

HI 205-01 and 02

History of the United States II

Fall 2026

Course Description:

History 205 is part of a two-semester survey of American history. It surveys the history of what becomes the United States from pre-contact Indigenous civilizations through Reconstruction, emphasizing that early American history was never purely “American.” Many forces shaped what became America: Atlantic exchanges, Indigenous networks, imperial rivalries, and global commodity flows. Students will develop skills in primary source analysis, historical argumentation, and comparative thinking through an active-learning framework that minimizes traditional lecturing.

Course Objectives:

Students who complete HI 205 will demonstrate:

Knowledge of a basic narrative of American history; political, economic, social, and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society.

Knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.

Understanding of America’s evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

Knowledge of the major events, ideas, trends, and problems in American history to 1877.

An ability to explain how the past has shaped the present.

An ability to think critically by analyzing and evaluating historical events and ideas in American history

Ability to question and rethink his/her preconceived notions regarding American History.

An ability to conduct/evaluate historical research.

Required Readings:

Textbook: Eric Foner, Give Me Liberty! Seagull Edition. I recommend the ebook option to save money.

Additional Readings:

Primary sources and other readings posted on Canvas.

Weekly Rythm:

I am experimenting with a new class format this semester to move away from traditional lectures toward a more actively engaging approach.

Monday: Context & Framing. You can expect a short mini-lecture (20-25 minutes) framing the week's theme, followed by an open discussion around a short primary source you will have read before class begins.

Wednesdays: Workshop Day (skill-based, active learning). Students will work in small groups on a rotating set of activity types: source analysis workshops, mapping exercises, debate simulations, document comparison labs, or short collaborative writing tasks. I will circulate and coach, and we will have a 10-minute debrief at the end of every session.

Fridays: Synthesis & Connections. A rotating format: "global connection" sessions linking the week's U.S. topic to developments elsewhere, student-led discussions, History Bowl competitions, or collective debriefs. Fridays tie the week together and reward preparation.

Course Assignments:

Midterm Exam: 100 points

You will have a midterm exam consisting of three parts:

Identifications (40 points): You will have to choose five terms to identify. Each identification should be at least three sentences, defining the term, placing it in historical context, and explaining its significance.

Primary Source Analysis (30 points): I will provide one or two short primary sources and related questions. This tests the analytical skills developed during our Wednesday sessions.

Short-Answer Connections (30 points): I will pose two or three questions that ask you to draw connections across topics. You will need to write a substantial paragraph for each.

Final Exam: 250 points

You will have a cumulative final exam. It will consist of four parts:

Identifications (60 points): Same format as the midterm but cumulative. You will have ten identifications.

Primary Source Analysis (60 points): Two source sets instead of one. You will be required to read the sources and then write a short comparative response identifying a common theme.

Short-Answer Connections (80 points): I will give you five questions and ask you to answer three of them. Each response needs to be at least a page of writing.

Cumulative Synthesis (50 Points): I will give you one broad prompt that asks you to make an argument in a few well-developed paragraphs.

Weekly Reading Responses: 200 points

Short responses (100-150 words) due before Monday's class engaging with the assigned readings. Prompts rotate weekly to keep it fresh. Graded on completion and genuine engagement. Collected over 14 weeks; the lowest score dropped. Approximately 15 points each.

Wednesday Workshop Participation: 200 points

Scored on a simple rubric: prepared/engaged/contributed = full credit; present but passive=partial; absent=zero. Collected over 14 workshops; the lowest score dropped, each worth ~15 points.

History Bowl Competitions: 200 points

Five team-based competitions spaced across the semester, 40 points each, with the lowest score dropped. Each competition will have four rounds: Quick Recall, Source Showdown, Global Connections Challenge, and a Wager round. I will keep a running leaderboard with team names on Canvas all semester. Your score that week depends on how well your team does. Everyone on the team earns the same score.

Attendance Policy:

Cadets absenting themselves from a scheduled test due to athletic events, scheduled guard duty, or other VMI-mandated reasons must discuss their anticipated absence with me in advance in order to arrange an alternative test date. This also applies to deadlines for all written work. The 30% rule is in effect for this course, which means that if you miss more than 13 times (excused or unexcused) you cannot pass this course. I will give you a warning at 20%.

Cadets are expected to have read and understood the Institute's Work For Grade policies and procedures. Those policies are attached to this syllabus and are available in the Academic Regulations section of Regulation for the Virginia Military Institute. Cadets may find this document on the Dean's website. Additional information on proper source citation and plagiarism can be found on the History Department website at

<http://www.vmi.edu/Content.aspx?id=14041> and <http://www.vmi.edu/Content.aspx?id=1844>.

Student Behavioral Standards:

You are not allowed to eat in the classroom. However, drinks are okay.

Please do not leave to go to the restroom unless it is an absolute emergency. If you are gone for longer than fifteen minutes, I will ask the section marcher to recall roll.

You may use laptops in class. You should only use your laptops to take notes.

We will treat each other with respect and professionalism in all interactions.

Please refrain from using cell phones during class. Your phones should be off and put away. You will lose participation points if they ring during class or if I see you using a phone.

Grading:

Late Submissions:

All assignments are due by the date and time indicated on Canvas. All late submissions will be penalized at a rate of ten points per twenty-four-hour period, including weekends.

Extra Credit:

I will allow you to complete two extra-credit assignments this semester for a total of ten points. We are fortunate to bring in several speakers each semester, who discuss a variety of topics. If you attend one of these speakers (please clear it with me first) and then share your notes and a 200-word analytical summary of the presentation, I will give you five points. You can do this twice. If you are unable to attend these events for a valid reason, please discuss an alternative with me.

VMI History Department Statement on Generative AI and Outside Resources

The following statements apply to ALL assignments, assessments, and activities contained within the entirety of our course and listed in this syllabus:

All student work should ONLY draw on the resources, readings, and materials specifically listed and/or referenced within the prompt specific to each assignment.

Students should NOT access any resources beyond those explicitly designated within the assignment prompts provided.

Students should NOT use any outside readings, summaries, explanations, software, applications, or other instruments not explicitly approved by the instructor for a specific assignment (including but not limited to artificial intelligence-generated summaries or descriptions of the works, papers or assignments created by generative platforms, reviews or other summaries of scholarship taken from human or computer authors without instructor approval).

You are NOT to use ANY platforms to assist your writing of ANY assignments, including Grammarly, ChatGPT, or any other software (generative, predictive or otherwise) that is not Microsoft Word, Google Docs, or another instructor-approved word processing platform. When using any word processing platform, you may NOT use ANY of its generative or predictive capabilities.

Work for Grade statements should reflect compliance with ALL of the items on this list.

It is your responsibility to discuss ANY clarifying questions or concerns you may have about these policies with the professor before submitting your work.

ANY violations of this policy will earn the offending assignment and/or assessment 0 points.

Appendix A: Institute Work for Grade Policy

Development of the spirit as well as the skills of academic inquiry is central to the mission of VMI's Academic Program. As a community of scholars, posing questions and seeking answers, we invariably consult and build upon the ideas, discoveries, and products of others who have wrestled with related issues and problems before us. We are obligated ethically and in many instances legally to acknowledge the sources of all borrowed material that we use in our own work. This is the case whether we find that material in conventional resources, such as the library or cyberspace, or discover it in other places like conversations with our peers.

Academic integrity requires the full and proper documentation of any material that is not original with us. It is therefore a matter of honor. To misrepresent someone else's words, ideas, images, data, or other intellectual property as one's own is stealing, lying, and cheating all at once.

Because the offense of improper or incomplete documentation is so serious, and the consequences so potentially grave, the following policies regarding work for grade have been adopted as a guide to cadets and faculty in upholding the Honor Code under which all VMI cadets live:

1) Cadets' responsibilities

"Work for grade" is defined as any work presented to an instructor for a formal grade or undertaken in satisfaction of a requirement for successful completion of a course or degree

requirement. All work submitted for grade is considered the cadet's own work. "Cadet's own work" means that he or she has composed the work from his or her general accumulation of knowledge and skill except as clearly and fully documented and that it has been composed especially for the current assignment. No work previously submitted in any course at VMI or elsewhere will be resubmitted or reformatted for submission in a current course without the specific approval of the instructor.

In all work for grade, failure to distinguish between the cadet's own work and ideas and the work and ideas of others is known as plagiarism. Proper documentation clearly and fully identifies the sources of all borrowed ideas, quotations, or other assistance. The cadet is referred to the VMI-authorized handbook for rules concerning quotations, paraphrases, and documentation.

In all written work for grade, the cadet must include the words "HELP RECEIVED" conspicuously on the document, and he or she must then do one of two things: (1) state "none," meaning that no help was received except as documented in the work; or (2) explain in detail the nature of the help received. In oral work for grade, the cadet must make the same declaration before beginning the presentation. Admission of help received may result in a lower grade but will not result in prosecution for an honor violation.

Cadets are prohibited from discussing the contents of a quiz/exam until it is returned to them or final course grades are posted. This enjoinder does not imply that any inadvertent expression or behavior that might indicate one's feeling about the test should be considered a breach of honor. The real issue is whether cadets received information, not available to everyone else in the class, which would give them an unfair advantage. If a cadet inadvertently gives or receives information, the incident must be reported to the professor and the Honor Court.

Each cadet bears the responsibility for familiarizing himself or herself thoroughly with the policies stated in this section, with any supplementary statement regarding work for grade expressed by the academic department in which he or she is taking a course, and with any special conditions provided in writing by the professor for a given assignment. If there is any doubt or uncertainty about the correct interpretation of a policy, the cadet should consult the instructor of the course. There should be no confusion, however, on the basic principle that it is never acceptable to submit someone else's work, written or otherwise, formally graded or not, as one's own.

The violation by a cadet of any of these policies will, if he or she is found guilty by the Honor Court, result in his or her being dismissed from VMI. Neither ignorance nor professed confusion about the correct interpretation of these policies is an excuse.

History Departmental Statement Concerning VMI's Policies Regarding Work for Grade

The Department of History's policies regarding work for grade apply to three types of written work.

1. In the case of written quizzes, tests, or examinations, cadets are to do their own work without help from any other source.
2. In the case of written book reviews or reading reports, cadets are supposed to have read every page indicated and must write the report without assistance.
3. In the case of research papers, such as those required in HI 460 or other research projects in other courses, the research and writing must be done by the cadet alone under conditions specified by the instructor.

When employing a word processor in the preparation of written work for grade, a cadet is allowed free and unrestrained use of computing aids, including translators, spelling, style and grammar checkers, but must acknowledge the use of these aids in the help received statement submitted with the written work.

When undertaking work for grade for history courses, Cadets may seek tutoring assistance from recognized Institute sources such as the Writing Center, Academic Center and tutors authorized by the Institute. This assistance may include critical comments. Such comments are defined in the Institute's Work for Grade Policy as "general advice on such matters as organization, thesis development, support for assertions, and patterns of errors. It does not include proofreading or editing." The cadet must acknowledge the use of this assistance in the help received statement submitted with the written work.

If specifically directed by the instructor of a history course, cadets may avail themselves of peer collaboration on written work. Similar to tutoring assistance, peer collaboration may involve the provision of critical comments. Such comments are defined in the Institute's Work for Grade Policy as "general advice on such matters as organization, thesis development, support for assertions, and patterns of errors. It does not include proofreading or editing." The cadet must acknowledge the use of peer collaboration in the help received statement submitted with the written work.

Unlike critical comments, proofreading and editing are expressly forbidden by the Institute's Work for Grade Policy, to wit: "Proofreading means correcting errors (e.g., in spelling, grammar, punctuation). It is the last step taken by the writer in the editing process. In addition to the corrections made in proofreading, editing includes making such changes as the addition, deletion, or reordering of paragraphs, sentences, phrases, or words. A cadet may not have his or her work proofread or edited by someone other than the instructor." Instructors in the Department of History who wish to employ proofreading and editing as pedagogical tools may be granted exceptions to this rule only if they have received written permission from the department head for a particular assignment.

In all cases, individual course assignments that deviate from the departmental work for grade policies must be approved by the department head in advance and must be explained to cadets in writing. Cadets should consult the History Department web site, "Guidelines for Referencing Papers" for a fuller discussion of how to conduct written work in History. Any non-written work for grade, such as oral reports, must be undertaken under specific conditions established by the instructor and will conform to the same spirit of the rules as pertain to

written work.

If you have any doubts as to the application of these rules to any of your work for grade in History courses, consult your instructor.

Do not leave anything to chance.

Addendum

Cadets enrolled in HI 103/104 are encouraged to seek assistance in preparing out-of-class writing assignments from the following sources, consistent with the governing policies of these sources: the VMI Writing Center, professional or cadet personnel under the auspices of the Academic Center, and tutors assigned by the Athletic Department. Additionally, cadets are allowed to engage in any level of peer review or collaboration authorized by their instructor with other members of their section or members of other sections taught by the same instructor. Cadets are encouraged to work with History GSS peer tutors, where they are authorized to receive additional levels of editorial or proofreading assistance designed to help them learn how to spot and address editorial or proofreading issues in their written work. Any type of assistance from any of the sources listed above must be explicitly authorized by the instructor and must be specifically acknowledged in "Help Received" statements.

ESL students are permitted two additional sources of critical commentary, editing, or proofreading as they work on their essays: 1) any VMI professor; and 2) any cadet who speaks the native language of the person seeking help. For our purposes, an ESL student would be identified as any cadet who has taken the TOEFL, or cadets for whom English is not their first language, and whose oral communication skills or written work demonstrates difficulties with the English language. As always, students who obtain help must specify clearly the nature of the Help Received.

Accessibility Statement:

VMI abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which mandates that reasonable accommodations are provided for all students with documented disabilities. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers that may be due to a disability, including but not limited to chronic medical conditions, learning disability, mental health, or other impairment, please contact Disability Services in the Miller Academic Center. The Disability Services office is located at 202 Carroll Hall in the Miller Academic Center. Please call, write, or stop by the office of LTC Allyson Pierce, Director of the Miller Academic Center, for more information (540-464-7661 or piercesa@vmi.edu). If you have a DS accommodation letter, please contact LTC Pierce and me (your instructor) early in

the semester so that we can provide or facilitate provision of the accommodations you may need.

Course Schedule

Unit 1: Worlds Before and Between

Unit 2: Colonial Societies and the Atlantic World (Weeks 3-6)

Unit 3: Revolution and the New Republic (1815-1850)

Unit 4: Democracy, Reform, and Expansion

Unit 5: Civil War and Reconstruction

Key Dates for the Semester:

Monday classes meet Tuesday, 1 September.

No Classes on September 2, 2026 (Academic Convocation)

No Classes on November 11th. Wednesday classes meet on Thursday, November 12th.

Thanksgiving Furlough: November 21-30, 2026.

Classes End: December 10, 2026. All work must be submitted by 1600.