

Course Overview: HIS 120

Course title: American Origins
Pre-requisites: None
Number of credits: 3
Catalog course description: In this course, we will study the development of American political, economic, and social institutions in their geographical and environmental context from the early explorations and colonial settlements through the end of the Reconstruction (approx. 1877). Along the way, we will ask and answer the following questions: What is American history? Can there be an "American" history before the formation of the United States? What are the principles developments that occurred within the Americas to create the United States? How did colonial society evolve from its earliest beginnings into a larger and modern nation? What moral questions afflicted the American people? Moreover, what groups of people comprise an "American"? Have their stories traditionally been told as part of American history? Finally, how did Americans in the past record their thoughts and experiences?
Required instructor qualifications: A master's degree in history is strongly preferred. Applicants with a bachelor's degree in history with a master's degree in another field that includes coursework in History will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
Course's audience and role in Eastern's curriculum: This course is a part of Eastern's liberal arts core curriculum, so it is taken by students across the university in their first or second year. This course fulfills the liberal arts learning outcome of ethical reasoning as well as the Social Sciences requirement. This course is also required for History majors and fulfills requirements for the History and Social Sciences major and the History minor. It also satisfies the State of Connecticut Teacher Certification requirement of a survey course in American History if a C or higher is earned.
Learning outcomes: All courses in the liberal arts core that meet the ethical reasoning requirement focus on the following learning outcomes, which you should include on your syllabus. Students will be able to demonstrate ethical reasoning by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognizing ethical issues• Identifying their own ethical positions• Analyzing other ethical positions• Considering the impact of decisions and actions on other individuals, society and the environment In addition to these ELAC learning outcomes, your syllabus should also include the following course-specific learning outcomes. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Display an understanding of the major social, political, intellectual, and diplomatic developments occurring in America from 1607 to 1876
- Understand how ethical systems were used to support existing social, political, and economic institutions
- Understand how changes in ethical reasoning were influenced by new intellectual and philosophical concepts
- Think critically about these developments in analytical writing and in discussions
- Effectively use primary and secondary sources to think critically about these issues

Primary modes of instruction: Each course in Eastern’s liberal arts core includes at least one high impact practice. The high impact practice you must include in this course is undergraduate research, following the [AAC&U definition](#). As described on the sample syllabus, such research should “involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.” The project need not necessarily focus on slavery, as it does on the sample syllabus.

Primary modes of assessment: On campus, students’ grades are calculated as follows:

- 4–6-page research paper that utilizes primary sources: 30%
- Midterm exam (multiple choice and essay): 20%
- Reading questions: 20%
- Shared writing: 20%
- Class participation: 10%

Instructors may exercise some freedom in selecting and weighting assignments, so long as the course involves both exams and writing.

For details on each of these assignments, please see the sample syllabus.

Other notes for instructors: On campus, instructors in this course use [REVEL for American Stories, Volume 1](#) as the course text. Instructors may use the text of their choosing, in consultation with their faculty liaison.

Approved by the Department of History on 05/15/2025

Signature of department chair or faculty liaison: *Caitlin Caronen*