essay option posted; Week 11 option due

Part 4 (Weeks 13-16): A House Divided

Week 13: The Crisis of 1850

M Nov 8 Lecture New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas

W Nov 10 Discussion

F Nov 12 Discussion Week 13 essay option posted; Week 12 option due

Week 14: The Crisis of 1860

M Nov 15 Lecture New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas

W Nov 17 Lecture

F Nov 19 Discussion Week 14 essay option posted; Week 13 option due

Thanksgiving break, no classes Nov 22, 24, or 26.

Week 15: The Hard Hand of War

M Nov 29 Lecture New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas

W Dec 1 Discussion

F Dec 3 Discussion Week 15 essay option posted; Week 14 option due

Week 16: Reconstruction vs. Redemption

M Dec 6 Lecture New "Art and America" online discussion topic posted on Canvas

W Dec 8 Lecture

F Dec 10 Discussion Week 16 essay option posted; Week 12 option due