UGS 302
Rethinking the Founding:
From the American Colonies to the United States

Professor Bartholomew Sparrow
MW 3:45 pm, MAI 220E
Office Hours: M, W: 1:15-2:45 and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The framers of the US Constitution had a great impact on the course of American political development. Unsurprisingly, we therefore often hear that the founders knew best or that the Constitution became a blueprint for later American politics and government. This course revisits what most of us know about America before the founding. If we know about the establishment of the settlement at Jamestown (and the role of Pocahontas), the landing of the Mayflower in Massachusetts Bay, and tax laws that led up to the Boston Tea Party and the American Revolution, most of us know little about the everyday realities of colonial America and how the story of the establishment of the United States had several dimensions and multiple implications.

This course returns to the circumstances of Britain North America in the decades before the founding era and establishment of the United States. Accordingly, it explores the effects of the decades of America being a British colony, from the first permanent settlement in Virginia in 1607 to the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and then to the Constitution of 1787. The course addresses the circumstances of Europeans and African slaves arriving in the New World, discusses the social and religious politics of the 17th and 18th centuries, examines the interaction of whites with Native Americans, considers the governments of the colonies and first states, and looks at the few American colonies in the larger context of European—and especially British—geopolitics of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe. This is to say that as students and citizens we have to take seriously the political and social world upon which American Independence, the Articles of Confederation—the United States’ first constitution—and the Constitution of 1787 were based.

GRADES

• Writing (40%): students will compose:
  (1a) one essay, to be discussed and edited by their peers;
  (1b) that same essay, rewritten (no more than 1500 words in length, 10%);
  (2) a book review, for which students may use one of the books from which class readings are taken or they may choose a new book (with the permission of the instructor). Students do a first draft, reviewed by peers, and then a final draft (1500 words, maximum, 10%).
  (3) an analysis of an aspect colonial America that students themselves choose (contingent on the instructor’s approval). This analytic essays should reflect a wider reading on the subject (3000 words, maximum). This analysis is to be based on first draft and reading list (8 percent) and then a final draft (12%)—totaling 20%.
• Oral presentations (15% total): students will present their findings from their book reviews (3 percent each) and from their analyses (6 percent each). For the latter presentation, students will state their question, discuss their sources and methods, explain their findings, and take questions from their classmates and instructor. Students will also make two brief reports on the topics covered in the class readings of those two days, spread out over the semester (5 percent each).

• Discussion (15%): includes attendance—which will be taken in class—the quality of class participation, two original blogs (linked to their class presentations on the days’ readings), and three responses to the (other) blogposts of their classmates, in response to the readings (and class discussion).

• Information literacy (10%): students will learn about plagiarism and citations, look up peer-reviewed articles, do a research log for their analysis paper, and visit the Harry Ransom Center.

• University Lecture (5%): students must attend the lecture (date TBD), summarize the lecture (200 words), and write a question about the lecture.

• Take–home final exam, choice of one of two questions (15 percent). More information will follow on the final exam and the individual papers.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Papers must handed in on time. *Electronic copies not accepted.* You are responsible for attendance and participation. Your regular presence and engagement in class discussion is expected. Your participation will be graded on the *quality of your contribution more so than the quantity*, and should reflect a thorough reading of the text and be *relevant* to the discussion on hand. Your instructor may also call on you.

*Three* tardy appearances (coming late to class or regularly coming late to class) counts as one absence. Early departures or absences while the class is going on are counted as tardies, or, depending on how much the student misses of the class period, absences. (Please note: there will be a short break during the 75–minute class to allow people to stretch their legs.)

*More than three* absences—excused or unexcused, it does not matter—will result in a 1 percent reduction in your overall course grade. *Each additional* absence results in another 1 percent reduction in your class grades. *Eight* or more class absences—effectively missing four out of fifteen weeks of the class—may result in automatic failure. Please let your instructor know in advance if you know you will be late for class or if you have to leave early (e.g., a summer job interview, an unavoidable doctor’s appointment). Also let him know *ahead of time* if you have miss assignments for extraordinary reasons or cannot otherwise participate in class assignments as expected of the class and as stated in the syllabus.

The assignment of the due dates for the class presentations and blogposts will be made after the term starts.
Expectations

- As a student in this course, you are expected to demonstrate the following:
  - intellectual engagement in the texts and topics of the course
  - honesty, responsibility, self-motivation, and diligence
  - on-going assessment of your own learning and self-reflection
  - respect for your fellow students and teacher

- Specific assignments:
  - reading the assigned texts in advance of class
  - participating in class discussion (including attendance)
  - making oral presentations
  - writing the essay and research paper, and commenting on others’ papers
  - keeping up with the course’s Canvas site and your own email

- Email correspondence is welcome and convenient. *Please format your emails as business correspondence (with a title/greeting and signature), and I shall try to get to you emails within 24 hours—and usually much sooner—unless I am indisposed.* I may also answer on Canvas should a student voice a general concern, one that it might be more useful to share with the entire class.

- Your instructor is available during office hours, and outside office hours by appointment if students cannot make office hours. He is also typically available for a few minutes both before and after class.

- Computers, mobile ‘phones, and other electronic devices need to be turned off: *using devices in class counts as a tardy, and after the third violation it will count as a class absence.*

- Misconduct will detract from your participation grade. Misconduct is any behavior disruptive to learning and includes the following: activated cell phones, iPods, laptops, etc.; personal conversations in class; studying for another class; or exhibiting other behavior as interpreted by your instructor. Inappropriate classroom behavior may also result in your dismissal from the classroom (with that class day being counted as an absence).

- Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, [http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/) Please inform the instructor of your condition by the 2nd week of classes.

- Special arrangements for the assignments may be considered on an individual basis in exceptional circumstances, and only if you discuss this with the instructor in advance.

- By UT Austin policy, you must notify your instructor of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
• Because this class has a Writing Flag, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing assignments, and receive feedback from both your instructor and your peers so as to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise three of your assignments, and you will also be asked to read and discuss your peers’ work. Two-fifths of your total grade (and this does not include your take-home final exam) is from your writing performance.

TEXTS: all readings are in a course packet available at Jenn’s at 2518 Guadalupe (at Dean Keeton), 512-482-0779. A few readings (such as the founding texts) are readily available online or (marked below) available as e-books through the UT library.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 18, W: I. Introduction
“Rethinking the Founding”; Course Overview

January 23, M: Writing introduction; division into teams
Handout on Writing

January 25, W: What Kind of Colonial America, What Kind of Founding?
Two Contrasting Theses
• Howard Zinn, A People’s History of the United States, Ch. 3, “Persons of Mean and Vile Condition,” pp. 39-58. Electronic copy available through PCL online catalog

January 30, M: II. Unfree Labor
• Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, “The People Trade,” White Cargo (2008), 113-136

February 1, W:
• John Van Der Zee, Bound Over, Ch. 18, 19; 194-228
• Russell Menard, “From Servant to Freeholder,” William and Mary Quarterly (1973), 37-64.

February 6, M: Class in the Perry-Castaneda Library
Draft of the First Essay Due

February 13, M:  

Revised First Essay Due

February 15, W:  

February 20, M:  
III. Religion and Republicanism  

February 22, W:  
• James Marone, “City on a Hill,” Hellfire Nation (2003), 34-54.

February 27, M:  

March 1, W:  
IV. Colonial Politics  

Book Review Drafts Due in Class

March 6, M:  
Class in the Harry Ransom Center

March 8, W:  
• Gordon Wood, Creation of the American Republic, 593-615.

Book Review Due

March 13-17  
SPRING BREAK

March 20, M:  
V. The Declaration, Revolutionary War, and the First U.S. Constitution  

March 22, W:  

March 27, M:  
March 29, W:  • *The Declaration of Independence* and the *Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union* (both texts available online)


April 19, W:  • *US Constitution* (available online)

April 24, M:  • Emily Conroy-Krutz, “Empire and the Early Republic,” *H-Diplo*, 10 September 2015

April 26, W:  • Frederick Douglass, “The Constitution of the United States: Is It Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery?”

May 1, M:  • Bartholomew Sparrow, “The Fourth “Race”: Tocqueville, Unfree Whites, and the Poor in American Society,” to be made available online

**Take-Home Final handed out**

May 3, W:  Course Conclusion and Overview. No assigned reading.

May 5, F:  Take home exams due, 4:00pm. BAT 3.142.