History 260: Economic History of the U.S. from Colonial Times to 1865

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Course Description: This course surveys the economic history of the United States from the colonial times to 1865. The course begins with an examination of American colonial economic development within the context of the expanding economy of the Atlantic. Attention will be paid to commerce, city/town building, merchants, artisans, agriculture and slavery. The course also explores the emergence of a national economy in the nineteenth century. The impact of immigration, population growth, city building, transportation, and manufacturing will be examined. Particular emphasis will be placed on the everyday life of citizens (both rural and urban).

Teaching: History 260 is a lecture / discussion /project course. Throughout the semester, the instructor has prepared lectures, debates/discussions, and projects on topics focusing on the emerging American economy. In addition, the instructor has organized a number of in-class activities. These include, a group project exploring slavery and the Atlantic World, a week of discussions exploring sailors, pirates and “capitalism” in the Atlantic World; a debate on the myth or reality of a consumer revolution in eighteenth century America; a group debate on the origins and rise of American capitalism. These activities and the accompanying writing assignments are evaluated. In general, this course challenges students to read, analyze and discuss historical documents and interpretations. As a result, students improve their critical thinking and writing skills.

Required Texts:

Library Reserve: A number of articles and book chapters have been placed on electronic reserve. These may be accessed through on the Hist 260 Angel Page, Lesson’s tab, Electronic Reserves folder. The course outline (see below) identifies all times that may be found in the Electronic Reserves folder.

Evaluation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>=15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth and Poverty Project</td>
<td>=2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slave Trade Project</td>
<td>=10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capitalism Debate</td>
<td>=10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build a Business Paper</td>
<td>=25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economics of Slavery</td>
<td>=2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seaman/Pirates Discussion</td>
<td>=05%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>=25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer Revolution Debate</td>
<td>=05%</td>
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Class Participation: In Class Discussions: This is a lecture / discussion course; therefore it is important that students actively participate in class discussions (each of which is noted in the course outline). To do so students must not only come to class, but also they must read the assigned reading before class.

Slave Trade Project: HIST 260 students—working in small groups—will use The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (www.slavevoyages.org) to explore a particular aspect of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The results of each group’s work will be detailed in a “group paper” and “group discussion.”

Evaluated Discussion / Brief Essay: Seaman, Pirates and Capitalism in the Atlantic World: HIST 260 students will participate in an evaluated discussion on M. Rediker’s, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*. This work challenges students to think about labor, class and capitalism and the Atlantic World.
Students will present the instructor a brief essay exploring one aspect of Rediker’s work.

 Evaluated Discussion and Debate: The Consumer Revolution: HIST 260 students will participate in a debate on the “consumer revolution” in eighteenth century America. The reading explores aspects of the “consumer revolution,” during the debate students will explore, assert and defend their position / interpretation (based on their reading).

 In-Class Workshop: Wealth and Poverty in Early America: HIST 260 students will participate in an in-class document analysis project. This project explores the inventories (a detailed list of property taken after one’s death) from the late eighteenth century. Students will present the instructor a brief (1 page, single spaced) paper exploring selections from the inventories.

 Debate: The Emergence of Capitalism: HIST 260 students will participate in a group project: a debate. The group debate focuses on the controversial topic of the emergence of capitalism in eighteenth and early nineteenth century America. The instructor will moderate the debate between the groups; each group will be assigned the work of a prominent historian from which they will develop their responses. Students will present the instructor a brief (1 page, single spaced) paper exploring their analysis of argument made by their assigned historian.

 Build a Business in Colonial America: HIST 260 students will write a five (5) page paper analyzing a business in early America. This assignment challenges students to “build a business.” In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, businesses were often viewed as the life blood of the seaport cities. After reading Carl Bridenbaugh’s Colonial Craftsman, students will write up a “business prospectus,” or a discussion of a colonial business based on research. Additional information provided in a “Building a Business in Late Eighteenth Century America” handout.

 Debate and Discussion: The Economics of Slavery: HIST 260 students will explore and thoughtfully discuss Fogel and Engerman’s study, Time on the Cross. Students will participate in a debate-discussion and submit a one to two page analysis paper.

 Final Exam : Students will be offered a Final Exam. The exam challenges students with a number of essay questions based on the material covered in the course.

 Attendance: This is a college level course. As such, it is important that students attend each class meeting. The instructor will not take attendance, but absences will have an adverse effect on a student’s participation grade.

 SUNY Oneonta is committed to the education of people with disabilities. If you believe that a disability will make it difficult for you to complete the regular work of this class, then please discuss this with the instructor during the first week of classes.

 Unit I: The Atlantic Economy and the Economic Growth of Colonial America

 Week 1: (1/25 to 1/27): Introduction and the Founding of the American Colonies

 1/25 & 1/27: Introduction: The Economic History of the Atlantic World and Early America

 Week 2: (1/30 to 2/3) : Colonial Economic Activities in North America and the Atlantic World

 1/30: Discussion: Understanding Economic History:
2/1: Discussion: Understanding the Domestic Economy

2/3: Discussion: Understanding the Economy of the Atlantic World

Unit II: Slavery and the Atlantic World Part I

Week 3: (2/6 to 2/10): Slavery and the Atlantic World: Working with the Data

2/6: Discussion on Required Reading: R. Dunn, “Servants and Slaves” and Exploring The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Computer Room, Milne Library)
2/8: Exploring The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Computer Room, Milne Library)
2/10: Exploring The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Computer Room, Milne Library)


Additional Information: Throughout Week 3, HIST 260 students --working in groups-- will explore, The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (www.slavevoyages.org). Historians have cataloged and created a database of nearly 30,000 trans-Atlantic slave ship voyages made before 1866. The website allows users to chart the trans-Atlantic slave trade (people on board, owners and captains, ships’ characteristics, and the geographic trajectory of each voyage). Therefore, it opens a window onto the economics of Atlantic slave trade.

Week 4: (2/13 to 2/17): The Atlantic Slave Trade

2/13: Research: Groups will meet in the James Milne Library and continue to research their history of slavery project.
2/15. Writing Workshop: Groups will meet in HECO 106 to work on their Slavery Paper.
2/17: Discussion: Group Results from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Unit III: Labor, Consumption and the Rise of Capitalism

Week 5: (2/20 to 2/24): Seaman, Pirates and Capitalism in the Atlantic World

2/20: Discussion: M. Rediker, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue, Chapter 1
2/22: Discussion: M. Rediker, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue, Chapter 2
2/24: Discussion: M. Rediker, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue, Chapter 3, 6 & Conclusion


Week 6: (2/27 to 3/2): Debating the Consumer Revolution in Eighteenth Century America
2/27: Lecture: A History of “consumption” & Group Preparation for consumer culture debate
2/29: Debate: Was There a Consumer Revolution in Early America?
3/2: Debate: Was There a Consumer Revolution in Early America?

Required Reading for Discussions: Students will read a series of articles exploring the consumer revolution in early America and the Atlantic World.

Week 7: (3/5 to 3/9): Wealth and Poverty in Early America

3/5: Data Workshop: How to Interpret Household Inventories from the Eighteenth Century
3/7: Group Work: Interpreting Household Inventories from the Eighteenth Century
3/9: Group Discussion: Group Discussion of Household Inventories

Required Documents: This week’s in-class activity is based on the eighteenth century household inventories from Boston, MA; Philadelphia, PA, New York, NY and the Southern Colonies/States. These inventories provide a detailed window onto everyday life in early America (on Electronic Reserves).


Unit IV: Debating the Origins of the Emergence of American Capitalism

Week 8: (3/12 to 3/16): The Debate over the Emergence of American Capitalism.

3/12: Workshop: Groups will spend the hour in class researching their assigned historian.
3/16: Workshop: The Emergence of American Capitalism

Required Reading: Students will work in groups and each group will be assigned the work of one historian who has explored the history of / rise of American Capitalism.

Week 9: (3/19 to 3/23): Spring Break: No Class

Week 10: (3/26 to 3/30): The Debate over the Emergence of American Capitalism.

3/26: Debate: The Emergence of American Capitalism
3/28: Debate: The Emergence of American Capitalism
3/30: Debate: The Emergence of American Capitalism

Unit V: Farming, Fishing and Whaling in Early American (and New York)

Week 11 (4/2 to 4/6): Farming, Fishing and Whaling

4/4: Discussion: Whaling: Norling, Captain Ahab and Creighton, Whaling (Electronic Reserve)
4/6: Documentary Film: On 4/8 students will view and discuss the documentary film Into the Deep: American Whaling and the World (a PBS documentary).
Week 12 (4/9 to 4/13): Rural Agriculture and Plantation Agriculture

4/11: Discussion: Plantation Agriculture: Carr, Menard and Walsh, Robert Coles World, 33-54
4/13: Discussion: Plantation Agriculture: Carr, Menard and Walsh, Robert Coles World, 55-18

Unit VI: Women and Business in Colonial America and the New Republic


4/16: Discussion:
1. C. Bridenbaugh, The Colonial Craftsman, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 and skim Chapter 5.
2. On 4/16 we will discuss some of the documents included in the database found at http://www.oneonta.edu/library/dailylife/ (additional instructions on Angel under Daily Life).

Additional Reading: Read the following depending on the “type” of business you have decided to develop.
1. Stansell, “City of Women,” (Electronic Reserves)
2. Rockman, “Scraping By” (Electronic Reserves)

4/18: Library Research: Microfilm Division: Milne Library
4/20: Library Research: Microfilm Division: Milne Library


4/23: Research and Writing Workshop: Building a Business
4/25: Research and Writing Workshop: Building a Business
4/27: Papers Due: Informal Discussion: Building a Business

Unit VII: Slavery and the American Civil War

Week 16: (4/30 to 5/4): The Economics of Slavery; or The Economic Realities of Slavery

4/30: Lecture: Slavery and the Nineteenth Century American Economy
5/2: Discussion: Slavery and the American Economy
5/4: Discussion: Slavery and the American Economy

Required Reading for Discussion: Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery. (selections, see above). Note: Fogel and Engerman’s work was/is very controversial. Our class will discuss their findings and the historiographical debate their work spawned.

Week 16: (5/7 to 5/9): An Economic Interpretation of the American Civil War

5/7: Discussion on Required Reading:
5/9: **Study Day:** Final Exam Workshop (attendance is optional)

**Required Reading for Discussion (5/7):** Richard N. Current, “God and the Strongest Battalions” -- an economic interpretation of the outcome of the American Civil War--(Electronic Reserve)

**Week 17: Finals Week:** Take Home Final Exam Due in Class during Final Exam Period