Revised Syllabus for History/American Studies 163
From Wampum to Phillis Wheatley: Communications in Early America
Professor Christine DeLucia, Williams College, Spring 2020

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Our spring semester and lives have been significantly disrupted by the coronavirus. Your physical and emotional wellbeing, and that of your families and communities, ought to be priorities at this time. Please know that faculty and staff very much want to support you and your continued learning this spring, and to be flexible with academic expectations and outcomes. The changes we are experiencing are serious, and necessitate substantial modifications to the remainder of our course. Below is an updated syllabus and set of course requirements. Following the College’s guidelines on accessibility, we will be moving to an asynchronous format and primarily using Glow discussion boards to interact, rather than attempting to virtually convene at a set time each week. I recognize that you may wish to consult with me one-on-one as you develop your final writing projects, and I am glad to make that happen via Zoom, telephone, email, or other means. I will shortly circulate a sign-up for scheduling digital check-ins.

Requirements
Williams College has moved to a universal pass/fail grading system for Spring 2020 courses. Details about this change are available via the Registrar’s Office: https://registrar.williams.edu/reminders/spring-20-universal-pass-fail-for-undergraduates/
Below are the revised course requirements, which include extensions of deadlines and simplifications/shortening of writing assignments. One of the most challenging aspects of the course to attempt to replicate is hands-on work with original objects and site visits. While there is no perfect substitute, I have added a brief “Activity” to each week, using digitally-available materials, that gives you an opportunity to delve directly into the practice of “doing history” and expand your investigative horizons.

1. **Class participation** (20% of final grade)

   In moving online, we will now have conversations take place through the course Glow “Discussions.” Each week you will be expected to post a set of comments/thoughts/reflections/questions in response to the week’s assigned readings and multimedia. Please aim to post your contribution by the end of the day on Thursdays. Because this is substituting for two weekly seminar meetings, try to make your contribution substantive (e.g., ~2+ paragraphs), and feel very welcome to respond to classmates’ postings.

2. **Discussion leader for one class session** (10% of final grade)

   Discussion leaders for the remainder of the semester should submit their contributions online through the Glow Discussion for the assigned week. You should be able to upload files (Powerpoints, videos, Word documents, handouts, etc.). Feel welcome to use whatever approach seems most feasible for getting your ideas across. This could be as simple as a text post with your main insights and some questions to spark discussion among the group. If you are the
discussion leader, please aim to post your work by the Tuesday of your assigned week, so that others may engage and build off of it.

3. **Reading responses** (10% of final grade—no longer required after Spring Break)
   I will credit you for reading responses already submitted in the first half of the semester. For the remainder of the spring, we will *not* be doing additional reading responses. Instead, please channel your weekly thinking and writing into the Glow discussion boards.

4. **Two analytic writing assignments** (each worth 15% of final grade)
   Each writing assignment will address a question provided well in advance by the instructor, pertaining to the readings and topical concerns of the course. The essays give you an opportunity to practice interpreting primary and secondary sources.
   - Writing assignment 1 is due April 6.
   - Writing assignment 2 (details to be distributed shortly) will be due May 4. Length will be ~3-4 pages.

5. **Final interpretative project** (30% of final grade)
   This project allows you to delve more deeply into a specific theme or debate in the course, and to create an original interpretation involving primary and secondary source materials. Detailed directions will be distributed well in advance, and will take into account the new challenges of conducting research and writing from a distance. A certain amount of independent research is involved, and creativity as well as critical analysis is encouraged. This project is due on May 23, 2020. Length will be ~5-7 pages.

**POST-BREAK SCHEDULE**

**WEEK of April 6-10**

**Soundscapes: Music, Aurality, Translation**

**Discussion leaders: William Litton, Terry Zapf**


**Activity:** Envision yourself as a curator of a playlist of early American music. What kinds of sounds would you want represented on your list? How might you consider organizing it? What would you want listeners to learn from it, including in areas that might surprise them? Include a few reflections on this topic in your weekly Glow discussion post, which should also engage the assigned readings and multimedia more broadly.
WEEK of April 13-17

**Private/Public Texts: Using Diaries to Open Up Social Histories**

Discussion leaders: Bo Peponis, Kary Chen


- Introduction, "a great sea A going," pp. 3-35
- August 1787, "Exceeding Dangerously ill," pp. 36-71
- September 1788, "warpt a piece," pp. 72-101
- Appendix: Medicinal Ingredients Mentioned in Martha Ballard’s Diary, pp. 353-364

**Activity:** browse “Overview: The Cultural Significance of Early American Handwriting,” in Study Guide: Colonial American Handwriting, Indian Converts Collection, Reed Digital Collections. Try your hand at some of the short activities such as the “abbreviations game.” Then try one or two of the transcribing exercises in Martha Ballard’s Diary Online. In your weekly Glow post, include some brief reflections on what these experiences reveal about making, reading, and accessing original handwritten sources like diaries. Your discussion post should also engage the assigned readings and multimedia more broadly.

- [https://www.reed.edu/indianconverts/studyguides/colonial_american_handwriting/cultural_significance.html](https://www.reed.edu/indianconverts/studyguides/colonial_american_handwriting/cultural_significance.html)
- Martha Ballard’s Diary Online: [http://dohistory.org/diary/index.html](http://dohistory.org/diary/index.html)

WEEK of April 20-24

**African-American Print Interventions**

Discussion leaders: Sarah Ryu, Eugene Amankwah

Selections from Phillis Wheatley, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (London: Printed for A. Bell, 1773), access via Internet Archive:

- [https://archive.org/details/poemsonvarioussus00whea/page/n7](https://archive.org/details/poemsonvarioussus00whea/page/n7)

- Dedication, Preface, and “The following is a Copy of a Letter sent by the Author’s Master to the Publisher”
- “To the University of Cambridge, in New-England,” pp. 15-16
- “On being brought from Africa to America,” p. 18
- “To a Lady on her remarkable Preservation in an Hurricane in North-Carolina,” pp. 80-81
- “To S.M. a young African Painter, on seeing his Works,” pp. 114-115


**Activity:** read this brief web commentary on Lucy Terry Prince, an African American woman in western Massachusetts noted for her literary pursuits, her efforts to attain freedom, and a story—perhaps accurate, perhaps mythological?—about her attempt to gain her son admission to
Williams College. If you were to investigate further about Lucy Terry Prince’s life and place her experiences into conversation with the assigned readings for this week, what would you want to know more about? Include some reflections on this topic in your weekly Glow post, which should also engage the assigned readings and multimedia more broadly.


(There is much more information about Prince available here—optional, not required, reading: http://www.memorialhall.mass.edu/classroom/curriculum_12th/unit1/lesson9/lucy_terry.html)

WEEK of April 27-May 1

**Mourning and Memorializing: Landscapes of Commemoration and Community**

**Discussion leaders: Jake Haase, Luke Swann**


- Chapter 6, “Representing the Ancestors,” pp. 43-46

James Deetz and Edwin S. Dethlefsen, “Death’s Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow,” via The Plymouth Colony Archive Project:

http://www.histarch.uiuc.edu/plymouth/deathshead.html

Jessie Lie Farber, selections “Early American Gravestones: Introduction to the Farber Gravestone Collection”—read short sections on:

- Who is interested in America’s early gravestones?
- Where are the colonial burying grounds?
- Have early American graveyards changed over time?
- Who carved the stones?
- How is a carver identified?
- What do the motifs on the stones mean?
- Who wrote the inscriptions?


**Activity:** browse the digital database *Find A Grave*. You might search for markers in the Williamstown/Berkshires area, or in another part of North America or the Caribbean that interests you. You can limit the search parameters by year, so try searching for items before 1830 (to fit with the early temporal focus of this course). Select a marker/memorial that interests you, and connect it to the themes from this week’s readings. In your weekly Glow discussion post, include a few reflections on the item you have selected and its significances. Your discussion post should also engage the assigned readings and multimedia more broadly.

https://www.findagrave.com

WEEK of May 4-8

**Stories in Objects: Material Culture and Historical “Collecting”**
Discussion leaders: Meghan Keenan, Zoe Bank


- Chapter 13, “Tantaquidgeon Museum,” pp. 89-93
- Chapter 19, “Talking Artifacts,” pp. 135-141


Activity: browse one of the digital museum exhibitions below, and select one or two material culture items that catch your interest. Think about how these items connect to the issues and debates raised in this week’s readings, especially regarding how knowledge is expressed and communicated through objects, and how the movements of these objects across time and space may have transformed their meanings. Include a few reflections on these items in your weekly Glow discussion post. Your discussion post should also engage the assigned readings and multimedia more broadly.

- A *Song for the Horse Nation*, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian: [https://americanindian.si.edu/static/exhibitions/horsenation/](https://americanindian.si.edu/static/exhibitions/horsenation/)
- *Collection Stories* (choose one that is relatively object-focused), Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture: [https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories](https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories)
- Online Collections, Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia: [https://emuseum.history.org](https://emuseum.history.org)

WEEK of May 11-15

**Declaring Independence and the Politics of Revolutionary and Native Printing**

Discussion leaders: Tallon Garelli, Mohemmed Hassaan Mustafa Rashid, and Daniel Vata


Declaration of Independence (1776): view high-resolution image and read transcript from U.S. National Archives: [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration.html)

*Founding Documents of the United States of America*, digital exhibition, Special Collections: [https://unbound.williams.edu/williamsarchives/islandora/object/foundingdocuments%3Aimages](https://unbound.williams.edu/williamsarchives/islandora/object/foundingdocuments%3Aimages)

Centennial Stories: The Cherokee Phoenix, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_T1Y3LKZ7Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_T1Y3LKZ7Y)

Ellen Cushman, ‘We’re Taking the Genius of Sequoyah into This Century’: The Cherokee Syllabary, Peoplehood, and Perseverance,” *Wicazo Sa Review* (Spring 2011): 67-83

**Activity:** browse the digital archive of either the *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper or the *Virginia Gazette*. Select a news item that interests you. Thinking about it in dialogue with the readings from this week, consider what kinds of context you would want readers of this primary source to have in mind? Include some brief reflections about this primary source in your weekly Glow post. Your discussion post should also engage the assigned readings and multimedia more broadly.

- *Cherokee Phoenix*, digitized by Georgia Historic Newspapers: [https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn83020874/](https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn83020874/)

**FINAL INTERPRETIVE PROJECT DUE**
Saturday May 23, 2020, by 2 p.m.