


E A R L Y  
A M E R I C A N  
R E P U B L I C



**Instructor:**

Dr. Sean Trainor

**Meeting:**

MWF 10:40am-11:30am in 119 Keene-Flint Hall

**Office/Hours:**

MWF 11:45am-12:35pm | [021 Keene-Flint](#)

F 3:00pm-5:00pm | [233H Bryan Hall](#)

(and by appointment)

**Contact:**

[sean.trainor@ufl.edu](mailto:sean.trainor@ufl.edu) | [@ess\\_trainor](#)

352-273-3399 | [seantrainor.org](http://seantrainor.org)

## **INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The era of the early American Republic, as defined by this course, was a period of reaction. It began with the ratification of the new U.S. Constitution: an ambiguously-legal effort by a handful of elites to invest the national government with a variety of powers that revolutionaries, only a few years early, had criticized the British crown for exercising. The period concluded, meanwhile, with the failure of liberal revolutions throughout Europe and the conclusion of the US-Mexico War – a conflict in which the US invaded a sister republic and forcibly seized its land on behalf of a slaveholding aristocracy.

In between these years, women lost the political gains they had won during the revolution; slavery was transformed from a dying institution into the economic engine of American wealth; independent artisans – as well as poor women and children – were swept into industrial wage labor; intellectuals and politicians invented new ideas about race to justify the expansion of slavery; and the country's first wave of immigrants was greeted with an insurgent wave of nativism.

Amidst this wave of reaction, however, white men won the franchise – regardless of their access to property ownership. And activists founded movements – from the abolitionist and women's suffrage

movement to a nascent American labor movement – that over the coming century would help restore some of the waning promise of the American Revolution.

In this class, therefore, we will study these varied and conflicting stories of the early American republic: the new constitutional system; the rise of modern racism; rapacious territorial expansionism; the twin development of slave-based cotton agriculture and industrial capitalism; burgeoning American imperialism; as well as the origins of the democratic politics and liberation movements that would ultimately remake the republic.

## COURSE TEXTS

This is a reading-intensive course. While students are not required to purchase any texts, they will nevertheless be expected to read between 50 and 100 pages of material each week. All readings will be available on the Canvas course management system.

## GRADING AND EVALUATION

**- Please note: there is no final exam in this course. -**

- *Attendance: 20%*
- *Participation: 30%*
- *Group Discussion: 10%*
- *Midterm Paper: 15%*
- *Final Paper: 25%*

### *Attendance*

**Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class.** If students arrive after attendance has been taken, they should speak to Dr. Trainor who will consider offering attendance credit on a case-by-case basis.

**Students may miss up to three classes with no questions asked. Should they miss additional classes, they must request an excused absence from Dr. Trainor.** For information on what constitutes an excused absence, students should consult UF's attendance policies:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

### *Participation*

Classroom participation is a key component of this course. **Students are expected to participate in no fewer than three-quarters of all class sessions.** For those who do not feel comfortable participating in person, I will also award participation points for questions and comments proffered on the Canvas discussion board.

*Group Discussion*

Working in groups, students will be expected to lead a group discussion on an aspect of American life during the early republic not covered in the course syllabus. Details of this assignment can be found on the Group Discussion Prompt on Canvas.

*Midterm Paper*

**Students will submit a ~10-page midterm essay on Sunday, March 11.** This paper will require students to situate one of several early republic slave narratives within recent scholarship on slavery and capitalism. The prompt for this paper is available on Canvas.

*Final Paper*

At the end of the semester, students will be required to submit a ~10-20-page paper on a topic of their choice related to the early American republic. This paper must utilize both primary and secondary sources. Details of this project will be available on Canvas.

**LATE PAPERS**

Late submissions will be accepted for full credit at any time throughout the semester. While deadlines are important, it is infinitely more important that students submit their best work -- whenever it may be ready.

**GRADE SCALE**

94-100 = A  
90-93.9 = A-  
88-89.9 = B+  
82.5-87.9 = B  
80-82.4 = B-  
78-79.9 = C+  
72.5-77.9 = C  
70-72.4 = C-  
68-69.9 = D+  
62.5-67.9 = D  
60-62.4 = D-  
Less than 60 = F

**EMAIL / CANVAS MESSAGE POLICY**

Students should expect a response to questions, comments, or concerns in 36 hours or fewer. I will not respond to emails between the hours of 9pm and 7am.

**GRADING POLICIES**

Grading policies for this course are compliant with those of the university. To learn more about these policies, please visit <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

**COLLEGE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

### SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

All course readings are available on the Canvas course management system. Readings are due on the day for which they are assigned (i.e. readings listed under 10 January are due by class time on 10 January).

#### WEEK 1: Building a Republic in Indian Country

- *Mon., Jan. 8:* Introduction
- *Weds., Jan. 10:* Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (2001): "Prologue," 1-10, and "Separate Creations," 189-236.
- *Fri., Jan. 12:* Introduction to Papers / Group Project

#### WEEK 2: Building a Republic in Indian Country

- *Mon., Jan. 15:* Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (No Class!)
- *Weds., Jan. 17:* Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (2009): "The War of 1812," 659-700.
- *Fri., Jan. 19:* Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (2010): "Introduction," 3-14, and "Peace," 409-440.

#### WEEK 3: Reaction and the Early Republic

- *Mon., Jan. 22:* Declaration of Independence; United States Constitution; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*: "Experiment in Republicanism," 5-36.
- *Weds., Jan. 24:* Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (2010): "The Morning After," 27-49.
- *Fri., Jan. 26:* Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (2001): "Introduction," xiii-xxv; "Prologue -- Walking in Untrodden Ground: The Challenges of National Politics," 1-11.

#### WEEK 4: Reaction and the Early Republic

- *Mon., Jan. 29:* Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*: "Dueling as Politics," 159-198.
- *Weds., Jan. 31:* Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (2007): "Introduction," 1-10, and "Women and the 'War of Politics,'" 115-147.
- *Fri., Feb. 2:* Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (2006): "Could Slavery Have Been Abolished?," 69-122.

**WEEK 5: Republican Racism**

- *Mon., Feb. 5:* Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (2016): "Prologue," 1-11; "Created Equal," 104-119; "Uplift Suasion," 120-134; "Big Bottoms," 135-142.
- *Weds., Feb. 7:* Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*: "Colonization," 143-160; "Gradual Equality," 160-176; "Imbruted or Civilized," 177-190.
- *Fri., Feb. 9:* Library Research Day

**WEEK 6: Slavery and Capitalism**

- *Mon., Feb. 12:* Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (2013): "Introduction: Boom," 1-17; "The Mississippi Valley in the Time of Cotton," 244-279.
- *Weds., Feb. 14:* Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*: "Tales of Mississippian Empire," 303-329.
- *Fri., Feb. 16:* **Group 1 Presentations**

**WEEK 7: Slavery and Capitalism**

- *Mon., Feb. 19:* Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (2014): "Introduction: The Heart, 1837," xv-xxix; "Seed," 215-259.
- *Weds., Feb. 21:* Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*: "Backs," 309-342.
- *Fri., Feb. 23:* **Group 2 Presentations**

**WEEK 8: Slavery, Free Labor, and Capitalism**

- *Mon., Feb. 26:* Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (2009): "Introduction," 1-15; and "A Job for a Working Man," 45-74.
- *Weds., Feb. 28:* Rockman, *Scraping By*: "A Job for a Working Woman," 100-131.
- *Fri., Mar. 2:* **Group 3 Presentations**

**WEEK 9: Spring Break**

- *Mon., Mar. 5:* *Spring Break (No Class!)*
- *Weds., Mar. 7:* *Spring Break (No Class!)*
- *Fri., Mar. 9:* *Spring Break (No Class!)*

**WEEK 10: Middle Class Culture**

- *Mon., Mar. 12:* Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (1982): "Preface," xiii-xviii; "Hypocrisy and Sincerity in the World of Strangers," 33-54.
- *Weds., Mar. 14:* James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (2001): "Introduction: "Thinking with Tricks"
- *Fri., Mar. 16:* Cook, *The Arts of Deception*: "The Feejee Mermaid and the Market Revolution," 73-118.

**WEEK 11: Nationalism**

- *Mon., Mar. 19:* Wood, *Empire of Liberty*: "Experiment in Republicanism," 36-52.
- *Weds., Mar. 21:* David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (1997): "Introduction: The Practices of Nationalism," 1-14.
- *Fri., Mar. 23:* **Group 4 Presentations**

**WEEK 12: Republicanism Abroad**

- *Mon., Mar. 26:* Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (2016): "An Age of Revolutions," 1-16; "A Genuine American Policy," 156-193.
- *Weds., Mar. 28:* Fitz, *Our Sister Republics*: "An Imaginary Kindred," 194-239; "Destined by Providence," 240-255.
- *Fri., Mar. 30:* **Group 5 Presentations**

**WEEK 13: Abolitionism**

- *Mon., Apr. 2:* Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (2016): "Introduction: The Radical Tradition of Abolition," 1-5; "Interracial Immediatism," 195-227
- *Weds., Apr. 4:* Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*: "The Woman Question," 266-298.
- *Fri., Apr. 6:* **Group 6 Presentations**

**WEEK 14: Immigration**

- *Mon., Apr. 9:* Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* [Second Edition] (2002): "Pioneers of the Century of Immigration: Irish, Germans, and Scandinavians," 121-184.
- *Weds., Apr. 11:* Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (1995): "Introduction," 1-3; "They Swung Their Picks," 92-121.
- *Fri., Apr. 13:* Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*: "The Tumultuous Republic," 124-144.

**WEEK 15: Manifest Destiny and War**

- *Mon., Apr. 16*: Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (2008): "Introduction: A Little Door," xiii-xxi; "How to Make a Desert Smile," 226-249.
- *Weds., Apr. 18*: Delay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*: "A Trophy of a New Kind of War," 253-273.
- *Fri., Apr. 20*: Delay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*: "Polk's Blessing," 274-296; "Epilogue -- Article 11," 297-310.

**WEEK 16: Conclusion**

- *Mon., Apr. 23*: Final Paper Presentations
- *Weds., Apr. 25*: Reflections on the Class