

## 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 Thomas Jefferson) this “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 to propose a particular future for their country as well.*

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

Best contact: email [tfarnold@bsu.edu](mailto:tfarnold@bsu.edu) at any time with any questions or concerns.

Office hours MWF 11:00-12:00 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 normally free to use a laptop, tablet, or even phone for taking notes and referring to class materials. Most 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. However, in line with Indiana State law and the policies of the Indiana Academy, students are not expected to use any wireless device for non-class related purposes.

Students are expected to read and consider all discussion materials carefully and thoughtfully. 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.

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 inclusive excellence 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. As a reflection of Ball State's commitment to respect, civil discourse, and the Beneficence Pledge, Inclusive Excellence 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. Unfortunately, there might be occasions when something occurs that disrupts our progress toward meeting these objectives. In this case, we encourage any member of the Academy community to file a Campus Climate Report (CCR) [https://bsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6mbRbL5acAntUTI](https://bsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6mbRbL5acAntUTI). All reports will be taken seriously, and appropriate responses will be carried out by Academy administration.

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 absence policy:

It is the policy of the Indiana Academy that any absence from class is unexcused, except for illness, death in the family, college or school-related activities, and extenuating circumstances. When a student is absent from a class, the instructor reports the student absence to the Faculty Attendance Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs. Unless the absence is excused by a school official, it is considered unexcused. The decision as to whether an absence is excused is not determined by the instructor. Four or more unexcused absences in any particular class a student takes will lead to academic and residential consequences to be determined by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Residential Life that may include detention, residential groundings, parent/principal conference, among others.

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 some circumstances, an alternative reading 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 principally 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* (3<sup>rd</sup> 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: Contact

M Aug 12	Introduction
W Aug 14	Lecture
F Aug 16	Discussion

Week 2: The Columbian Exchange

M Aug 19	Lecture
W Aug 21	Discussion
F Aug 23	Discussion

Week 3: Colonial Intent

M Aug 26	Lecture
W Aug 28	Discussion
F Aug 30	Discussion

Week 4: Colonial Discontents

M Sept 2	No class, Labor Day
W Sept 4	Lecture
F Sept 6	Discussion

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

### Week 5: Independence

M Sept 9      Test 1 covering Weeks 1-4  
W Sept 11      Lecture  
F Sept 13      Discussion

### Week 6: A New Political Settlement

M Sept 16      Lecture  
W Sept 18      Discussion  
F Sept 20      Discussion

### Week 7: The American Revolution in International Context

M Sept 23      Lecture  
W Sept 25      Discussion  
F Sept 27      Discussion

### Week 8: Competing Visions

M Sept 30      Lecture  
W Oct 2      Discussion  
F Oct 4      Test 2 covering Weeks 5-8

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

### Week 9: Democracy

M Oct 7      No class, extended weekend  
W Oct 9      Lecture  
F Oct 11      Discussion

### Week 10: Hearts and Minds

M Oct 14      Lecture  
W Oct 16      Discussion  
F Oct 18      Discussion

### Week 11: The Peculiar Institution

M Oct 21      Lecture  
W Oct 23      Discussion  
F Oct 25      Discussion

### Week 12: Manifest Destiny

M Oct 28      Lecture  
W Oct 30      Discussion  
F Nov 1      Test 3 covering Weeks 9-12

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

Week 13: The Crisis of 1850

M Nov 4           Lecture  
W Nov 6           Discussion  
F Nov 8           Discussion

Week 14: The Crisis of 1860

M Nov 11          Lecture  
W Nov 13          Lecture  
F Nov 15          Discussion

Week 15: The Hard Hand of War

M Nov 18          Lecture  
W Nov 20          Discussion  
F Nov 22          Discussion

Thanksgiving break

Week 16: Reconstruction vs. Redemption

M Dec 2           Lecture  
W Dec 4           Lecture  
F Dec 6           Discussion

Week 17: America at the Centennial

M Dec 9           Lecture  
W Dec 11          Discussion  
F Dec 13          Discussion

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