

Hist. 322 The Age of Expansion and the Creation of American Identity

Prof. Dufour Spring 2010

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Office Hours: T, Th. 1-2; W, 5-6, and by appointment.

Course Description: Much of the material covered in this course is predictable, surveying the major topics in the ante-bellum United States. The focus is perhaps more limited than other such courses, since we spend (relatively) less time on the south and west regions, focusing more extensively on the north and northeast and on national events. However, an even more significant difference in this course lies in its thematic focus, which often dictates the type of material I will be presenting. I am concerned in particular with the creation of American identity during this years—political and personal identity, and the relationship between the two. What did it mean for citizens and residents of the United States to be an American? How did this identity differ between genders, races, and classes and most obviously, between regions? How did the United States emerge as a nation structurally—politically, economically, geographically? These are some of the crucial questions we will explore while we are working our way through the early years of the American Republic.

Class Expectations: Since this is a once-a-week class, regular attendance is particularly crucial. Past experience has shown that students who miss more than one class suffer in their performance. Scheduling also heightens the advantage of class participation—not only for your grade, but also for the emotional well-being of all of us during a three-hour block. I try to vary activities as much as possible, but this is an upper-level history class, so a certain amount time will always be taken up with lectures. The Wilentz assignments (and the Davis ones) are discussion-only, but reading the other material thoroughly will allow students to ask intelligent questions and challenge both professor and author when appropriate.

Papers and Exams: As indicated, there will be a mid-term and final exam. In addition, there will be two papers. For the first, each student must choose a chapter in the Wilentz/Earle reader, and write a 7-8 page synopsis of both the primary source documents and the secondary source articles in that chapter. We will divide these up in class, so that every chapter will have several students assigned to it. Second, each undergraduate student must write a 10-12 page critical book review on a scholarly monograph that I approve; more on this in class. Each graduate student will write a 15 page paper, either a traditional research paper or an historiographic essay, and again I must approve the topic and sources. All papers must follow the History Department Style Sheet and adhere to the department/college rules concerning plagiarism.

Grading:

Mid-Term Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	25%
Major Paper:	30%
Wilentz essay:	20%
Atten., partici.:	5%

Required Books:

Johnson, Paul. The Early American Republic (Oxford, 2007).

Wilentz, Sean and Jonathan Earle, eds. Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787-1848 (Houghton Mifflin, 2008).

Reynolds, David S. Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson (Harper Collins, 2008).

Davis, David Brion. Inhuman Bondage... (Oxford, 2008).

In addition, there are three recent surveys of this period that are worth consulting, since they represent the mature statements of scholars who have been researching and writing about the early republic for several decades. They also differ, sometimes strikingly, in their interpretation and understanding of these years. These books are: Sean Wilentz, The Rise of American Democracy (2005); Daniel Walker Howe, What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848 (2007); and Gordon Wood, Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic (2009). Despite (or because of) their thematic differences, each of these books offer challenging starting points for understanding the early years of the nation.

Class Schedule

- 1/27 “Themes in Understanding the Early Republic”
“The Ratification and Implementation of the Constitution”
- 2/3 “Creating and Contesting American Identity: Federalists, Republicans and the 1790s”
“Republican Mothers: Women and Political Identity in the Early Republic”
Reading: Johnson, ch. 1; Wilentz, ch. 2, document 7 and Jan Lewis article; Wilentz, ch. 3.
- 2/10 “The Republican Vision: From Lewis and Clark to the War of 1812”
Reading: Johnson, ch. 2; Wilentz, ch. 4.
- 2/17 “War and Expansion”
Reading: Wilentz ch. 5, documents only.
“A New World: The Early Industrial Revolution”
Reading: Johnson, ch. 3; Wilentz, ch. 7, all; Wilentz, ch. 1, “The Market Revolution,” pp. 1-8.
- 2/25 “The Shaping of Personal Identity: Family, Race and Religion in the Early Republic”
Reading: Johnson, ch. 5; Wilentz, ch. 6; Davis, chs. 7-8.

- 3/3 . “Regional vs. National Identities: The South in the Early Republic”
Reading: Johnson, ch. 4; Wilentz, 8, documents 9, 10; McCurry article
 Davis, ch. 9.
- 3/10 **Mid-Term Exam**
- 3/24 “Regional vs. National Identities: The West in the Early Republic”
Reading: Wilentz, ch. 9.
 “The Era of Bad Feelings: Politics and National Identity”
Reading: Reynolds, chs. 1-2; Wilentz, ch. 10, doc. 1-8 only.
- 3/31 “Jacksonian Democracy”
Reading: Reynolds, ch. 3; Wilentz, ch. 11.
- 4/7 “‘What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?’: African-Americans and American
 Identity”
Reading: Davis, chs. 9, 10, 11;
 Wilentz, ch. 8, documents 1-8; Johnson article.
- 4/14 “Spiritual Kingdoms, Secular Reform”
 “Separate Spheres and Political/Social Identities: Women in the
 Jacksonian Era”
Reading: Reynolds, chs. 4-5; Wilentz, ch. 12.
- 4/21 “‘Race, Slavery, and Morality: Contesting American Identity’”
Reading: Wilentz, ch. 13; Davis, ch. 13.
- 4/28 “Searching for American Identity: Literature and Culture in the Early Republic”
Reading: Reynolds, ch. 6; Wilentz, ch.. 14, Emerson; Widmer.
- 5/5 “Whose Manifest Destiny: Politics, Slavery and Expansion”
Reading: Reynolds, ch. 7; Davis, ch. 1; Wilentz, ch. 15.

Wilentz chapters for short paper: 4; 7; 6; 9; 11; 12; 13.

