

**History 1377: The United States to 1877**  
**University of Houston--Department of History**

**Syllabus**

Eric Walther

section #05471

Office: AH-531; phone: 743-3101

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:00-12:30pm and by appointment

**Fall, 2006**

AUD1-AH

MW 1:00-2:20pm

**Teaching Assistants (all in AH-662; phone 713-743-3125)**

Gary Bryant

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**Office Hours:**

MW 2:30-4:00pm

M11:45-12:45; WF 2:30-3:30pm

MW 12:00-1:00pm; Tues 12:00-1:00pm

**Required Readings:**

Martin, Roberts Mintz, et al, *America and Its People: A Mosaic in the Making Volume 1-to 1877, Third Edition*

United States History, *United States History to 1877: HIST 1377, Section 05471* (reader)

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (Paine)

Eric Walther, *The Shattering of the Union: America in the 1850s* (Walther)

**Course Requirements:**

You are expected to attend class daily, and to arrive on time. Any and all announcements (about exams, class rosters, etc.) will be made **only** at the beginning of class. If you are late or absent for any reason, it is **your** responsibility (not mine or my teaching assistants') to get class notes and information.

Students must be in the classroom on time and are expected to attend for the duration of the lecture. If you must leave early, *do not even come to class*. Turn off all cell phones, pagers, alarms and/or chimes on watches. Disruptive behavior can result in me withdrawing you from this course with an F at any time during the semester.

Your grade will be determined from your performance on three, all-essay exams, each given at the end of a five-week unit. Each exam counts as one-third of your grade. You **must** write in ink on each exam. If for any reason you fail to take an exam, you must provide me (not my t.a.s) with written proof of illness or of family emergency—and I will verify these and determine if a make-up exam is in order. In all cases, the History Department will provide Bluebooks.

After the first two days that graded exams are available for students to pick up, students will lose ½ a letter grade per class day (Mon/Wed) for four (4) days; if a student has not retrieved her/his exam by that time (in fact, six class meetings after exams go back), I will drop you from the course with a WF—withdraw, fail.

You are expected to prepare for every class by completing the readings assigned for that week (by following the schedule below). If any of the readings or lectures pose problems, please feel free to bring them up with my assistants or me before or after class, in our

offices, or—if pertinent—ask me during class. Each lecture is designed to present factual and interpretive material dealing with a critical issue or group of issues. If you are ever in doubt as to the scope of a topic, its meaning, or how it relates to a broader understanding of history, ask me or one of my assistants as soon as possible. Your questions and participation are welcome.

Except for those students who require the aid of tape recorders, you may not use these things in my class. My assistants and I will gladly help anyone learn to take better notes.

Cautionary note: if anyone is caught cheating in any way (including plagiarism), I will deal with them as severely as allowed by University of Houston policy (see student catalogue).

## **Schedule:**

### **Unit I**

#### **week of:**

Aug. 21: Course Introduction; European Exploration; English Colonies  
text, 1-3 (*skim* ch. 1 only); reader, 1-6

Aug. 28: Development of English Colonies; Servants & Slaves  
text, 3-4; reader, 7-44

Sep. 4: **Labor** Day Holiday; Colonial Societies & Governments  
text, 5; reader, 45-62

Sep. 11: From Britons to Americans  
text, 6; Paine, entire

Sep. 18: Confederation & Constitution  
text, 6-7 (7 only to p. 195); reader, 63-94

### **Exam #1, Wednesday, September 20**

### **Unit II**

Sep. 25: Defining the New Nation  
text, 7, pp. 195-end, and chapter 8; reader, 95-106

Oct. 2: Jeffersonian America  
text, 9

Oct. 9: Expansion & Realignment  
text, 9-10; reader, 107-131

Oct. 16: Jacksonian America  
text, 10; reader, 133-164

Oct. 23: Society & Culture  
text, 13; reader, 193-206

**Exam #2, Wednesday, October 25**

**Unit III**

Oct. 30: Manifest Destiny & the Territorial Question  
text, 14; reader, 165-192

Nov. 6: The North & the South  
text, 11-12; Walther, begin

Nov 13: The Impending Crisis  
text, 15; Walther, complete

Nov. 20: War, & Transformation; **Thanksgiving holiday: Wednesday, no classes**  
text, 16; reader, 207-256 (continued next week)

Nov. 27: Reconstruction  
Text, 17; reader, 207-256, complete

**Final Exam, Wednesday, December 13, 2:00-5:00 pm**

The only way to receive notification of your grade on the final exam and a summary of your grades for the course is to leave a self-addressed, stamped envelope with my teaching assistants during the last week of classes or at the time of the final exam.

**How to do Well on (Dr. Walther's) Written Exams:**

- 1) **Answer the question as asked/read all instructions.** If the question frames a topic within certain dates, stick to that time; if it asks about one person or event, don't talk about different ones. If it asks about slaves, don't write about servants; if it asks about Pilgrims, don't write about Puritans; if it asks about Pilgrims **AND** Puritans, then write on both of them, not just one.
  
- 2) **Argue and prove; do not just assert.** State your point of view—the general answer, the position that you want to prove—right away; that is your assertion. Then prove it. Proof comes in the form of facts, examples, and illustrations. Be specific; address things like “who, what, where, when, why, how, how many.”

For example: “How did African slavery start in America?”

*Do NOT write:* "Slavery began early in the colonial era. It was confusing in law and it evolved slowly. The conditions were sort of like indentured servants. It was different in different places."

*DO write:* "Slavery began differently in different places. It started in Virginia in 1619 when a Dutch ship sold over 20 people to the English. The English did not yet have slave laws, so for a while things developed awkwardly. Early on, the English probably considered some of the Africans as sort of indentured servants, although they treated others more like property of the master for life..."

- 3) **Write clearly. If we can't understand you, you don't get credit.** Complete your thoughts. We are not getting tested, you are. You must fully explain concepts and events. We don't care if you print or hand write, skip lines or pages, as long as we can read and understand your answer. It is nice, though, to have college students know that *colonist* is singular, *colonists* are plural, and *colonist's* is something that a colonist possesses; *colonists'* is something that many colonists possess; and that British colonists in the 13 colonies that rebelled against England were no longer colonists after July 4, 1776—they were citizens of a new republic.
- 4) **When in doubt, put it in.** We'd rather have too much information than too little, an irrelevant fact rather than no facts. ***But***, see point #1—stick to the question—don't throw in the kitchen sink.
- 5) **Work in information from readings where appropriate.** You will not receive the highest grade possible on an exam if we cannot see evidence that you have done the readings and understood what you read. You need not cite pages or even write, "as the textbook says, blah blah blah..." just add to your answers very specific material from the readings when appropriate.
- 6) **If you don't understand something, ask.** Please stay seated, raise your hand, and we will answer whatever we can; you may ask us *anything*.