

HIST 106-20: The Atlantic World, 1400-1900

Summer 2023

Monday - Thursday, 3.30 - 5.20.

Room to be determined.

Professor George Clay

Email: ggc13@georgetown.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 11am to noon. History Department, Sixth Floor of ICC.

Course Description

Atlantic history is the history of four continents connected by an ocean; a new world brought violently into being by the voyages of Christopher Columbus. This course will provide a survey of Atlantic history from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. We will cover topics ranging from the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the origins of modern racism, to the rise of capitalism and the modern nation-state. Along the way we will examine encounters between indigenous peoples and new settlers, epidemic diseases, religious conflicts and atrocities, colonialism and imperialism, and the creation of new cultural forms.

Students should gain a good grounding in the key events and processes which historians study to make sense of this vast temporal and geographic expanse. More importantly, they should gain experience in interpreting and analysing historical documents, and thinking and writing like historians.

Course Materials

All required reading for this course will be freely available. You will be expected to find most readings yourself using Georgetown's Lauinger Library Website (locating academic sources online is a valuable skill which you should practise). If a source is not available through Lauinger or via a Google search, I will provide it through Canvas. You will not have to spend any money on course materials.

Please note that assigned readings may be added or removed at Professor Clay's discretion. Any changes will be announced well in advance, but please make sure you consult an up-to-date version of the syllabus.

There is no assigned textbook for this class. However, if ever you would like an accessible overview of any of the topics we cover, designed for undergraduates, I highly recommend consulting *The Atlantic World: A History, 1400-1888* by Douglas R. Egerton, Alison Games, Jane G. Landers, Kris Lane, and Donald R. Wright. Several copies are available in Lauinger Library.

Grades

The grade breakdown for this course is as follows:

Thoughtful, Informed, and Courteous Participation in Class: 30%

Primary Source Analysis	10%
Final Project (overall)	60%
of which:	
Initial Concept Note	5%
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Draft Introduction	10%
Final Paper	25%

Grade Boundaries

A: 94%, A-: 90%, B+: 87%, B: 84%, B-: 80%, C+: 77%, C: 74%, etc. A grade of below 60% is an F.

Assignments

All written assignments should be written double-spaced in 12 point font. They should be submitted on Canvas.

Thoughtful, Courteous, and Informed Class Participation – 30%

We will spend a great deal of time in this class discussing assigned readings as a group. For this to be useful, everyone needs to come to class having read all of the assigned materials, and prepared to share their opinions with their classmates.

There are rarely “correct” ways to read historical sources; many opinions are valid and important. Everyone has something to bring to the table, so please share your own thoughts, and please listen carefully and respectfully to what your classmates are saying.

I will keep a record of every contribution that you make in class. However, you will not be graded on the quantity of your contributions, you will be graded on the quality. The person who speaks most will not necessarily receive the best grade.

A good contribution in class has two characteristics. First, it must be relevant to the discussion taking place (so pay careful attention to the questions being discussed, and to the thoughts and opinions of your classmates). Second, it must be informed by the assigned readings, so try to talk about specific things in the readings that interested you (you might say “I found it interesting when Hernan Cortes discussed X”, or “I think Barbara Fields makes an interesting argument about Y”).

Sharing academic opinions in a seminar is a skill that people learn over time. If you do not feel particularly confident sharing opinions, please feel free to discuss this with me at any time. It is my job to help you develop skills in this class, so I will be happy to help!

Students can improve their participation grade by meeting with Professor Clay during Office Hours to discuss any aspect of the course (and meeting during Office Hours is also a chance to get help with written assignments, so it is a win-win!)

Primary Source Analysis – 10%

In this assignment you will write a short analysis of a passage from one of the primary sources we have read for this class. You may choose to write about a primary source we have not discussed in class, as long as you ask permission from Professor Clay in advance.

Pick any passage that interests you, and write a response of between 500 and 1000 words. Your response should raise analytical questions (and offer suggested answers), while demonstrating an awareness of the source's limitations.

You will be graded on your ability to make arguments about the source, demonstrate your critical thinking, and write clearly and persuasively.

You are welcome (and indeed encouraged!) to come to office hours to discuss how you plan to approach this assignment.

Final Paper

Over the course of this five-week course, you will plan and write a ten-to-twelve page paper, on a topic of your choice. This assignment is broken into four different components.

Initial Concept Note – 5%

Write approximately one page about a topic you might like to research and write a final paper on. Tell me about questions you might want to ask, phenomena you might want to investigate, things you might want to read, or any other thoughts you have about your chosen topic at this stage.

I really encourage you to come to Office Hours to discuss the sort of thing you might want to write about. I am happy to offer suggestions and brainstorm ideas with you.

The purpose of this assignment is to make sure you are thinking seriously about your final paper, and to give Professor Clay a chance to give you advice and reading recommendations. As such, this assignment will not be strictly graded (you will simply be graded "Complete" or "Incomplete").

Annotated Bibliography – 20%

Come up with a bibliography, of at least five items, of works you will use to write your final essay. Each item must be accompanied by a paragraph explaining how the piece will fit into your final paper. Answer the question of "what did you learn from this piece that will be useful for your final paper?" The bibliography must include at least one book. You may not include any of the assigned readings in your bibliography.

Every item in the bibliography must be a reputable academic source, either published in a peer-reviewed academic journal, or by a university press. Please ask Professor Clay if you would like to check whether or not a source is suitable.

There is no minimum length for a good academic source. However, bear in mind that a thirty-page article will probably be more useful than a five-page article, and I will not be impressed if you cite a three-page article!

Draft Introduction – 10%

Write a draft introduction to your final paper. It should be approximately one page long, and should set up the argument you are going to make. Explain what you will be studying, what your hypothesis is, and how the rest of the essay will unfold.

Final Paper – 25%

Write a ten-to-twelve page paper, which makes a clear historical argument about some part of the Atlantic World between 1400 and 2000. You have a great deal of freedom to choose a topic that interests you, but please consult with Professor Clay early in the process, to make sure your topic is suitable and of a manageable size.

The goal of the paper is to make a clear, coherent argument that is supported by a wide range of evidence.

We will discuss what a good essay looks like in class. You are also encouraged to come to Office Hours at least once to discuss your plans for the essay, so that Professor Clay can check that you are on the right track.

Deadlines, Extensions, and Accommodations

Deadlines are for your benefit as much as mine. In a five week course, it is important not to fall behind with your work, so please make an effort to hand everything in on time. With that said, I understand that you are adults who can be trusted to manage your own time. If you would like a short extension on an assignment which is not the Final Paper, email me in advance and I will usually be happy to discuss a new deadline. Please note, though, that the Final Paper deadline is inflexible, because the University requires me to submit grades promptly.

I am always happy to discuss any change that might make this class more accessible or enjoyable. If you have a request or a suggestion at any time, please feel free to email me or to come to Office Hours to discuss it.

Attendance

Attending every class is compulsory. If you need to miss a class for a good reason, you should get in touch with Professor Clay by email as soon as possible. Unexplained absences will affect your participation grade.

Important Resources

Academic Support Center: <https://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/Links> to an external site.

Academic Honesty: <https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system/>

CAPS: Stress and Mental Health: <https://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/mental-health/>

Gender Inclusivity: <https://lgbtq.georgetown.edu/resources/transatgu/>Links to an external site.

Title IX Syllabus Statement

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. [Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator.]. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/resourcecenter>.

If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These resources include:

Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: confidential email sarp@georgetown.edu

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): 202.687.6985 or after hours, call (833) 960-3006 to reach Fonemed, a telehealth service; individuals may ask for the on-call CAPS clinician

More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the [Sexual Misconduct Website](#).

(Above statement and TIX faculty resources found at:

<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help/guidance-for-faculty-and-staff-on-how-to-support-students/>
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Title IX Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant students. At any point throughout their pregnancy students may request adjustments/modifications based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication or medical need. Students may also request accommodations following labor and delivery based on a complication or medical need.

SCS students must complete the [Pregnancy Adjustment Request Form](#) (<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/>) and submit it to the SCS Deputy Title IX Coordinator at titleixscs@georgetown.edu. Upon receiving the completed form, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the requested adjustments and implementation process.

More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the [Title IX at Georgetown University Website](#).

Important Limits of Confidentiality

Please note that Professor Clay is a mandated reporter, which means he is legally obliged to report any violations of Title IX that he sees or hears about. He will be happy to support you in any way he can, but he must follow his reporting obligations.

Schedule and Assigned Readings

Week 1: Early Encounters and the Pre-Columbian Atlantic

- Monday 10th July What is history?
- Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Chapter 1 from *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).
- Tuesday 11th July Early Encounters: Africa before Europe.
- Toolongjong. Please listen to the recording and read the accompanying notes.
- “Voyages of Cadamosto” in G.R. Crone, *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), Read Chapters XXXV-XXXVIII (pages 53-61).
- Wednesday 12th July Early Encounters: America and Europe.
- Hernán Cortés’ Second Letter from Mexico, in A.R. Pagden, ed. *Letters from Mexico* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971), pages 101-107 (from “Most Powerful Lord” to “I did not see a living creature killed or sacrificed.”)
- Thursday 13th July How do we write the history of encounters?
- Inga Clendinnen. “Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty”: Cortés and the Conquest of Mexico.” *Representations*, Number 33 (1991): 65-100.
- Saturday 15th July at 5pm. Initial Concept Note for Final Paper Due.

Week 2: Cultural, Biological, and Material Exchanges

- Monday 17th July Biological Exchanges.
- Seth Archer. “Colonialism and Other Afflictions: Rethinking Native American Health History.” *History Compass* 14, Issue 10 (2016): 511-521.

Alfred Crosby. Chapter 2, "Conquistador y Pestilencia," from *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*.

Tuesday 18th July

Material Exchanges.

Carina L. Johnson, "Aztec Regalia and the Reformation of Display," in Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall, eds., *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the early Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), Chapter 4 (accessible via Lauinger).

Wednesday 19th July

Cultural Exchanges.

Marcy Norton, "Conquests of Chocolate," *OAH Magazine of History* 18:3 (April 2004), 14-17.

Judith Carney. "The African Antecedents of Uncle Ben in U.S. Rice History." *Journal of Historical Geography*, 29, 1 (2003), 1-21.

Thursday 20th July

Upstart Empires.

Melissa Morris. Introduction and Chapter One (pages 1 to 65) in "Cultivating Colonies: Tobacco and the Upstart Empires, 1580-1640." PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 2017.

Saturday 22nd July at 5pm. Primary Source Analysis Due.

Week 3: Migration, Slavery, and Unfree Labour

Monday 24th July

The Middle Passage: Part I.

Ottobah Cugoano. "Thoughts and sentiments on the evil and wicked traffic of the slavery: and commerce of the human species, humbly submitted to the inhabitants of Great-Britain." Read pages 1 to 14.

Tuesday 25th July

The Middle Passage: Part II.

John Thornton. "Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders in the Atlantic World," in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60:2 (April 2003): 273-294.

Wednesday 26th July

The World of the Plantations.

Vincent Brown. "Spiritual Terror and Sacred Authority in Jamaican Slave Society." *Slavery & Abolition*, Volume 24, 1 (2003): 24-53.

Thursday 27th July

The Making of Race.

Jennifer Morgan. "Preface and Introduction: Refusing Demography." In *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

Barbara J. Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 181 (May/June 1990).

Week 4: Capitalism and Imperialism

- Monday 31st July Industrial Revolutions.
- Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), "Of the Advantages which Europe has derived from the Discovery of America..." to "much less abundant than it otherwise would be."
- Karl Marx, *Capital* (1867), Part 8, Chapter 31: "Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist."
- Tuesday 1st August Slavery and Industrialism.
- Edward Baptist "Introduction: The Heart, 1937" and Chapter One, "Feet, 1783-1810" in *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014.
- Wednesday 2nd August Nations.
- Benedict Anderson. Chapters One to Four ("Introduction", "Cultural Roots," "The Origins of National Consciousness," and "Creole Pioneers") in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2006).
- Thursday 3rd August The Age of Revolutions.
- Tom Paine. Chapter 3 from *Common Sense* (1776) ("On the Present State of American Affairs.")
- Saturday 5th August. Annotated Bibliography Due and Draft Introduction Due

Week 5: Modern Nation-States and the "End" of Atlantic History

- Monday 7th August The Most Important Revolution?
- The Haitian Declaration of Independence
- The Haitian Constitution
- John Thornton. John K. Thornton, John K. " 'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo' ": African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History* 4.2 (1993): 181-214.
- Tuesday 8th August Continental Migrations.
- Jose Moya. "A Continent of Immigrants: Postcolonial Shifts in the Western Hemisphere." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 86, 1, 2006: 1-28.
- Wednesday 9th August The End of Atlantic History?
- Alison Games. "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities." *The American Historical Review* 111, Number 3 (2006): 741-757.

Peter Coclanis. "Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, Number 4 (October 2006): 725-742.

Thursday 10th August Legacies.

Report of the Georgetown University Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation.

Friday 11th August at 11.59pm. Final Paper Due.