**History 495: Research in Historical Topics**

**Persistent Myths in American History**

**Spring 2016--Lambert**

**Description**

Citizens of every country create myths about their nation’s origins and character, and Americans are no exception. From the creation of the republic, myths have played an important role in how Americans have perceived of themselves and their nation. A number pertain to the country’s founding such as “The Founding Fathers” constituted as an “Assembly of Demigods” and performing a “Miracle at Philadelphia;” the United States conceived of as a “Christian State;” and Americans as a “Chosen People.” Myths are frequently created by partisans and patriots who blend them into a “usable past” that serves a particular end, and frequently those myths become entwined with history. One recurring narrative in American history is that of declension, which is a tale of decline from a mythical “golden age” that embraced lofty ideals to a sordid present brought about by—take your pick—wrong-headed political ideas, social experimentation, moral decline, increased diversity, etc. Myths present historians with both challenges and opportunities. The biggest challenge is often that of lifting the veil of myth to explore the history behind. The greatest opportunity lies in probing the underlying culture that informs the creation and uses of myths.

In this seminar students will select a myth, investigate its origins and uses, and write a research paper based primarily on source documents.

**Readings**

William K. Storey, *Writing History: A Guide for Students*, Oxford University Press

Godfrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism*, Yale University Press

Jay Fliegelman *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority 1750-1800*, Cambridge University Press

**Written Assignments**

Students will write two 500-600 word essays on questions inspired by the books we read together.

Each student will write a 20-25 page research paper on a topic agreed upon by the student in consultation with the instructor. The paper will examine the aspirations and challenges of a marginalized group in colonial America. The paper will explore the circumstances and experiences of the group in enduring and resisting marginalization. Throughout the semester the student will submit the following: a paper proposal, an annotated bibliography, a topic-sentence outline, and a final draft. Directions for these submissions will be discussed in class. All assignments will be submitted on Blackboard.

NB Late submissions of assignments may result in a grade reduction.

**Grades**

Students will be evaluated as follows:

Research papers (all elements) 75%

Class participation 25%

**Class Attendance**

Students are expected to attend and participate in every class. Every student is responsible for announcements and assignments made in class, whether or not the student is present.

**Office Hours**

9:00 to 11:00, or by appointment

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**Class Schedule**

Tue Jan 12 Introduction of the question of myth in American history.

Thu Jan 14 The question of American exceptionalism considered. Read *Myth of Exceptionalism.*

Tue Jan 19 Examination of exceptionalism continued.

Thu Jan 21 **Submit essay on American Exceptionalism.** In-class discussion of student essays.

Tue Jan 26 The discipline and craft of writing historical essays. Read *Writing History.*

Thu Jan 28 Discussion of the craft continued

Tue Feb 2 **No Class** Defining Research Topic and Developing Bibliography

Thu Feb 4 **No Class** Defining Research Topic and Developing Bibliography. **Submit paper proposal, including topic, scope, and historical question as well as a preliminary bibliography.**

Tue Feb 9 Myths of “The Founding Fathers” Read *Prodigals and Pilgrims*

Thu Feb 11 Myth and History of the Founding Era

Tue Feb 16 **Submit essay on “The Founding Fathers”** In-class discussion of essays.

Thu Feb 18 Individual meetings with students on research papers

Tue Feb 23 **No Class** Library Research

Thu Feb 25 **No Class** Library Research

Tue Mar 1 **No Class** Library Research

Thu Mar 3 **No Class** Library Research

Tue Mar 8 **No Class** Library Research. **Submit annotated bibliography.**

Thu Mar 10 **No Class** Library Research

Tue Mar 15 **No Class** Spring Vacation

Thu Mar 17 **No Class** Spring Vacation

Tue Mar 22 Roundtable discussion of research

Thu Mar 24 Individual meetings with students on progress

Tue Mar 29 **No Class** Library Research

Thu Mar 31 **No Class** Library Research. **Submit topic sentence outline.**

Tue Apr 5 **No Class** Library Research and Writing

Thu Apr 7 **No Class** Library Research and Writing

Tue Apr 12 **No Class** Library Research and Writing

Thu Apr 14 **No Class** Library Research and Writing

Tue Apr 19 **No Class** Library Research and Writing

Thu Apr 21 **No Class** Library Research and Writing

Tue Apr 26 Discussion of student papers

Thu Apr 28 Discussion of student papers

Mon May 2 **Submit final paper**

**Disclaimers**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Purdue University and this professor prohibit “dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty.” (University Regulations, Part 5, Section III, B, 2, a). In this class it will lead to a failing grade (0) on the assignment. Depending on the severity of the incident it may lead to further consequences. And you should know that faculty members are expected to report all cases of plagiarism to the Office of the Dean of Students. For a set of helpful guidelines, see: https://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academic-integrity-brochure/ Plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not commonknowledge) material without acknowledging the source. This definition applies to texts published in print or online, to manuscripts, and to the work of any writer, including other student writers. Plagiarism means reproducing or paraphrasing the words or ideas of someone else without proper attribution, and passing this work off as one's own. For more discussion of academic dishonesty, see the Online Writing Lab’s discussion and guidelines for avoiding plagiarism at: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

**UNIVERSITY EMERGENCY POLICY**

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Any changes will be posted, once the course resumes, on the course website. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course: my email address [flambert@purdue.edu](mailto:flambert@purdue.edu), my phone 765-12-3586, and the History Department main office phone: 494-4132. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS Please review the Emergency Preparedness website: http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency\_preparedness/index.html