

# History A301: American Colonial History I

a learning guide  
3 credit hours

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# Introduction

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## History A301: American Colonial History I

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History A301 is concerned with the historical growth and development of Anglo-American colonial society from its origins to 1763. Two themes will be emphasized in this course. Simply stated, these themes are continuity and change. But in more complex terms this course will stress, first, the ways in which Anglo-American colonial society patterned its own social structure, economy, political institutions, and culture after its European parent. Second, we will examine the multitude of forces—such as capitalism, the Protestant Reformation, and technological and scientific discoveries—and a variety of New World conditions—such as the abundance of land, labor shortages, climate, the presence of Native Americans—that produced social change.

In stressing both continuity and change in colonial America, the course raises a problem that is fundamental to the study of Anglo-American colonial origins. Can early America be best understood as a derivation of European civilization? Or did the colonies by 1763 exhibit a distinctly different and uniquely “American” civilization—one whose values and behavior more closely resembled modern society than its own past? This is a problem each of you must face and answer for yourself. Perhaps you will conclude, as many historians have, that early America was both old and new, and from this dichotomy came its fascination.

### The Course

## Introduction History A301

History A301 contains ten lessons. Included in these lessons are a midterm and final examination, two book reviews, and a research report. Five of the lessons have an introductory discussion, a reading assignment, and a written assignment that must be completed before you move on to the next lesson. You must complete all work leading up to each exam before you can take the exam.

The book reviews and the research report are important adjuncts to the goals of this course. The book reviews give you additional opportunities to read history and to think critically about the past; they give the instructor extra opportunities to judge your originality, your critical skills, and your ability to organize what you've learned and communicate it effectively. The research report is designed primarily to help you organize the material you have learned into a format which will help you on the final examination. The grading of your work in this course will be weighted as follows:

Written Assignments—20%  
Book Reviews—10% each  
Midterm Examination—25%  
Research Report—10%  
Final Examination—25%

To pass this course, your average for the two exams must be at least a D-. Both exams will be a combination of essay and short-answer questions (that is, you will be given a list of persons, places, or events and you will be asked to identify and give the historical significance of each).

## Textbooks

The primary textbook for this course is *Colonial America* by Jerome Reich. This book is compact and well-organized, providing a concise, balanced, and accurate portrait of colonial development. The other required textbook is *Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development*, edited by Stanley N. Katz, John M. Murrin, and Douglas Greenberg—a reader containing essays and excerpts by some of the best historians of early America. One of the reasons we've included this book of readings is to help you see that the pursuit of historical truth is an arduous process that in many ways can be compared to building a brick house. Various historians contribute their bricks to the total structure. Often, however, they disagree over the placement of the bricks. Rarely does a single historian ever

construct the whole house. Mostly, historical specialists contribute their insights into specific topics and then others, such as Jerome Reich, synthesize those insights into a usable portrait of a nation or an era. It is an exciting activity because, while it is dominated by professionals, it has plenty of room for amateurs such as yourself.

## Reading and Written Assignments

In reading the assignments that follow and completing the written work, there are a few signposts which can aid your study and your understanding of American history. Familiarize yourself with the reasons for European expansion into the New World and pay special attention to England's rather unique circumstances. The old British Empire (before 1763) was rather loosely structured and British colonies practiced an independence denied French and Spanish colonies. As a result the English colonies developed a remarkable capacity to control their own affairs while creating a lucrative economic trade structure for English and colonists alike. The reasons for Britain's laxness in imperial government were many, and you should learn them. Partly England's domestic development influenced its colonial policies, and partly the colonial system was molded by England's imperial struggles with other countries.

Learn the dominant features of Anglo-American colonial development. What kinds of colonies were founded and why? What happened to the European desire for precious metals in the atmosphere of Virginia or Massachusetts Bay? What role did religion play in the founding and development of the colonies? What sort of government did colonists construct? What characterized the life of villages in New England and the plantations of the South? What resulted from the interaction of races and cultures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? What was the impact of imperial wars on the colonists? How can one explain the commercial might of New England in the eighteenth century, or the cosmopolitan urban culture of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, or the aristocratic culture of eighteenth-century Virginia?

## A Note on Studying

Too often, students who take courses by correspondence work hard for one or two lessons and then stop. This is probably the biggest problem you

will face. The easiest way to acquire self-discipline in studying is to set aside a period of time each day for reading and writing and then force yourself to work during that time. If you like, set a deadline for completing your work and then try to achieve it. If you find the intervals between submitting a lesson and obtaining the results from the instructor too long, contact your instructor and he or she will probably let you work at your own pace.

There is no single method for studying in a rigorous, disciplined fashion. Each student has a different personality, and you yourself will probably know what it takes for you to finish assigned work. Some things will facilitate your efforts, however. Choose a quiet, well-lighted place for your work. If you live in a house or a large apartment, there is probably an area that is your favorite place to study. Do your work in that area. If, after a number of weeks, you feel yourself losing interest in the course, try shifting your locale. Move to another part of the house or try working in your public library or some other place that you know has conditions suitable for study. Undergraduates learn very quickly that the best place for intense work is in an area, like a library, where others are doing the same thing.

Finally, don't attempt to construct an elaborate outline of everything you read. There is nothing that ruins the joy of reading faster than having to put the book down every two minutes to write something down. Frankly, the material covered in this course should not be all that difficult. The best way to cover it is to read an assignment, then reread it a second time, jotting down whatever notes you think will be helpful. Don't bother to underline the text. Everyone seems to do it but it rarely does anything except make sentences unintelligible. If you find a passage that seems important, make a light "x" in the margin and move on.

## Plagiarism

As stated in Extended Studies brochures, “A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, words, or statements of another person without an appropriate acknowledgment. A student must give due credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever he or she does any of the following:

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2. paraphrases another person's words, either oral or written;
3. uses another person's idea, opinion, or theory; or
4. borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material, unless the information is common knowledge.”

## Contacting Your Instructor

With each lesson you are required to submit an assignment cover sheet. Every assignment cover sheet has a space for your questions and comments; you are strongly encouraged to use this space. If problems arise between assignments, you can write to your instructor at the Division of Extended Studies. Many instructors can be contacted via e-mail. Please check the information booklet you received with your initial enrollment materials for the complete listing of instructors with e-mail addresses.

You can also reach most instructors by calling our toll-free number - between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. on working days. (Bloomington is on Eastern Standard Time all year.) Our business office is open until 5 p.m. and is reached through this same toll-free number.

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