Welcome to 241: Colonial America. For many Americans, colonial history is synonymous with the thirteen English-speaking colonies that became the United States. But colonial America was a large, crowded, and diverse place that stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific and from Hudson’s Bay in the north to the tip of South America. Within this arena, Native, English, Spanish, French, Dutch, Russian, Swedish, and African peoples met, intermingled, and jostled for power. The impossibility of
conveying New World societies in all their complexity and variety forces us to focus on a limited number of actors and a narrow range of themes, such as American exceptionalism, the nature of cultural contact, and the rise of racism and race slavery. This broadly comparative course will explore common themes in English, French, and Spanish speaking North America. It will focus on the evolving relationships between America’s founding people, Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans, and the societies they created together.

**Course Objectives**

Students will

- become familiar with the main events and themes in colonial American history.
- become familiar with some of the major schools of thought and historiographical debates that have shaped historians’ understanding of the colonial period.
- understand the role of Native peoples and Africans in the development of New World societies.
- learn to critically evaluate secondary sources.
- further develop clear and effective oral and written communications skills.

**Class Organization**

Classes will be a combination of lecture and discussion. We will usually begin with a brief introduction to the week’s topic followed by a student-led discussion of the assigned readings.

**Required Texts**


Required texts are available in the Moravian College bookstore. Additional readings are available on JSTOR or will be placed on reserve in Reeves Library.

**Attendance**

While there is no formal penalty for missing classes, students are strongly encouraged to attend all classes. Success in the course depends upon comprehension of the lecture material and participation in class discussions. Lateness will not be tolerated.

Please turn off or mute all electronic devices in the classroom.
Grade Distribution

Topic and preliminary bibliography 7%
Annotated Bibliography 15%
Final Essay 20%
Journals 18%
Participation 20%
Final Exam 20%

The participation grade will reflect the quality and quantity of your contributions to class. It is not an attendance grade.

Journals
Throughout the semester you will be writing weekly journal entries to reflect on the readings. Journal entries must be at least one-and-a-half pages long, double-spaced. Journals serve as a place for you to think about not just the immediate readings but also the larger themes of the course. What does it mean to be American? I will read every journal entry to ensure that you are keeping up your journal entries and taking them seriously. Since we meet twice a week, it is up to you whether you write about Tuesday or Thursday’s readings. In terms of format and style, journal entries may be less formal than the essay. They will be graded for content, regularity, and willingness to engage with ideas, rather than for stylistic concerns such as spelling and grammar. Nonetheless, I do expect you to proofread your journals before handing them in. Journals must be handed in at the beginning of the class in which they are due.

Assignments
By the end of the course, you will become an expert in one area of colonial history, which you will demonstrate in a 10-12-page historiographical paper. A historiographical essay provides comment and analysis on a number of works pertaining to one subject. Do not summarize the contents of the books. Instead, write a coherent essay with a thesis that assess how historians have interpreted the topic over time. Writing will take place in stages. By week four you will have selected a topic and prepared a preliminary bibliography. In week 8, you will turn in an annotated bibliography containing a minimum of twelve works. You will utilize eight of those books in writing the final essay, which you will turn in week 13.

Late Policy
Papers turned in after the beginning of the class on which they are due will be assessed a penalty of 5% for the first day they are late and 2% for each day thereafter. I do not accept late journals. They must be turned in at the beginning of the class in which they are due. Computer and printing problems are not acceptable reasons for lateness.
Important Due Dates

Topic and preliminary bibliography  September 18
Annotated bibliography  October 16
Final Paper  November 20

Academic Dishonesty

According to the Moravian College Student Handbook, the following constitutes plagiarism: “as the use, deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgment.” Plagiarism will result in the offender receiving zero in the course. Please consult the Student Handbook for fuller details.

Students with Disabilities

Students with physical, learning, or medical disabilities should speak to me and contact Laurie Roth, Director of the Learning Center, to arrange the appropriate accommodations. Please make these arrangements in the first weeks of the semester.

NOTE: Additional readings may be assigned throughout the semester.

Class Schedule

I. Introduction

Week 1
Aug. 28 – Introduction: What is colonial history?

Aug. 30 – Historiography

II. Old Worlds

Week 2
Sept. 4 – America
What does Salisbury mean by ‘Indians’ Old World?” Does this article change the way you think about history? How and why?

Sept. 6 – Europe
Why does Fogelman begin his history in Germany? What are the implications of this for a distinctive American character?

II. New Worlds

Week 3
Sept. 11 – Encounters
How do preconceptions shape the nature of contact? To what extent does reality alter these misconceptions? Would you describe the English intrusion into America as settlement, colonization, conquest or something else?

Sept. 13 – Frontiers and Borderlands
Compare frontiers, borderlands, and metropolis? What are the strengths and limitations of the concept of “frontier” for the study of American history?

III. American Societies

Week 4
Sept. 18 – Spanish America
Why were Spanish colonies in the region that would become the United States less successful than the ones in South and Central America, and the Caribbean? In what ways did the Spanish influence Native societies? To what extent did Native peoples influence colonial society?

*Topic and Preliminary Bibliography Due*
Sept. 20 – French America

**James Gaines lecture at 7:30pm Peter Hall.**
How and why did French colonies in Canada in Louisiana differ? What were French goals in America? How did the crown achieve them? How do you think French and English colonies differed?

**Week 5**
Sept. 25 – British America: Slave Colonies
Why did English men and women go to Virginia? How did their values and expectations hold up against the reality of Virginia? To what extent were they capable of transferring English culture to America?

Sept. 27 – Slavery and Freedom
Did racism result from economic imperatives or a cultural predisposition on the part of the English?

**Week 6**
Oct. 2 – Slave Societies
Do you believe that the experiences of African slaves in the different regions of North America were more similar or different? Why? Was America Africanized in the eighteenth century?

Oct. 4 – Immigration
To what extent did the Old World inform the New and/or did the environment transform Europeans into Americans?

**Week 7**
Oct. 9 – No Class – Fall Recess

Oct. 11 – New England
English men and women settled both Virginia and New England. Did the two regions more similar or dissimilar? What accounts for the differences? Can we speak about an undifferentiated ‘British America?’

**Week 8**
Oct. 16 – British West Indies

**Annotated Bibliography Due**
Should the West Indies be considered part of colonial America? Why? What is a cultural hearth?

**V. Revolutions**

Oct. 18 – Religious
What was the significance of the Great Awakening and how did it affect colonial society? How did women and immigrants participate in the Great Awakening?
Week 9
Oct. 23 – Consumer
T.H. Breen, “Baubles from Britain: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the
James Axtell, “The First Consumer Revolution,” in Natives and Newcomers: The
Cultural Origins of North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001),
15-45.
What is a revolution? Does increased consumption of consumer goods constitute a
revolution? Are the two consumer revolutions related? Why or why not?

Oct. 25 – Political
Fogelman, Hopeful Journeys, 127-53.
Holton, Forced Founders, 1-76.
What are the sources of revolutionary fervor in Pennsylvania and Virginia? To which
school(s) of historiography do you think Holton belongs? Why?

Week 10
Why did Virginians embrace non-importation and non-exportation? What does this tell us
about Virginia society in the Revolutionary era?

Nov. 1 – The Imperial Crisis in Britain’s Other Colonies
Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British Caribbean,”
William and Mary Quarterly (April 1994): 203-226. Reserve/JSTOR
Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, “The Lost Decade,” in A People Highly Favoured
of God: Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution (Toronto: Macmillan),
3-23. Reserve
To what extent did the experiences of Nova Scotia and the British Caribbean conform to
those of the mainland colonies? Why did Britain’s other colonies not join the Revolution?

Week 11
Nov. 6 — Woody Holton, Forced Founders, 131-220.
Why did Virginia rebel? Have you changed the way you thought about the Revolution
and American society because of Holton’s book?

Nov. 8 – No Class – The Instructor Is Away

Week 12
Nov. 13 – Natives, Slaves, and Women in the Revolution
Colin G. Calloway, “Corn Wars and Civil Wars: The American Revolution Comes to

As these articles demonstrate, slaves, Anglo-American women, and Native Americans participated in the Revolution. For what did they struggle? And how does their struggle force us to revise an interpretation that the war was about freedom and the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuits of happiness?

Nov. 15 – The Other Americans


Were the Loyalists British or American?

Week 13

Nov. 20 – **Paper Due**

Nov. 22 – **No Class – Thanksgiving Recess**

Week 14

Nov. 27 – *The Life and Times of Captain N*

How does Glover characterize the interactions between Native Americans and Euro-Americans? Do you agree with his characterization? According to Glover, what is the meaning of the Revolution?

Nov. 29 – Consolidating the Revolution


How is an American identity and nationality constructed in the years after the Revolution?

Week 15

Dec. 4 – American Identity


How should we assess colonial America? What factor, event, or trend defines the essential American character?

Dec. 6 – Conclusion and Review

The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus with appropriate notification.