

Rhode Island College  
Department of History  
History 331  
Rhode Island History  
Spring 2010

“Gotta get me a little oblivion, baby  
try to keep myself away from me.

Adam Duritz,  
*Perfect Blue Buildings*, 1993

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Office Hours: Monday 11am-12:20pm and Thursday, 2pm-3pm and by appointment.

**Course Description:**

Students will survey Rhode Island’s history from its colonial origins down to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The course will examine Rhode Island’s distinctive characteristics and history as well as its regional and national context as the state has evolved over its three and a half centuries. Special emphasis will be placed on the issues of race, class, and community.

**Prerequisites:**

None.

**Structure:**

History 331 meets twice a week for 80 minute class periods. Although this class includes lecture, class discussion is essential and participation in class roundtables are required. Accordingly, students must read all assignments as scheduled and prepare comments and questions on such readings.

**Student Responsibilities and Assessment:**

Students are responsible for all required reading assignments and must keep detailed class notes. There will be a midterm and a final examination. Each exam will include a mix of identifications essays, and reaction statements. The midterm is worth 25% and the final 25% of your course grade. If you miss an exam due to illness or emergency, you must provide the instructor with written documentation; an unexcused absence results in a failing grade. The remaining percentage of your grade will reflect your performance on three written assignments and two roundtable discussions. Please note that no makeup exams will be given, or late papers accepted, unless arrangements have been made before the due dates.

**Departmental Outcomes and Professional Standards:**

After successfully completing this course, students will know and be able to meet several of the Departmental outcomes and National Council for the Social Studies Standards. Please consult the attached sheet for the outcomes/standards addressed and assessed.

**Student Disability Policy:**

Rhode Island College is committed to making reasonable efforts to assist individuals with documented disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations, you are required to register with the Student Life Office. To receive accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper Student Life Office forms and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

**Academic Honesty Policy:**

The History Department has a zero tolerance policy with respect to plagiarism. If a student is caught plagiarizing, he/she will receive an F for the paper. Depending on the seriousness of the offense, the student may receive an F for the course. The plagiarized paper will be copied and placed on file in the department chair's office and sent to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs. If a student is caught a second time, the paper will be copied (and circulated as above), but that person will also be referred to the Academic Standing Committee for a hearing, which may lead to suspension or expulsion from the college.

**Required Books and Articles**

Edwin Gaustad, *Roger Williams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Stanley Lemons and George Kellner, *Rhode Island: The Ocean State* (Sun Valley: American Historical Press, 2004).

Charles Hoffman and Tess Hoffman, *Brotherly Love: Murder and the Politics of Prejudice in Nineteenth Century Rhode Island* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).

Brown University, *Slavery and Justice* (Providence: Brown University, 2006). Available online at the following address:

[http://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery\\_Justice/documents/SlaveryAndJustice.pdf](http://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/documents/SlaveryAndJustice.pdf)

*Providence Journal* articles on slavery and organized crime online

<http://www.projo.com/extra/2007/mob/story.html>

<http://www.projo.com/extra/2006/slavery/>

**Written/Oral Assignments:****Research Essay. 25% of Course Grade**

In this exercise, students will examine the impact of slavery and the slave trade or organized crime in Rhode Island as the basis for their essay. The assignment is straightforward and the resources are readily available on line and in print. In addition to the material found in the *Providence Journal*, students must find, at least, one additional source for their paper. In this paper, students will address the question "What impact did either slavery or organized crime have on the history of Rhode Island?" This is a secondary source research project that must be completed in several stages with occasional consultation with the instructor. During the first week of class, we will

discuss this exercise in closer detail and confirm due dates for assignment submissions.  
Due Dates: February 22 and April 26.

**Book Review Essay.** 20% of course grade.

Students will select either *Roger Williams* or *Brotherly Love* as the basis for a five-seven page book review essay. Please keep in mind the following guidelines for reviews suggested by historian Jules Benjamin in his book *A Student's Guide to History*.

Benjamin states: "The most important point to remember about a book review is that it is a commentary, not merely a summary. The bulk of your report should be an evaluation of the way the author handled the subject, and a commentary on the book's contribution to your understanding of the issues discussed. Your review should discuss the author's theme and point of view, as well as your reaction to them; evaluate the author's methodology; discuss the author's values and biases; and draw conclusions as to how well the author's point comes across. Because a book review is generally brief, come to the point directly and confine yourself to a small number of supporting examples." Due Dates February 10 and April 5.

**Roundtable Discussion.** 5% of course grade.

Each student will participate in a roundtable discussion based on one of the two books, *Roger Williams* or *Brotherly Love*, under review. In this discussion, you will focus on the book of your choice and participate in a discussion with others who read the same book. As part of this exercise, you will analyze the book informally debate the author's critical points among yourselves, and then field questions from the class. You should prepare a series of questions to ask your fellow group members. Due Dates: February 8 and March 24.

**Topics and Required Reading Schedule.**

**Please note important due dates for all exams and assignments.**

Week 1. January 25. Introduction and House Rules. January 27. Local History: Themes and Historical Memory. Suggested Reading: "Why Nearby History" in David Kyvig and Myron Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982). Required reading: Begin reading Gaustad, *Roger Williams*.

Week 2. Politics and Self-Government. February 1. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chap. 1 and continue reading *Roger Williams*. February 3. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chap. 2 and finish *Roger Williams*.

Week 3. **February 8. Roundtable Discussion on *Roger Williams*. February 10. Book Review Essays Due for discussion participants.** Contested History: Rhode Island and Slavery. Suggested Reading: Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981) and Joanne Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and Race in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981). Required Reading: Handouts and *Slavery and Justice*.

Week 4. February. 15. Contested History Continued. Required Reading: Slavery and Justice. February 17. Rhode Island in The Age of Revolution, 1760-1787. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chap. 3.

Week 5. **February 22. Papers on Slavery Due.** Living on the Margin. Required Reading: Ruth Wallis Herndon, *Unwelcome Americans: Living on the Margin in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) pp. 31-34, 57-60, 91-94, 134-138, and 170-173. February 24. Rebels, Rioters and Partymen. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chap. 4.

Week 6. Industrialization and Immigration Part I. March 1. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chap. 5. March 3. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chap. 5.

Week 7. **March 8. Midterm Examination.** March 10. Rhode Island and the War Between the States. Required Reading: Handouts and begin *Brotherly Love*.

Week 8. March 15-19. Spring Break. No Class

Week 9. March 22. The Dorr War. Required Reading: Patrick Conley, *The Dorr Rebellion: Rhode Island Crisis in Constitutional Government* (Providence: Cogens, 1976). March 24 Rhode Island and the War Between the States. Required Reading: Handouts and *Brotherly Love*.

Week 10. March 29. Gilded Age: Robber Barons and Rebels. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chap. 8 and *Brotherly Love*. **March 31. Roundtable Discussion: *Brotherly Love*.**

Week 11. April 5. **Book Review Essays Due for discussion participants.** Immigration, Urbanization, and Industrialization: Part II. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chap. 6 and Paul Buhle, *Working Lives: An Oral History of Rhode Island Labor* (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1991) pp. 11-26. April 7. Immigration, Urbanization, and Industrialization: Part II. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chaps. 7 and 8. April 7. Case Study: Woonsocket and the Rise of Industrial Unionism. Required Reading: Gary Gerstle, "Interpreting Woonsocket History, 1875-1955" in Doug Reynolds and Marjory Myers, eds., *Working in the Blackstone Valley: Exploring the Heritage of Industrialization* (Woonsocket: Sheahan, 1990).

Week 12. April 12. Labor and Leisure: Rocky Point Movie and discussion. April 14. Rhode Island: Politics and People. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chaps. 10 and 12.

Week 13. April 19. Rhode Island: Politics and People. Required Reading: *Rhode Island*, Chaps. 13, 14, and 15. April 21. Politics: Rhode Island Style. *Buddy* movie and discussion.

Week 14. April 26. **Organized Crime Papers Due.** Organized Crime in Rhode Island. Required Reading: *Providence Journal* series. April 28. Benefit Street Walking Tour.

Week 15. May 3. Guest Speaker. Mr. Stanley Crum on the history of African Americans on the East Side of Providence. May 5. Final reflections and final exam review.

May 10-15. Final Exam Week.

Rhode Island History  
Precis Assignment

Directions. During the first week of class, each student will be assigned one of the following articles to analyze. Students will write and submit a one page précis stating the author's main points and discuss these points in a short class presentation. A grading rubric for the written portion of this assignment has been attached as a guideline for your work. Each article appears in Rhode Island History, a journal located in the Adams Library stacks. Please consider the following articles and note the due dates:

January 30. Raymond Irwin, "Cast Out From the "City on a Hill": Antinomian Exiles in Rhode Island, 1638-1650" (52, 1, February 1994)

February 1. Timothy Wood, "World's Apart: Puritan Perceptions of the Native Americans during the Pequot War" (56, 3, August 1998)

February 15. Neil York, "The Uses of Law and the Gaspee Affair" (50, 1, February 1992)

February 15. William Leeman, "Rhode Island's Controversial General: Nathanael Greene and the Continental Congress, 1776-1780" (59, 3, August 2001)

February 22. Jane Lancaster, "I Would Have Made Out Very Poorly Had It Not Been for Her": The Life and Work of Christina Bannister, Hair Doctress and Philanthropist" (59, 4, November 2001)

March 20. Frank Williams, "A Candidate Speaks in Rhode Island: Abraham Lincoln Visits Providence and Woonsocket, 1860" (51, 4, November 1993)

March 20. Eric Ethier, "George Sears Green: Gettysburg's Other Second Day Hero" (53, 2, May 1995)

March 22. Andrew Morris, "The Problem of Poverty: Public Relief and Reform in Postbellum Providence" (56, 1, February 1998)

March 29. Richard Sorrell, "Sentinelle Affair: Religion and Militant Survivance in Woonsocket, Rhode Island" (36, 3, August 1977)

April 3. David Farbman, "Developing an Esprit de Corps: Efforts to Reform the Teaching Profession in Rhode Island, 1870-1900" (56, 2, May 1998)

April 5. Carl Gersuny, "Uphill Battle: Lucius F.C. Garvin's Crusade for Political Reform (39, 2, May 1980)

April 5. Norma Lasalle Daoust, "Building the Democratic Party: Black Voting in Providence in the 1930s (44, 3, August 1985)

April 10. Jason McGill, "The Celebrity Club: Social Change in Postwar Providence" (63, 2, Summer 2005)

April 12. Valerie Quinney, "A Crisis in Rhode Island Mental Health Care: The Closing of Butler Hospital in 1955" (47, 2, May 1989)

April 17. Joseph Conforti, "Irving Fain and the Fair Housing Movement in Rhode Island, 1958-1970" (45, 1, February 1986)

April 19. Andrew Heubner, "Support Unseen: Rhode Island and the Vietnam War, 1965-1973" (60, 1, Winter 2002)