HIST 201: American History to 1876

Ball State University
Fall 2026

Section: 05
Class Times: MWF 12:00 - 12:50 pm
Class Location: Applied Technology 109
Credit Hours: 3.0
CRN: 38714

Professor: Luc Avelar
lucas.avelar@bsu.edu
Office: Burkhardt 205
Office Hours: W 1:30–2:30 pm
or by appointment.

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1. Course Information

Course Description

This course surveys the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of the history of the United States from pre-European contact to Reconstruction. It explores how ideas of freedom, citizenship, and popular sovereignty acquired various meanings over time. Those ideas often intersect with colonialism, racialized slavery, and territorial expansion, foundational historical processes to the American national identity. Throughout the course, students will be introduced to the core principles of historical thinking as they learn how to engage with, analyze, and interpret primary documents that speak to significant moments in U.S. history.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- **Understand** the foundational principles of the American political system.
- **Recognize** complex threads, key political events, and cultural phenomena that explain the forces at work in the evolution of American history through Reconstruction.
- **Analyze** and interpret historical sources and situate historical material in contextual evidence in order to understand the core principles of historical thinking and analysis.
- **Understand** the multiplicity of the American national character and its development until 1877.
- **Articulate** a well-structured, evidence-based historical argument.

Course Modality/Structure

This course meets in person three times a week. Weekly modules consist of in-person lectures to take place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Students can expect to complete in-class quizzes and are required to read relevant documents and textbook materials prior to each lecture as per the syllabus schedule. Major assignments include historical source analyses and in-class exams.

2. Course Materials

Required Books:

- Joseph Locke and Ben Wright (eds.), *The American Yawp*. Free version available online.
- Students will be notified of any other text excerpts to be provided through Canvas.

Further Readings / Recommended:

- Blight, David. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge: Harvard Belknap, 2001.
- Calloway, Colin G. *New Worlds for All: Indians Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Foner, Eric. *Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution. W. W. Norton & Company, 2019*.
- Grant, Susan-Mary. *A Concise History of the United States of America.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Taylor, Alan. *Colonial America: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Zabin, Serena. *The Boston Massacre: A Family History.* New York: Harper Collins, 2020.

3. Course Assignments & Grades

Assignments

Your final grade in this course will be based on your performance across a variety of assignment types. Each category of assignments is designed to assess different aspects of your engagement with the course material, and all are essential to your overall success in the class.

- **Participation (10% of Total Grade):** Throughout the semester, students are expected to actively participate in class and engage with the lecture content. Usually, for in-class discussions, I will provide students with a set of documents and they will work in groups to practice the core principles of historical thinking.

- **Checkpoint Quizzes (15% of Total Grade):** Checkpoint Quizzes are meant to help students assess their understanding of major themes and concepts discussed in class. In this sense, each Quiz will be based on lecture content covered since the previous Quiz.

- **Document Analyses (25% of Total Grade):** Each Analysis will look different as these assignments will be tailored to guide students through the core steps of historical thinking and source evaluation. Detailed instructions will be provided in Canvas. Please make sure to check the syllabus and the weekly schedule to see when a Document Analysis is due.

- **Midterm Exam (25% of Total Grade):** Students will have access to a Midterm Exam Study Guide with specific instructions and expectations well in advance of the examination.

- **Final Exam (25% of Total Grade):** The University has a predetermined schedule for Final Exams. The Final Exam for this course is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, December 9, from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm. Students will have access to a Final Exam Study Guide well in advance of the examination.

Assignment details, including instructions, relevant readings, due dates, and grading criteria/rubrics will be posted and updated on Canvas. Please check Canvas regularly to stay informed and on track.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Range
A	100% - 94%
A-	<94% - 90%
B+	<90% - 87%
B	<87% - 84%
B-	<84% - 80%
C+	<80% - 77%
C	<77% - 74%
C-	<74% - 70%
D+	<70% - 67%
D	<67% - 64%
D-	<64% - 61%
F	<61% - 0%

Final grades will follow a percentage-based grading scale. Please note that I will round up only if you fall within .5% of the next grade up. So, for example, I will round up a grade that is a 89.51% or higher.

4. Weekly Schedule

This is a tentative slate of meetings, assignments, and due dates. I reserve the right to make modifications to the schedule and the due dates in correspondence with the needs of the class. I will announce any changes well in advance of any due dates in person and through Canvas.

Date	Related Readings	To-Do List
Week 1: Getting Started		
Monday, August 24	• Course Syllabus.	
Wednesday, August 26	• Yawp, Chapter 1, I-III.	
Friday, August 28	• Yawp, Chapter 1, IV-VII.	
Week 2: Discovering, Invading, and Inventing America		
Monday, August 31	• Yawp, Chapter 2, I-IV.	
Wednesday, September 2	• Yawp, Chapter 2, V-IX.	
Friday, September 4	• Yawp, Chapter 3, I-II.	
Week 3: European Settler Colonialism		
Wednesday, September 7	**Labor Day**	

Wednesday, September 9	• William Cronon, "Learning to Do Historical Research" • Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does it Mean to Think Historically?"	**Bring to class:** An example of primary source. **During Class:** Historical Thinking Exercise.
Friday, September 11	• Yawp, Chapter 3, III.	
Week 4: Race, Slavery, and Economy in British North America		
Monday, September 14	• Yawp, Chapter 3, IV-VII.	
Wednesday, September 16	• Yawp, Chapter 4. • Olaudah Equiano Describes the Middle Passage, 1789.	
Friday, September 18	• Kevin M. Kruse's piece for The 1619 Project (pp. 48-49).	During Class: **Checkpoint Quiz 1**.
Week 5: British Colonial Cultures		
Monday, September 21	• Yawp, Chapter 5, I-III.	
Wednesday, September 23	• Philippe Halbert, "Early American Women Unmasked"	
Friday, September 25	• Yawp, Chapter 5, IV-V.	

Week 6: A Century of Conflict		
Monday, September 28	**Hard copy of Document Analysis 1** (handwritten) due by the start of class.	
	• Yawp, Chapter 5, VI-VIII.	
Wednesday, September 30	• Serena Zabin, *The Boston Massacre* (excerpt in Canvas).	
Friday, October 2	• No readings due.	During Class: **Checkpoint Quiz 2**.
Week 7: Revolution, Independence, and a New Nation		
Monday, October 5	**Document Analysis 2** due on Canvas by the start of class.	
	• Yawp, Chapter 6, I-III.	
Wednesday, October 7	• Declaration of Independence.	
Friday, October 9	• Yawp, Chapter 6, IV-VII.	
Week 8: Making the Constitution		
Monday, October 12	**Fall Break**	
Wednesday, October 14	• Yawp, Chapter 7, I-V.	

Friday, October 16	• Yawp, Chapter 7, VI-XII. • Federalist Papers (No. 1; No. 9; No. 10; No. 68; No. 84) • The United States Constitution (with all Amendments). • Bill of Rights.	
Week 9: Freedom and The American Paradox		
Monday, October 19	**In-Class Midterm Exam**	
Wednesday, October 21	• Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told* (Excerpt in Canvas). • Explore: Freedom on The Move Database.	
Friday, October 23	• Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founder* (Excerpt in Canvas).	
Week 10: The Birth of the Political Nation		
Monday, October 26	**Document Analysis 3-A** (Data Collection) due by the start of class.	
	• Yawp, Chapter 8, I-IV.	
Wednesday, October 28	• Yawp, Chapter 8, V-VII.	
Friday, October 30	• Yawp, Chapter 9, I-III.	

Week 11: Culture and Ideology in Antebellum America		
Monday, November 2	• Yawp, Chapter 9, IV-V.	
Wednesday, November 4	• Yawp, Chapter 10, I-V.	
Friday, November 6	• Yawp, Chapter 10, VI-VIII.	During Class: **Checkpoint Quiz 3**.
Week 12: Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion		
Monday, November 9	**Document Analysis 3-B** (Data Formatting) due by the start of class.	
	• Yawp, Chapter 10, IX-XII.	
Wednesday, November 11	• Yawp, Chapter 11, I-V.	
Friday, November 13	• Yawp, Chapter 11, VI-X.	
Week 13: Sectional Crisis and the War for the Union		
Monday, November 16	**Document Analysis 3-C** (Data Interpretation) due by the start of class.	
	• Yawp, Chapter 12, I-IV.	
Wednesday, November 18	• Yawp, Chapter 12, V-VI.	
Friday, November 20	• Yawp, Chapter 13, I-III.	During Class: **Checkpoint Quiz 4**.

Week 14: War for Emancipation		
Monday, November 23	• Yawp, Chapter 13, IV-V.	
Document Analysis 4 due Tuesday by 11:59 pm.		
Wednesday, November 25	**Thanksgiving Recess**	
Friday, November 27		
Week 15: Unfinished Reconstruction		
Monday, November 30	• Yawp, Chapter 14, I-IV. • The Emancipation Proclamation. • 13th Amendment.	
Wednesday, December 2	• Yawp, Chapter 14, V-VIII. • Mississippi Black Code, 1865. • 14th Amendment. • 15th Amendment.	
Friday, December 4	• Annettee Gordon Reed, Between Juneteenth and the Fourth of July in *The New York Times*, July 4, 2021.	
Week 16: Finals Week		
Wednesday, December 9	12:00 pm - 2:00 pm: **In-Class Final Exam**.	

5. Course Expectations & Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. While attendance will not be formally graded, students are expected to attend classes in person and consistently throughout the semester. Students who miss class meetings must communicate with me as early as possible with justifiable reasons.

This class is scheduled to be fully in person in the Fall 2026 semester on Ball State University's main campus. However, Covid-19 cases still rise due to new variants. Please know that I am eager to make accommodation should you need to miss class due to exposure. We will make this work on a case-by-case basis as we go.

- **If you are feeling sick,** please stay home.
  - Please, take a Covid-19 test and wear a high-quality mask around others for precaution.
  - Obtain medical care if you are experiencing severe symptoms.
- **If you test positive for Covid-19**, please isolate for a minimum of five full days to prevent spread.
  - Employees must notify their supervisor and enter appropriate sick leave.
  - Students must complete a Notification of Absence.
- **If you were exposed to Covid-19**, please wear a mask around others and monitor symptoms for 10.
  - If you have symptoms, get tested immediately.
  - If you do not have symptoms, get tested 5 days after last exposure.
  - Test again if symptoms develop.
- In case any of the above scenarios are true, **please contact me and we will work together to accommodate your absence.**

Late Work & Extensions

The pace of this class makes it critical that students turn their work on time and consistently communicate with me. But life happens, and I am fairly flexible and understanding. All I ask for is consistent and honest communication. Students should always try to reach out to me **ahead of time** if they know they might miss an in-class assignment or a submission deadline. Similarly, if unforeseen circumstances stop you from talking to me ahead of time about a missed assignment, you should still come to me to discuss the situation and determine if a makeup would be possible.

Assignments will open in Canvas well before the due dates and will close at 12:00 am the date after the due date. No work will be accepted after the last day of class unless specifically assigned.

Participation

In-class participation as well as engagement with the readings are essential components of this course's learning objectives. In class, I welcome questions and comments before, during, and after

the lecture as long as we are respectful and constructive in our commentary. I encourage students to collaborate and help each other with content, but please note that, unless stated otherwise, course assignments must be completed individually. Participation will be graded according to the Grading Policy for this course.

Respect and Equity in Class

As your instructor, I am committed to a policy of equality and respect for all persons. I have a personal commitment to creating and fostering a caring community based on the core values of integrity, honesty, and respect. Discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated in this course.

Technology in Class

The use of personal devices such as laptops or tablets to take notes or access readings and Canvas materials during class is welcomed and encouraged. We will be working with digital tools that will require you to have access to a laptop computer, either Windows or Mac iOS, during each class period. However, students are advised not to enable notifications and/or other forms of distraction (i.e., social media apps) from the devices they bring to class.

Academic Integrity

Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Visit the VPAA's academic integrity website (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. To learn about BSU's academic integrity expectations and students' rights, please read the University Student Academic Ethics Policy.

Plagiarism and Other Violations

Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself. Check with me if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty.

More broadly, examples of academic integrity violations include but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by the instructor (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books).
- Using a generative AI system or a person to complete academic assignments such as response papers, discussion posts, essays, or any other assignment when such use is not explicitly permitted by the assignment instructions or the instructor.

- Presenting as one's own work the ideas, representations or words of another person or of a GenAI system without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources or of the AI tool(s) used.
- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission, giving away, buying, or selling graded assignments class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or to third-party vendors (Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.)
- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.

Policy on Artificial Intelligence: No Generative AI Use

All work conducted and/or submitted in this course should reflect your own ideas and demonstrate your current knowledge, abilities, and skills. Therefore, generative AI should not be used to complete any portion of the assignment(s). Doing so constitutes a violation of Ball State University's Student Academic Ethics Policy.

6. University Statements

University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Disability Statement

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities. Documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

FERPA and Privacy

As a student, your educational records are considered confidential. Under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), your records are confidential and protected. Under most circumstances, your records will not be released without your written and signed consent. However, some directory information may be released to third parties without your prior consent unless a written request to restrict this is on file. You can learn more about student rights to privacy by reading Ball State's FERPA and Privacy and Protection.

7. Campus Resources & Information

The Writing Center

All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center to get additional feedback on your writing. The Writing Center can help you at any stage of the writing process, whether you're just getting started and need help brainstorming or when you're wrapping up a project and just want a second set of eyes. We work with writers from all disciplines and with all kinds of writing, including essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts.

You can choose from three appointment types: getting started on a new project (Planning appointment), discussing an existing draft (Feedback appointment), or scheduling time to work, with a tutor on hand to keep you motivated (Accountability appointment). To schedule a free appointment, go to bsu.edu/writingcenter. We offer online appointments any time we're open, or you can meet a tutor face-to-face in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays and Bracken Library First Floor West in the evenings. Make sure you plan ahead, because appointments book quickly!

The Learning Center

The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit myballstate.bsu.edu and click on "Navigate" in the Academic Tools section, or just go directly to bsu.navigate.eab.com.

Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are available for students who have received the appropriate documentation from Disability Services. Tests may be administered in the Learning Center.

Supplemental Instruction is available in select courses. If you have an SI leader for your course, that person will provide students with information the first week of school regarding weekly study sessions. For more information about Learning Center programming, visit bsu.edu/learningcenter or call 765-285-1006. Follow us on Instagram: BallStateLC.

The Basic Needs Hub

If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the Basic Needs Hub. The Basic Needs Hub has information, resources, and provides individualized support to students. To talk with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a Basic Needs Assistance Form.