



## Hunan University

### HIS 11: United States to 1877

**Professor:** To be announced  
**Total contact hours:** 54 hours  
**Credit:** 4

#### *Course Description*

This designed to provide a general introduction to the History of the United States, covering the period from the Revolution through the tumultuous era of the Civil War and Reconstruction. We begin by examining how the intersection between the dynamics of European expansion and the New World environment produced a special sort of English (ultimately British) man and woman, and how their society developed its near-fatal entanglement with African slavery. We proceed to explore the logic by which these colonials came to conclude that their "liberties" were best served by declaring independence from their Mother Country.

Once independent, the "Americans" had to frame new political institutions for themselves and learn how to use them to settle conflicts without falling into anarchy. As they learned how to govern themselves, they gained increasing security and freedom to expand across the continent (albeit at the expense of the original inhabitants). Americans' explosive surge into the West greatly increased their wealth, not simply through the settlement of fertile land but also through the creation of a continental economy that encouraged industrialization and urbanization. With increased economic opportunity and the erosion of traditional social allegiances, Americans democratized their political institutions; no longer reliant on traditional rulers to provide social institution such as churches and schools, they devised new, voluntary approaches to building their communities. Some Americans went further, imagining that they had the capacity to create a society in which all were equal and liberated to develop their fullest capacities.

This expansive, egalitarian (for white guys) society, though, was also hamstrung by contradictions. Native Americans were "outsiders" to be pushed aside; women were accorded a sort of "equality" but were still subject to male dominance. Above all, American wealth and American white liberty was intimately bound up with the use of African slave labor - a system that pervade all the British colonies before the Revolution, but became increasingly identified afterward with the American South. While most white northerners had little interest in extending the promise of American life to African-Americans, the slavery issue increasingly became bound up with a complex of issues separating North and South, issues that ultimately led to



Secession and War. In the end, the War itself, more than any human intent, would purge slavery from American society-but only after the bloodiest slaughter in American history.

The War did far more than free the slaves, however; it also launched a period of revolutionary experimentation that redefined the nature of American citizenship, dramatically expanded the suffrage to male African-Americans (though not women), and attempted a massive democratization of southern society. The outcome of this "Second American Revolution," however, was mixed, as violent southern white resistance turned back efforts to "reconstruct" the ex-Confederate states. At the same time, underneath the sectional conflict, a quieter transformation of American society was resulting in a reaction against the antebellum sense of boundlessness; the future of the United States was to be, not a nation of "independent" farmers, artisans, and shopkeepers, but of employees, giant enterprise, and new conflicts. While distracted by the war between North and South, the country had been transformed from the America of the Jacksonian Age to the America of the Gilded Age.

**Textbook**

1. *Who Built America? Volume One: Through 1877: Working People and the Nation's History*; Author: American Social History Project, Publisher: MPS, Edition: 3, Year Published: 2008
2. *Oroonoko*, Author: Behn, Publisher: Penguin, Year Published: 2003
3. *Heroic Slave*, Author: Douglas, Publisher: Createspace, Year Published: 2001
4. *Common Sense*, Author: Paine, Publisher: Dover Press, Year Published: 1997
5. *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, Author: Rediker, Publisher: Random House, Year Published: 2004

**Grading**

- Participation 20%
- 3 Essays 15% each
- Final Exam 35%

A+ 96-100	A 90-95	A- 85-89
B+ 82-84	B 78-81	B- 75-77
C+ 71-74	C 66-70	C- 62-65
D 60-61	F < 60	

**Guide**

A pair of students will be expected to lead discussion for the class by providing discussion questions. The timeline of the course has been broken into four sections, one for each week.



## ***Course Schedule***

The course has 24 class sessions in total. All sessions are 2 hours and 15 minutes in length.  
Note: the course outline and required readings are subject to change.

Class 1:

Introduction and general overview of the United States of America (geography and earliest historical data / events)

Class 2:

The Colonial World and the Empire

Class 3:

Piracy and the time of the Enlightenment

Class 4:

Role of Religion

Class 5:

The Seeds of the Revolt (Origin of the American Revolution)

Class 6:

Building Toward War; or, British Policies / American Reactions

Class 7:

The Revolutionary War, creation of the Republic

Class 8:

The Constitution and the Articles of Confederation

Class 9:

The Constitution and The Federalist Era, Presidents: Washington and Adams

Class 10:

President Jefferson and The Jeffersonian Revolution  
(Essay No. 1 due)

Class 11:

Review and discussion of Essay No. 1

Class 12:

The Early Supreme Court



Class 13:

Jackson Election and the end of Old Guard

Class 14:

Mexican-American War, Expansion of America

Class 15:

The Antebellum Crises

Class 16:

The Origins of Civil War

Class 17:

Lincoln's Election and the early war in the East  
(Essay No. 2 due)

Class 18:

Review and discussion of Essay No. 1

Class 19:

The War in the West and Sherman's March to the Sea

Class 20:

Antietam, Gettysburg and Emancipation

Class 21:

Johnson and Grant

Class 22:

The Rise of Racism and Ku Klux Klan

Class 23:

Sharecropping and Carpet-bagging  
Essay No. 3 due

Class 24:

Final Exam



## ***Attending Policy***

Regular and prompt attendance is required. Under ordinary circumstances, you may miss two times without penalty. Each absence over this number will lower your course grade by a third of a letter and missing more than five classes may lead to a failing grade in the course. Arriving late and/or leaving before the end of the class period are equivalent to absences.

## ***Policy on “Late Withdrawals”***

In accordance with university policy, appeals for late withdrawal will be approved ONLY in case of medical emergency and similar crises.

## ***Academic Honesty***

Hunan University expects all students to do their own work. Instructors will fail assignments that show evidence of plagiarism or other forms of cheating, and will also report the student's name to the University administration. A student reported to the University for cheating is placed on disciplinary probation; a student reported twice is suspended or expelled.

## ***General Expectations:***

Students are expected to:

- Attend all classes and be responsible for all materials covered in class and otherwise assigned;
- Complete the day's required reading and assignments before class;
- Review the previous day's notes before class and make notes about questions you have about the previous class or the day's reading;
- Participate in class discussions and complete required written work on time;
- Refrain from texting, phoning or engaging in computer activities unrelated to class during the class period;
- While class participation is welcome, even required, you are expected to refrain from private conversations during the class period.

## ***Special Needs or Assistance***

Please contact the Administrative Office immediately if you have a learning disability, a medical issue, or any other type of problem that prevents professors from seeing you have learned the course material. Our goal is to help you learn, not to penalize you for issues which mask your learning.