**Master Syllabus – HST 115 History of the US I**

**Cluster Requirement: 4B**

**I. Course Catalog Description:**

**HST 115 - History of the United States I**

3 credits

A survey of American history from 15th century European contact to the end of the Civil War. The emphasis placed on themes such as politics, society, race, war, gender, economics, etc. will vary with the instructor.”

**II. Course Overview:**

A survey of American history from 15th-century European contact to the end of the Civil War; i.e. the development of mature colonial societies, early nationhood, the sectional crisis, and disunion. The most common themes taught in this course include transatlantic migrations, the establishment of colonial societies and their relations with the indigenous peoples, the development of New World slavery, revolution and early nationhood, the sectional crisis, and civil war. Issues and emphases will vary with the instructor.

Although customarily a “lecture” course, professors may also employ class discussion, research, debate, online discussion, film criticism, and other comparable pedagogical methods of instruction.

**III. Course Rationale:**

Through critical reading of primary and secondary sources, students will explore the political, social, intellectual, and economic changes and conflicts of the time period. While some emphasis will be placed on learning chronology and historical ‘facts,’ the primary aim of the course is to develop students’ historical understanding of US society and cultures, by helping students think historically, examine evidence, and grapple with how historical arguments are made and used. Thus, critical reading and thinking skills will receive priority in this course. Typical assignments might include response papers, examinations, argument papers, and small research essays, as well as online Discussion Boards.

**IV. Learning Outcomes:**

* Course-Specific Learning Outcomes: Students will be able to:

1. Understand the development of the US from Exploration/European contact to 1865.
2. Identify and properly use primary and secondary sources in the study of history.
3. Identify and formulate historical arguments.
4. Develop critical reading, writing, and/or oral skills.

* University Learning Outcomes: After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain: a) the development of US culture and sub-culture from different perspectives; b) US social and cultural domains in relationship to other regions of the world; or c) the different facets of citizenship in the United States.
2. Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.
3. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on US society.

**V. Examples of Texts and/or Assigned Readings:** Instructors may use the following texts, or any comparable texts or assigned readings.

* Boydston, et al, *Making a Nation: the United States and its People* Vol.1
* Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*,Vol. 1
* Faragher, et al, *Out of Many: A History of the American People* Vol. 1.
* Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* Vol. 1
* Goldfield, et al, *The American Journey* Vol.1
* Norton, *A People and a Nation* Vol. 1
* Wheeler & Becker, *Discovering the American Past: A Look at the Evidence* Vol. 1

**VI. Examples of Assignments:** Instructors may use assignments such as those below, or substitute comparable assignments meeting the Learning Outcomes.

**University Learning Outcomes category 4B1:**

1. “[Exam essay question]: Briefly explain how three (out of four) crucial factors contributed to the institutionalization of black slave labor in the Chesapeake before 1700.”

Course-specific Learning Outcomes: 1, 4

Rubric: Students studied four crucial factors, as described. Successful responses:

* Correctly identify three relevant factors.
* Explain their relatedness and impact upon the early development of slavery.

1. [Reading Quiz – topic: The Kensington Rune Stone]: “Identifications: select five of the items below and in no more than two sentences indicate who or what, about when, and what the significance is to the Runestone controversy. (10 points each)”

Olaf Ohman

Hjalmer Holand

Runes

Icelandic Sagas

Alfred Wegener

Goths

Viking

Lizard Mounds Park

Inuit

L’anse aux Meadows

Rubric: Identifications are worth 10 points each selecting, five out of ten options. Students must write brief (no more than two sentences) responses which indicate who or what (define), about when, and what its significance is to US history. Each element is worth 3 points.

1. Midterm exam Writing Assignment: “Using the late 18th- and early 19th-century concept of character and the need for a virtuous citizenry, analyze the personality and the presidency of two of the following: George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson. The essay is worth 50% of the exam grade.” [Students get the question in advance and may bring one large index card with notes on one side. (The note card is handed in with the exam.)]

Rubric: The criteria for a full credit essay include: having planned ahead and using the notecard to full advantage, clearly explaining the concept of character and virtue, providing good examples to illustrate the concepts, and producing an essay that is well reasoned and well written (keeping in mind the time constraint).

**University Learning Outcomes category 4B2:**

1. “[Response paper]: Much of history is about interpreting events. Now that you have read Fischer’s book [*Washington’s Crossing*], consider: at what points do you think the British plan for the Concord raid was 1) significantly compromised (salvageable, but with potential for serious consequence); and b) critically compromised (mission completion not likely worth the likely consequence)? Be sure to explain why you think so.”

Course-specific Learning Outcomes: 2, 4

Rubric: Students must read carefully to identify two significant turning points in a well-known historical event. Successful papers:

* Recognize two plausible, contingent historical factors.
* Defend the choice of factors reasonably.
* Are of required length and written to acceptable college-level standards. See HST 115 Rubric for Papers, attached.

1. [5 page paper, based on two weeks of primary and secondary source readings]: "Using the readings of the past few weeks (particularly Holton, Wood and the primary sources), describe the major differences between supporters and opponents of the ratification of the Constitution."

Rubric: excellent papers will:

* Directly address the question(s) posed in the assignment
* Make use of examples and quotes from the primary and secondary sources in support of their argument(s), and properly cite them
* Have a formal introduction and conclusion
* Be thoroughly proofread, with writing and ideas expressed clearly. See HST 115 Rubric for Papers, attached.

1. “Conduct research into primary sources, including those found in the textbook, *Voices of Freedom*, and two sources outside of the book, and write a three-page paper comparing and contrasting the experiences of two of the following groups in the colonial period: Indians, African Americans, and women.”

[Students draw on information from the early chapters of the text, *Give Me Liberty!,* to provide context, and they use Eric Foner's definition of freedom as a framework for their analysis. In his preface Foner explains three aspects of freedom, which serve as a thematic structure for the textbook. His ideas are part of the discussion from the start of the semester to the end.]

Rubric: Attached to their syllabus students find a guide to writing papers for this class. In addition, they receive the HST 115 Rubric for Papers (or a more simplified version; see attached).

**University Learning Outcomes category 4B3:**

1. “Read chapter 10 of *Discovering the American Past*, and address the following situation:

It is September 30, 1862. You are President Abraham Lincoln. For more than a year, northern blacks and powerful white politicians have been pestering you to authorize recruitment of black troops to help in the war effort. There are many perfectly sound reasons why you should do so, and yet you have steadfastly resisted the notion all this time. Finally, and perhaps reluctantly, you have issued the Emancipation Proclamation, to take effect on January 1. Frederick Douglass has written you a letter demanding to know what took you so long. Answer him, in a letter of about 800 words, discussing *at least three* *good reasons* (to you) why you held off on the decision. And don’t hold back; tell him what you think was the *most* important reason for your reluctance.”

Course-specific Learning Outcomes: 2, 3, 4

Rubric: Successful student responses:

* Accurately reflect the positions of Lincoln and Douglass.
* Display an ability to comprehend the development of complex arguments over time.
* Recognize the interplay of events and personalities.
* Are of required length and written to acceptable college-level standards. See HST 115 Rubric for Papers, attached.

1. “This 5-page paper should be based primarily on the primary and secondary source readings, supplemented by lectures and films. Please write on the following: `Describe the various strategies and philosophies argued for by Frederick Douglass, John Brown, William Lloyd Garrison and other opponents of slavery in the 1840’s and early 1850’s. Which approach to ending slavery did you find the most convincing, and why?’”

Rubric: excellent papers will:

* Directly address the question(s) posed in the assignment
* Make use of examples and quotes from the primary and secondary sources in support of their argument(s), and properly cite them
* Have a formal introduction and conclusion
* Be thoroughly proofread, with writing and ideas expressed clearly. See HST 115 Rubric for Papers, attached.

1. Activity: “Students hold a debate on Nat Turner's strategy and tactics in the 1831 rebellion, and on the question of how Turner is viewed in history. Students acquire background by reading the textbook and excerpts from *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Students work in teams to present and defend arguments in support of one of two positions.”

* Position 1. Turner was a murderous fanatic who chose to kill men, women, and children as part of his plan. His actions should be abhorred.
* Position 2. Turner was a freedom fighter acting within the constraints of his situation. His actions can be admired.

Rubric: Grading for the debate takes into consideration the student's preparation (including bringing the printed excerpts to class, notes, index cards, etc.), and his/her contribution to the team in the preparation and in the debate itself. After the debate students write and post on the class web site a paragraph describing their personal points of view. Their grade for this posting is a check, check-plus, or check-minus.

**VII. Sample Course Outline/Components:**

The following may vary in emphasis and particulars to suit the individual professor’s design:

* From colonial entities to independent nation
  + Migration and movement of peoples
  + Labor, free and unfree
  + Revolution and Constitution
* Building the new nation
  + Acquisition of a continental domain
  + Emergence of American identities, ideas and institutions
  + Development of American democracy
  + Development of regional economies
* Slavery, sectionalism, and Civil War
  + Sectional conflict
  + Experience of slavery
  + Politics of slavery and the Civil War
  + The Civil War as watershed in American history.

HST 115 Rubric for Papers

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Needs Improvement** | **Poor** |
| Depth of analysis | Paper goes beyond the assignment to explore the implications of arguments or evidence in new contexts or in particularly thoughtful, insightful, and/or original ways. | Paper fully meets the parameters of the assignment but does not exceed them. | Paper does not address some aspects of the assignment. | Paper does not address the assignment. |
| Introduction | Clearly and eloquently identifies a topic and line of argument.  Provides reader with a clear sense of the nature of evidence that will follow.  Reveals the organizational structure of the paper, and guides reader smoothly and logically into the body of the paper. | Clearly identifies a topic and line of argument.  Gives the reader a reasonably good sense of the nature of evidence that will follow. | Identifies a topic and argument that is not stated clearly.  (and/or…) Does not guide the reader into the body of the paper. | Introduction does not have a clear topic or discernable central argument. |
| Evidence | Evidence is rich, detailed and well chosen, and evidence sections employ appropriate illustrations and well-chosen quotations.  The connection between argument and evidence is clearly and compellingly articulated. | Evidence is well chosen, though not particularly rich or detailed.  The connection between argument and evidence is clearly articulated. | Connection between argument and evidence is not clearly articulated. | Evidence used does not clearly support the main argument. |
| Conclusion | Elegantly synthesizes and reframes key points from the paper.  Suggests new perspectives or questions relevant to the central argument, and brings closure. | Synthesizes and brings closure but does not examine new perspectives or questions. | Restates the same points as the topic paragraph without reframing them. | Is missing or cursory. (and/or…)  Repeats the topic paragraph more-or-less verbatim. |
| Organization | Organization of paper as a whole is logical and quickly apparent.  Connections among paragraphs are clearly articulated, and transitions between paragraphs are smooth.  Every paragraph makes one distinct and coherent point, expressed in a clear topic sentence; the parts of each paragraph connect logically and persuasively, and internal transitions are smooth. | Organization of paper as a whole is logical and apparent, but transitions between paragraphs are not consistently smooth.  Every paragraph makes one distinct and coherent point and, for the most part, the parts of each paragraph connect logically and effectively.  In most cases, the paragraph’s point is expressed in a clear topic sentence. | Organization of paper as a whole can only be discerned with effort. (and/or…) Not all parts of paper fit the organizational structure. (and/or…) Not all the parts of the paper are effectively integrated.  In a number of paragraphs, there is not a distinct or coherent point.  (and/or) Topic sentences are missing or unclear in a number of paragraphs. (and/or) In some paragraphs, parts do not connect logically. | Organization of the paper as a whole is not logical or discernable. |
| Clarity | Throughout the paper, wording is precise and unambiguous.  Sentence structure is consistently clear and lucid.  Meaningful use of quotations and quotations are all framed effectively in the text (i.e. integrated properly in terms of both grammar and meaning). | Paper is for the most part precisely worded and unambiguous.  Sentence structure is mostly clear.  Good use of quotations and quotations are framed effectively in the text. | Wording is imprecise or ambiguous fairly often. (and/or…) Sentence structure is often confusing. (and/or…)  Quotations are not framed effectively in the text. | Throughout the paper, wording is imprecise or ambiguous.  (and/or…) Sentence structure is consistently confusing. |
| Mechanics | Paper is clean and appropriately formatted.  There are no incomplete or run-on sentences and virtually no spelling or grammatical errors.  Quotations are all properly attributed and cited. | There are a few minor spelling or grammatical errors.  Quotations are all properly attributed and cited. | There are a number of spelling and grammatical errors. (and/or)  In a few places, quotations are not attributed and cited. | Paper is poorly written.  (and/or…) Quotations are frequently not attributed or improperly cited. |

Adapted from Rubric found at Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence, Carnegie Mellon University, Fall 2011.