American History Graduate Reading List to Accompany:

American Readings 1 (01:510: 555) –

America from pre-Columbian/Colonial to The Coming of the Civil War (c. 1850)

The list that follows draws on contributions to earlier compilations to such lists (2015, 2017) as well as in 2021 from Mia Bay, Paul Clemens, James Delbourgo, Ann Fabian, Marisa Fuentes, Jackson Lears, Jan Ellen Lewis, Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan, Louis Masur, Walter Rucker, Andrew Shankman, Peter Silver, Camilla Townsend.

Overview: The following reading list provides a general overview of the subjects and texts that students should study in preparing to write the Colonial/Early 19th Century portion of American/US Minor and Major exams.

How to use the reading list: Like our two Readings courses, our exam reading lists divide American history into two broad periods: (1) Colonial Era through the Coming of the Civil War (c. 1850); and (2) Coming of the Civil War to the Present. Exam questions will likewise cover these two broad periods, although some questions may ask you to think across periods. Please use both reading lists (or the older reading lists that divided American History into three periods) to develop your own personalized exam reading lists. Beginning well in advance of the planned exam date, you should develop, update and personalize your own reading lists to include any recently published works not yet on the departmental lists, as well as any texts you consider central to your own field. You can plan your exam reading by marking off texts that you have read and the texts you plan to read. You will not be expected to master all the books and articles on both of the lists, but you should have some command of most of the subject areas. Once you have put together your own annotated and updated version of the lists you should meet with your examiners to discuss and review your personalized lists and reading plan. Such meetings should occur well in advance of your exam date and will allow you to confirm that your lists are up-to-date, and include a suitable selection of texts. Students taking the major field exam should meet three times with each examiner. Students taking the minor field exam should meet at least twice with each examiner.

There is no set number of books (and articles) you need to read. But as an approximate standard, students should have read about 50 books for each of the two sections of the minor field exam, and 75 for each of the two sections of the PhD exam. In addition, you should read a number of articles in preparation of each section of the exam. As noted above, you should have done some reading from every section, but, working with your examiners, you should focus your readings in several of the “weeks” (1-14) and be prepared to write answers that broadly engage the scholarship.
In 2019, American historians in the department were asked to designate about two dozen works they felt were exceptionally significant in the historiography of the period covered by this list. Some responded. Thanks in particular to Lou Masur and Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan for help with this. Below are the short titles of a sampling of the suggestions (the fuller citations are in the 14 sections that follow). As with any such list, most American historians working in this area would have among their own favorites many not on this short list.

Camilla Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices
Daniel K. Richter, Facing East from Indian Country
William Cronon, Changes in the Land
James Delbourgo, Collecting the World
Kathleen Brown, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs
Marisa Fuentes, Dispossessed Lives
Londa Schiebinger, Plants and Empire
Peter Silver, Our Savage Neighbors
Stephanie E. Smallwood, Saltwater Slavery
Bernard Bailyn, Ideological Origins of the American Revolution
Kathleen Duval, Independence Lost
Erica Dunbar, Never Caught
Laurel Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale
Alan Taylor, Civil War of 1812
Richard White, Middle Ground
Joanne Pope Melish, Disowning Slavery
Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan, Vagrants and Vagabonds
Jeanne Boydston, Home and Work
Paul Johnson, Shopkeeper’s Millennium
Deborah Gray White, Ar’nt’t I a Woman?
Seth Rockman, Scrapping By
Thavolia Glymph, Out of the House of Bondage
Designations in the List:
* Before the author of a work, this indicates the citation appears in more than one section.
SURVEY: at the end of a citation, this indicates the work provides broad chronological and historiographic coverage, and that it is significant in its own right as an interpretation of an era.
CLASSIC: older works that remain significant in the historiography.

1. Encounters and Early Contact

1-A: Overviews and Perspectives

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel* (Norton, 1997) [Prologue and Part II only]


Nicolás Wey Gómez, *Tropics of Empire: Why Columbus Sailed South to the Indies* (MIT, 2008)

1-B: Spanish and French Settlement/ Borderlands

James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, 2002)


Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away* (Stanford, 1991)


James Lockhart, ed., *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest* (UCLA, 1993)


María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, 2008)


-----, *Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico* (New Mexico, 2006)

Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada’s Heroic Age Reconsidered* (McGill, 1985)


1-C: Dutch and Early English Settlement


Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade* (Yale, 2002)


Andrew Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast* (Yale, 2015).


2-A: Early Modern England


**SURVEY**

**2-B. New England and the Puritans**


John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (Yale, 1994)


**3. Anglo Colonial Maturation: Middle and Plantation Colonies**

**3-A. Middle Colonies**

Marisa Fuentes and Deborah Gray White, eds., *Scarlet and Black: Slavery and Dispossession in Rutgers History* (Rutgers, 2016).


Brendan McConville, *These Daring Disturbers of the Public Peace: The Struggle for Property and Power in Early New Jersey* (Cornell, 1999)
Serena Zabin, Dangerous Economies: Status and Commerce in Imperial New York (Penn, 2009).

**3-C. Plantation Colonies**


Trevor Burnard, Mastery, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World (UNC, 2004)


Wesley Frank Craven, The Southern Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, 1607-1689 (Louisiana State, 1949). CLASSIC


Richard Pares, War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763 (Oxford, 1936, 1963) CLASSIC

Lorena S. Walsh, Motives of Honor, Pleasure and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763 (UNC, 2010).

*Peter Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion (Norton, 1974)
4. African Diaspora in the New World

4-A. Colonial Encounters


4-B. Atlantic Slave Trade


*Sowande Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Illinois, 2016)


Randy J. Sparks, Randy J. *Where the Negroes Are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Harvard, 2014)

4-C. Early Iberian America: the Spanish Caribbean as a Context

Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt Childs and James Sidbury, eds., *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Penn, 2013)


4-D. Early British Americas: Chesapeake, Carolinas, and Caribbean


### 4-E. Slave Trade Abolition and Emancipation


### 5. Material Worlds: Environment and Animals

#### 5-A. Environment


Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (Yale, 2013)


Anya Zilberstein, "Inured to Empire: Wild Rice and Climate Change," *William and Mary Quarterly* 72 (2015): 127-158

**5-B. Animals**


Susan Scott Parrish, "The Female Opossum and the Nature of the New World,” *William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., LIV* (July 1997): 475-514; or *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (UNC, 2006)


**6. Material Worlds, Part 2**
6-A. Natural History and Collecting


Nicholas Jardine, et al., eds., *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge, 1996)


Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (UNC, 2006)


**6-B. Science, Technology and Networks**


James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew, eds., *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World* (Routledge, 2007)


6-C. Material and Visual Cultures and Archaeology

Daniela Bleichmar, Visible Empire: Botanical Expeditions and Visual Culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment (Chicago, 2012)

Richard Bushman, The Refinement of America (Knopf, 1992)

Shannon Lee Dawdy, Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans (Chicago, 2008)


Mark Hauser, An Archaeology of Black Markets: Local Ceramics and Economies in Eighteenth- Century Jamaica (Florida, 2013)

Ilona Katzew, Casta Paintings: Images of Race in Eighteenth Century Mexico (Yale, 2004)

Kay Dian Kriz, Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement (Yale, 2008)

Ann Smart Martin, Buying into the World of Goods (Johns Hopkins, 2010)

Catherine Molineux, Faces of Perfect Ebony: Encountering Atlantic Slavery in Imperial Britain (Harvard, 2011)


Laurel Ulrich, Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth (Knopf, 2001)

Jane Bennett, Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things (Duke, 2010), chap. 2


### 6-D. Medicine and Healing


7. Eighteenth Century: Society, Politics, Economy

7-A. British Empire


Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (Alfred Knopf, 2000). [Note: there is an abridge edition of this book.]


Julie Flavell, *When London was Capital of America* (Yale, 2010).


7-B. Colonial Society and Politics in the Eighteenth Century


*Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (UNC, 2006).


Marla Miller, *The Needle's Eye: Women and Work in the Age of Revolution* (Massachusetts, 2006)


7-C. Colonial Economy


David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (Yale, 2009).


8-A. Religion & Culture


Perry Miller, *The New England Mind from Colony to Province* (Beacon Press, 1953). CLASSIC


**8-B. Borderlands**


*Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (Yale, 2008).
Jane Landers, “‘In Consideration of her Enormous Crime’: Rape and Infanticide in Spanish St. Augustine,” in Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, eds., The Devil’s Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South: (Oxford, 1997), 205-217.

James H. Merrell, The Indians’ New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors From European Contact Through the Era of Removal (UNC, 1989). CLASSIC

Jane Merritt, At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763 (UNC, 2007).


Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society (Oklahoma, 1980) CLASSIC

David J. Weber, “Bourbons and Bárbaros: Center and Periphery in the Reshaping of Spanish Indian Policy,” in Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820, ed. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (Routledge, 2002), pp. 79–103


9. American Revolution: Causes & the War for Independence

9-A. Coming of the American Revolution


Brendan McConville, The King’s Three Faces (UNC, 2007)

Edmund Morgan and Helen Morgan, The Stamp Act Crisis (UNC, 1953) CLASSIC


9-B. War for Independence

Books:


Alan Gilbert, Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence (Chicago, 2012)


Marla R. Miller, Betsy Ross and the Making of America (Henry Holt, 2010).


Andrew Jackson O’Shahghnessy, The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire (Yale, 2014)


CLASSIC


10. Consequences and Aftermath – Critical Period & 1790s

10-A. The Critical Period and the Constitution


10-B. The 1790s


Andrew Shankman, “How Should We Think About the Election of 1800?” *Journal of the Early Republic* 33 (2013): 753-761


### 11. Life in the Early Republic and the Era of the Market Revolution


Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan, Vagrants and Vagabonds: Poverty and Mobility in the Early American Republic (NYU, 2019).


Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge, 1981). CLASSIC


Rosemarie Zagarri, Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic (Penn, 2007).

12. Religion, Gender, Family, Reform in Antebellum America


Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, Re-reading Sex: Battles over Sexual Knowledge and Suppression in Nineteenth Century America. (Knopf, 2002).


*Clare A. Lyons, Sex Among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830 (UNC, 2006).


Ellen Carol Dubois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women’s Movement in America, 1848-1869*. (Cornell, 1999).


13. Frontiers, Borderlands, and “Manifest Destiny”


Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire.* (Yale, 2009).


Daina Ramay Berry, *Their Price for a Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Beacon, 2017)


*Sowande Mustakeem, Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage (Illinois, 2016)


Theda Perdue, Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866 (Tennessee, 1987)

Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South (Knopf, 1956)

CLASSIC

*John Wood Sweet, Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730-1830 (Johns Hopkins, 2003)