History 715: France, Africa, and the Americas
Wednesdays 6:00 – 9:00 pm
Professor Brett Rushforth
Office Hours (Blair 225): Wednesdays, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, or by appointment
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COURSE OVERVIEW:
In this course we will explore the historiography of the early modern French Atlantic world. Ranging from West Africa through the Caribbean to the North American colonies of greater New France, we will discuss a broad array of topics central to the history of colonialism: cultural encounters; systems of labor, power, and law; empire and the state; the interrelated histories of gender, sexuality, and race; and anti-colonialism and revolution. Although we will explore these problems in the context of the French Atlantic world, they are meant to broaden your thinking well beyond the temporal and topical boundaries of the course.

REQUIRED READINGS:
Each student will read one book and one article each week. We will all read the same book, but different articles. Our discussion will focus on the book, but your article will give you a unique vantage point from which to approach the common reading: challenging one of its arguments, highlighting one of its themes, proposing an alternative interpretation, expanding on one of its ideas, etc.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:
Weekly Reading and Article Summaries: Each week you must come to class having read, taken notes on, and thoughtfully considered the required book and your individual article. You must also write a one-paragraph summary of the article’s argument, its method and sources, and its contribution to the historiography, *including a statement of how it relates to the required book*. Submit your paragraph by email to the professor before the beginning of class. I will compile the abstracts into a single document and post it on Blackboard to provide you with a cumulative summary of each week’s articles. By the end of the semester, the document will contain abstracts of 120 key articles in conversation with a dozen key books. You can then download this and use it to study for comprehensive exams or to keep for future reference.

Class Discussion: Each student is expected to make substantive, thoughtful, and well-informed contributions to our class discussions *every week*. The best comments will be concrete and clear and will reference specific arguments/ideas/moments in the text under consideration. There is nothing wrong with disagreeing – with the author, the professor, or another student – but to be productive disagreements need to be based on rational, substantive grounds.

Writing Assignments: In addition to the weekly article summaries, each student must write two review essays, each approximately 3,000 to 3,500 words, similar to those published in Reviews in American History. You may choose to review a single book, placing it in its historiographical context and analyzing it at length in light of a deep knowledge of other literature in the field (i.e., the ten related articles and other relevant assigned readings). Or you may pair two books and write an essay comparing their arguments, methods, and interpretive contributions. I will post several models of each kind of essay on Blackboard. The first essay is due no later than Friday,
Oct. 8, at 5:00 pm. The second is due no later than Friday, Dec. 3, at 5:00 pm. You may submit either or both at any time prior to these dates, but not later. These essays must be submitted on paper; electronic copies will not be accepted.

A note on grades: To receive an A, you must do work that you and I agree is exceptionally insightful, thoughtful, original, and interesting. You must be able to say to yourself and to me that your work is truly superior. I will assign an A- to students who complete all assignments, work hard, engage consistently in class discussions, but lack the depth of engagement or spark of originality and insight that would warrant an A. I will assign a B+ to students whose work is casually or minimally done, whose contributions to class discussions are less frequent and less insightful than I would expect at this level, or whose overall approach to the course shows a lack of serious intent to master the material. I will assign a B to students whose work is of insufficient quality, who lack engagement in class discussions, or who fail to respond to feedback. But at this level, if you’re worrying about your grade, you’re worrying about the wrong thing.

POLICIES AND REMINDERS:
William and Mary has the oldest and arguably the strongest honor code in the United States. I take it very seriously, and I expect that you will, too. I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty. Anyone presenting work as their own that was actually done by another, or for which they have received credit in another class, will fail this class and be reported to the department and the college.

Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. If you experience a problem, please report the situation to the professor immediately. If you are uncomfortable with this for any reason, please report the problem to the office of the Dean of Students. Students with any kind of disability are also encouraged to contact the Dean of Students, who will arrange any necessary accommodations.

A note on cell phones and laptops: It is unacceptable to use a cell phone for any reason during class. Nothing will jeopardize your standing more quickly than cell phone use during class discussions. The use of laptops is a privilege that students must respect to retain. It is unacceptable to use the internet, check or send emails or instant messages, or conduct any other activity not directly required by the class. These actions distract those around you and make it impossible for you to engage the intellectual content of the class.

READING SCHEDULE:
WEEK 1 (Aug. 25): Introductions and Overview
Common Reading:
- Tartarolo, “Atlantic History Old and New”
- Vidal, “The Reluctance of French Historians to Address Atlantic History”
- Dubois, “The French Atlantic”
- Girard, “Empire by Collaboration”
- Hodson and Rushforth, “Absolutely Atlantic”
- Cohen, “Was There an Amerindian Atlantic?”
WEEK 2 (Sept. 1): Atlantic Models
Common Reading:
- Kenneth Banks, *Chasing Empire across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic World*

Satellite Reading:

WEEK 3 (Sept. 8): Encounters
Common Reading:
- Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits*

Satellite Reading:
1. Tracy Neal Leavelle, “‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts’: Mediation, Meaning, and the Language of Illinois Christianity,” *Church History* 76 (June 2007), 363-394.
Christianity and Native Cultures: Perspectives from Different Regions of the World (Notre Dame 2004), 352-383.


WEEK 4 (Sept. 15): Accommodations

Common Reading:

Satellite Reading:

2. Brett Rushforth, “Slavery, the Fox Wars, and the Limits of Alliance,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (January 2006), 53-80.


WEEK 5 (Sept. 22): Negotiating Space
Common Reading:
- Daniel Usner, Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy

Required Reading:

WEEK 6 (Sept. 29): Trials of Empire
Common Reading:
- Shannon Lee Dawdy, Building the Devil’s Empire: French Colonial New Orleans

Satellite Reading:

**WEEK 7 (Oct. 6): Gender, Religion, and Community**

**Common Reading:**
- Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834*

**Satellite Reading:**

WEEK 8 (Oct. 13): Caribbean Beginnings

Common Reading:

- Philip Boucher, *France and the American Tropics to 1700: Tropics of Discontent?*

(Prof. Rushforth will be presenting a paper at the *Ethnohistory* conference in Ottawa. We will work together to find an alternative day to discuss the Boucher book, but there will be no satellite readings.)

WEEK 9 (Oct. 20): Race

Common Reading:

- Sue Peabody, “There Are No Slaves in France”: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime
- Jennifer Palmer, “People of Color in France: Establishing and Subverting Race and Gender Hierarchies” (OIEAHC Colloquium, Tuesday, Oct. 19 – *attendance is mandatory*)

Satellite Reading:

2. Jennifer Spear, “Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (January 2003), 75-98.
WEEK 10 (Oct. 27): Atlantic Slavery

*Monday, Oct. 25: Mini-Conference, Haiti – From Revolution to Republic*: Attendance is Mandatory

**Common Reading:**
- Robert Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (We will discuss this book on Tuesday, Oct. 26, at reading group, and our class conversation will take up where we leave off.)

**Satellite Reading:**

WEEK 11 (Nov. 3): Atlantic Africa

**Common Reading:**

**Satellite Reading:**

WEEK 12 (Nov. 10): The Science of Empire

Common Reading:
- Neil Safier, Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America

Satellite Reading:


WEEK 13 (Nov. 17):

Common Reading:

Satellite Reading:

WEEK 14 (Nov. 24): *No Class – Thanksgiving Break*

WEEK 15 (Dec. 1): Revolution

Discussion Question:
- Jeremy Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*

Satellite Reading:
2. Laurent Dubois, “‘Our Three Colors’: The King, the Republic, and the Political Culture of Slave-Rebellion in Saint-Domingue,” Historical Reflections/Reflections historiques 30 (Special Issue, April/May 2003), 83-102.