

HIST 1301.003: United States History I

University of Texas at Tyler

Fall 2026; T/R, 11:00-12:20; Fine Arts Complex (ARC) 112

Instructor: Prof. [Matt Stith](#)

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Office: CAS 127

Office Hours: T/R, 12:30-1:30; Tuesday, 3:30-4:30; Or by appointment.

Course Description:

We will explore American history from human origins in North America (~13,000 BCE) to the end of Reconstruction (1877). In doing so, we will examine social, political, environmental, cultural, diplomatic, and military history and how each together shaped the course of American history.

Content Objectives:

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

1. Demonstrate a strong understanding of the development of the United States in both a domestic and global context.
2. Develop analytical skills through thinking deeply, reading actively, and writing carefully about American history.
3. Gain a strong sense of scholarly skepticism by balancing everything with hefty amounts of context and perspective.
4. Appreciate and understand that accurate interpretations can only rest on ample and sturdy evidence.

Important Note:

I encourage you to meet with me regularly to discuss or clarify lecture, discussion, or reading—or to talk about American history in general. My job (and satisfaction) is as much to work with students on an individual basis as it is to lecture and facilitate discussion. Please keep this in mind throughout the semester.

Another Important Note:

When you finish this course, my goal is for you to have a strong understanding of the major themes, characters, and connections in the story of early America, and I hope you will recognize how enormously impactful this period has been (and remains) in our world today—politically, militarily, environmentally, diplomatically, socially, culturally, and so on. To fully understand and appreciate any story, it is imperative that you know-well the characters and events in that story. You must commit to memory a lot of material (characters and events) for this class. What class/subject does not require that you remember things? This said, I recognize and appreciate that specific names, events, etc., fade in time. They fade for me, too. That's okay. This stuff is the scaffolding. Like scaffolding for any structure, real or perceived, it is critically important early on, but it is not meant to stay forever—just long enough such that the finished product emerges in all its glory and remains for the ages. Simply put, the finished product for this course is your general understanding and appreciation for the early American past—an understanding and appreciation that I hope will remain long after the details fade.

Required Reading (ALL FREE):

- Textbook: Joseph L. Locke and Ben Wright, eds., *American Yawp*, Vol. I: to 1877 (Stanford University Press, 2026)
 - o Full-text PDF on Canvas & available here: <https://www.americanyawp.com/>
- Vicki Betts and Randal B. Gilbert, eds., “Personal Experiences of Lindsey Zollars During the Civil War,” *Chronicles of Smith County*, Texas 51 (2021): 29-39. **Full Text PDF on Canvas**

Exams:

There will be THREE exams. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple choice questions worth two points each for a total 100. Exams are not cumulative. I will distribute a study guide a week before each exam, and we’ll have a brief study session the class period before each exam.

Point Breakdown:

Exam I:	100 pts
Exam II:	100 pts
Exam III:	100 pts
Civil War Assignment:	50 pts
<u>Participation:</u>	<u>50 pts</u>
Total:	400 pts

Grade Scale:

400-360 = A
359-320 = B
319-280 = C
279-240 = D
239-000 = F

Civil War Primary Source Assignment:

On the assigned date (see below), we will have an in-class writing assignment in which you answer a series of questions about the assigned reading, “Personal Experiences of Lindsey Zollars During the Civil War” (available on Canvas in PDF). The questions will be open-ended and will require a paragraph or so per answer. This assignment is worth 50 points.

Attendance/Participation:

At different times throughout the semester, I will ask you to write on a piece of paper or on Canvas something you gained from the last class and/or your thoughts on some historical, philosophical, or educational issue. These brief exercises will only take 5-6 minutes. There is no set number of these participation exercises, so you will receive a pass (1) or fail (0) for each one in Canvas. By the end of the semester, I’ll apply the appropriate number of points to each such that they equal 50. I will drop your TWO lowest scores.

Classroom Conduct/Decorum:

Be kind.

Make-up Policy:

I will work with you on an individual basis with regard to any missed exams, assignments, or other deadlines.

Academic Honesty [*IMPORTANT***]**

Cheating of any kind, including plagiarism, will result in immediate failure of the class and possibly further sanctions from the University of Texas at Tyler. Plagiarism, put simply, is using another’s work as your own

without proper citation or usage. This includes everything from copying and pasting from the Internet to failing to cite an idea from another source that you put in your own words. Please carefully read the university policy for cheating and academic dishonesty at the following website:

<https://www.uttyler.edu/mopp/documents/8-student-conduct-discipline.pdf>

AI is not permitted in this course. All work students submit for this course should be their own. This is college. Do your *own* work without artificial intelligence. The use of ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values and will be treated as cheating (see above).

Grade Grubbing:

Except for legal university accommodations, there will be no special circumstances offered to any *individual* student with respect to increasing their grade (such as extra work, bonus opportunities, or similar requests) beyond what is offered to the *entire* class. This is especially important to remember at the end of the semester. The best way to make the grade you want to make is to do your very best on the work required throughout the semester and to ask for honest help on assignments—not bonus points or favors after all assignments are finished. It is bad practice and unethical to request that professors offer you something that isn't offered to the entire class.

Schedule/Topic Outline:

PART 1: Pre-Columbian America to the French & Indian War (14,000 BCE – 1700s CE)

- Weeks 1-5 (August 25-September 24):
 - o Lectures; Outlines; Reading: Locke & Wright, *American Yawp*, Chaps. 1-4
 - The New World
 - Colliding Cultures
 - British North America
 - Colonial Society

o Exam I (Thursday, September 24)

PART 2: Revolutionary America and the Early Republic (1754ish-1815ish)

- Weeks 6-10 (September 29-October 29)
 - o Lectures; Outlines; Reading: Locke & Wright, *American Yawp*, Chaps. 5-8
 - American Revolution
 - A New Nation
 - The Early Republic
 - The Market Revolution

o Exam II (Thursday, October 29)

PART 3: Antebellum America, Civil War, and Reconstruction (1816ish-1877)

- Weeks 11-15 (November 3-December 3)
 - o Lectures; Outline; Reading: Locke & Wright, *American Yawp*, Chaps. 9-15
 - o **Civil War Assignment—in Class—Thursday, December 3**
 - Democracy in America
 - Religion and Reform and the Cotton Revolution
 - Manifest Destiny and the Sectional Crisis
 - The Civil War and Reconstruction

o Exam III (Tuesday, December 8, 11:00-1:00)