

Spring 2-1-2018

# HSTR 300.01 Writing for History: Early America

Claire Arcenas

*The University Of Montana*, [claire.arcenas@umontana.edu](mailto:claire.arcenas@umontana.edu)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

---

## Recommended Citation

Arcenas, Claire, "HSTR 300.01 Writing for History: Early America" (2018). *Syllabi*. 7730.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/7730>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Course Syllabi at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

# Writing for History: Digital Worlds of Early America

HSTR 300 | Spring 2018  
Class meets Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30-1:50PM  
Room: LA 334

Professor Claire Arcenas | [claire.arcenas@umontana.edu](mailto:claire.arcenas@umontana.edu) | office: LA 261  
office hours: Monday 1-1:30PM; Tuesday 2-3PM; Thursday 2-2:30PM, and by appointment

## Course Overview and Goals:

What does it mean to study early American history in our digital age? How has the Internet shaped the practice of doing history? These are among the many questions we will explore together this semester. This class will cover the history of North America from the late 1500s through the American Civil War in the 1860s, with an emphasis on the period between 1600-1776. Although we will move roughly chronologically, the course is organized thematically into four units. As an intermediate writing course, our primary focus will be on the production of high-quality historical writing. To help you become better, more confident writers, we will be working with the Sidecar Project out of UM's Writing and Public Speaking Center. Throughout the semester, students will also have the opportunity to explore digital history approaches, methods, and processes of inquiry.

## Learning Outcomes:

As an approved intermediate writing course, this class will adhere to the learning outcomes provided by the University of Montana Faculty Senate. They are provided verbatim below. Upon completion of this course, students will have learned how to do the following:

- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Formulate and express written opinions and ideas that are developed, logical, and organized
- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively and ethically
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage<sup>1</sup>

## UPWA Submission:

As an intermediate writing course, this class requires an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment (for this class: Assignment #3) stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the university's writing program. Your assignment will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from a selection of the Writing Learning Outcomes. This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/committees/writing\\_committee/guidelines.php](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/committees/writing_committee/guidelines.php).

### **Course Structure, Expectations, and Policies:**

Our class meetings will generally take one of three forms: a discussion based on shared readings for the day; a student-led presentation followed by a class conversation about a digital database or tool; or a writing tutor session with Sidecar.

You are required to attend and participate actively and respectfully in all our class meetings and Sidecar sessions. You must also submit all assignments by the deadlines listed on this syllabus. If, for any reason, you need to miss a class or require an extension on an assignment, you must get my approval ahead of time. Any unexcused absences will negatively impact your grade. All assignments will lose half a letter grade for every day they are late (e.g. a “B+” assignment will be a “B” assignment, if you turn it in a day late). Please also note that you are required to submit all your assignments to your assigned Sidecar tutors by the dates listed on this syllabus. If you do not submit your assignment first to Sidecar, you will receive a zero for that assignment, unless you have made prior arrangements with Professor Arcenas.

### **Required Books (available for purchase at the UM Bookstore and on reserve at Mansfield Library):**

1. Alan Taylor, *Colonial America: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford, 2013).
2. Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998).
3. *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America*, ed. Colin G. Calloway, Second Edition (Boston: Bedford St. Martin’s, 2016).
4. Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
5. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

All other readings will be available via Moodle. If you are able, please print off readings and bring them with you to class.

### **Assignment & Grading Overview:**

#### **1. Class Attendance, Participation in Discussions, and Reading Check-Ins (20%)**

Your attendance in class is required. Simply attending class, however, is not sufficient. Rather, active, thoughtful, and engaged participation is the key to your success in this class. When evaluating your participation, I place more value on the quality rather than the quantity of your contributions. I will also take into account improvement in your participation over the duration of the semester. When thinking about your participation in class, it might be helpful to imagine yourself as a co-discussion-facilitator; participation means both constructively contributing to discussion and actively engaging with your peers. Your contributions to discussion should be based closely on the readings you complete for each class. In preparation for most classes, you will also complete a short reading check-in assignment. Instructions for these are either below on the syllabus or on Moodle in the folder for the week.

#### **2. In-Class Presentation on Digital Database or Tool (15%)**

You will work in pairs or teams to present on a digital database or tool that enhances our study of early American history. The students in charge of presenting will meet briefly with Professor

Arcenas ahead of their in-class presentation. Early in the semester, we will assign groups, presentation schedules, and go over expectations for this in more detail.

### **3. Presentation Journal Entries (5%)**

For each of your classmates' presentations, you should write roughly a page of reflections on and observations about the day's presentation. In your reflection, please summarize what the presentation covered and mention one strength and one weakness of the presentation. Your journal entry is due in class on the day immediately following the presentation.

### **4. Assignment #1: Argument Blog Post (10%)** [Length: 2 pages]

Write a blog post introducing a general audience of Internet readers to either Richter's or Salisbury's article. In your blog post, you should:

- identify the article's central arguments
- explain how the historian makes his arguments
- discuss how persuasive you find them and why.

### **5. Assignment #2: Primary Source Anthology Description (15%)** [Length: 4 pages/ 2 pages per source]

Imagine you have been asked to contribute to an edited anthology (collection) of primary sources that scholars all over the country will use to teach classes on slavery in early America. Your task is to select two primary source documents that are available digitally that you would like to include in the anthology. For each document you select:

- provide a description and analysis of the document to accompany its reprinting in the anthology
- explain what the document reveals about slavery in early America and why you chose to include it. To explain this well, you should engage with some of the secondary readings you have completed for this class.

### **6. Assignment #3: Museum of Early America Part I: Exhibit Plan (20%)** [Length: 7-8 pages]

Your anthology freelancing gig got old, so you have now moved on to museum work. Your boss has put you in charge of directing an exhibit on Worlds of Early American History. The scope, content, and approach of the exhibit are entirely up to you, but you need to produce a written exhibit plan for your boss.

Your exhibit plan should address the following questions:

1. What is the topic or theme of your exhibit? What is your vision for it?
2. What is the chronology of your exhibit?
3. Who is the intended audience of your exhibit?
4. What objects/documents/interactive activities/artifacts/visuals/etc. will be in your exhibit?
  - You should mention (and properly cite) *at least five specific items* that will appear in the exhibit.
5. What will each of these objects/documents/interactive activities/artifacts/visuals/etc. bring to your exhibit? What will they contribute? In short, why are you including them?

**7. Assignment #4: Museum of Early America Part II: Fundraising Pitch (15%)** [Length: 3-4 pages]

Congratulations! Your boss approved your exhibit plan, but you need to come up with the funds to put it together. Your first task, therefore, is to fundraise.

Write a letter to potential donors explaining your vision for the exhibit and its potential payoffs (i.e. why what you are doing is significant). Ultimately, your letter should persuade someone to help finance your exhibit.

In your letter, be sure to address the following questions:

1. What is your exhibit trying to do? In other words, what is the purpose or goal of your exhibit?
2. What does your exhibit reveal about early America that viewers may not have known before? Does your exhibit build on work done by past historians in books or articles you have read for class? Does your exhibit do something entirely new?

\*\*For those students so inclined, there will be the option to complete an alternative Assignment #4 using a digital exhibition tool (such as Omeka, Neatline, or Map Scholar). If you are interested in this option, please speak with Professor Arcenas in office hours. For more info, see:

- <http://neatline.org/>
- <http://mapscholar.org/>
- <https://omeka.org/>
- [http://dh101.humanities.ucla.edu/?page\\_id=104](http://dh101.humanities.ucla.edu/?page_id=104)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FncO08PeK9o>

**Grading Rubric:**

A: 93-100	C: 73-76
A-: 90-92	C-: 70-72
B+: 87-89	D+: 67-69
B: 83-86	D: 63-66
B-: 80-82	D-: 60-62
C+: 77-79	F: 59 and below

**Assignment Due Dates:**

Assignment	Submit Draft to Tutors via Moodle	Sidecar Session	Due to Instructor	Instructor returns papers to students
Assignment #1	Monday, February 5th	Thursday, February 8th	Tuesday, February 13th	Tuesday, February 20th
Assignment #2	Friday, March 9th	Tuesday, March 13th	Tuesday, March 20th	Thursday, March 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Assignment #3	Friday, April 6th	Tuesday, April 10th	Tuesday, April 17th	Thursday, April 19th
Assignment #4	Friday, April 27th	Tuesday, May 1st	Friday, May 11 <sup>th</sup>	Upon Request

**Formatting Specifications:**

Unless otherwise noted, here are the formatting guidelines you should follow for all written work in this class:

- 12-point, Times New Roman font; Double-spaced; 1-inch margins; Chicago Manual of Style citations

**Electronics Policy:** Before coming to class, please silence and put away all electronics, including your cell phone. On the first day of class, we will discuss appropriate use of laptops and tablets for discussion, presentations, and activities.

**Academic Honesty:** Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with UM’s Student Conduct Code and conducting themselves accordingly. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating, will result in appropriate disciplinary action and possibly a failing grade. An easy rule to follow is that all work you produce for this class should be your own. Please ask Professor Arcenas if you have any questions.

**Students with Disabilities:** As per university policies, appropriate accommodations will be made. To ensure that the proper steps can be taken, please speak with Professor Arcenas as early in the semester as possible. It is your responsibility to speak with me and to provide the proper documentation from Disability Services for Students (DSS). You can visit [www.umt.edu/dss](http://www.umt.edu/dss) for additional details and information.

**Schedule of Classes:**Unit 1: “The World Turned Upside Down”**Unit Background reading:**

Alan Taylor, *Colonial America: A Very Short Introduction*, Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 4.

**Tuesday, January 23: Welcome & Introductions****Thursday, January 25: Encounters I + Visit from Sidecar**

To read for today:

-Foreword, Preface, and “Introduction: ‘Times Are Altered with Us Indians’” in *The World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Colin G. Calloway, pp. v-20.

-“A Dream of Strangers,” “Meeting the Dutch at Manhattan,” and “What Can You Get by Warre . . . ?” in *The World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 37-44.

To complete for today:

“3-2-1” reading response: In preparation for our class meeting today, in roughly a page, list three things you learned from the readings this week, two things you have questions about, and one thing you found particularly surprising.

## **Tuesday, January 30: Algonquians at Jamestown**

To read for today:

-Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* <http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/exploring/>  
(Read the Introduction and browse the rest of the website.)

To investigate for today:

-Virtual Jamestown: <http://www.virtualjamestown.org/page2.html>

To complete for today:

-DH/Virtual Jamestown worksheet (available on Moodle)

## **Thursday, February 1: Encounters II**

To read for today:

- Neal Salisbury, "The Indians' Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans," in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (1996): 435-58. (Moodle)

-Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1983): 528-59. (Moodle)

- "The Creation of the World" and "The League of Peace in Wampum," in *The World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 23-32

- "The Walking Purchase": A Delaware Complaint and an Iroquois Response" and "The Treaty of Lancaster," in *The World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 105-115

- "A Native War Record," "Iroquois Loyalty Turns to Disenchantment," and "Intertribal Conflict Fostered by Colonists," in *The World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 131-138.

To complete for today:

In preparation for our class meeting today, brainstorm 3-5 discussion questions you could imagine asking your classmates that would spark an interesting discussion or conversation about today's readings.

**\*\*Assignment #1 due via Moodle to Sidecar by 5pm on Monday 2/5\*\***

## **Tuesday, February 6: Mapping the "New World" and Understanding Spatial History**

To read for today:

-Richard White, "What is Spatial History?" <https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29> (Moodle)

To investigate for today:

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/> or <https://www.loc.gov/maps/collections/>

To complete for today:

Spatial history and maps worksheet (available on Moodle)

## Thursday, February 8: Sidecar Session 1

## Tuesday, February 13: Group 1 Student Presentations on Mapping Empire

(<http://mapscholar.org/empire/>)

To read for today:

-S. Max Edelson, *The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America before Independence* (Harvard, 2017), selections (Moodle)

## Unit 2: Slavery Across Time and Space

### Unit Background Reading:

Alan Taylor, *Colonial America: A Very Short Introduction*, chapters 5 and 6.

Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, Introduction (and look ahead through chapters 1-5).

## Thursday, February 15: Studying Slavery in Early America

To read for today:

- Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” in *The American Historical Review*, 114, no. 5 (December 2009): 1231–1249. (Moodle)

-Ira Berlin, “From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America,” in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1996): 251-288. (Moodle)

To complete for today:

**\*\*Assignment #1 due in class to Professor Arcenas\*\***

## Tuesday, February 20: Group 2 Presentation on Transatlantic Slave Voyages

<http://www.slavevoyages.org/>

## Thursday, February 22: Slavery and Print Culture

To read for today:

-David Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic.” (Moodle)

-Billy G. Smith: “Resisting Inequality: Black Women Who Stole Themselves in Eighteenth-Century America” in Carla Gardina Pestana and Sharon V. Salinger., eds., *Inequality in Early America* (Hanover, N.H: University Press of New England, 1999), 134-159. (Moodle)

-Selection of “Runaway Slave Advertisements” from  
<http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/index.html> (Moodle)

To complete for today:

“3-2-1” reading response: In preparation for our class meeting today, in roughly a page, list three things you learned from the readings this week, two things you have questions about, and one thing you found particularly surprising.



**Tuesday, February 27: Group 3 Presentation on Slavery and American Universities**  
<https://slavery.princeton.edu/>

**Thursday, March 1: Slavery in Antebellum America**

To read for today:

-Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*, Introduction, Chapter 4 “Turning People into Products,” and Chapter 5 “Reading Bodies, Marking Race”

To do for today:

“I learned; I think” reading response: In preparation for our class meeting today, write about a paragraph on what you learned from reading Johnson and about a paragraph on what you think about what you read.

**Tuesday, March 6: Guest Visit from Professor Billy Smith (Montana State University) on Mapping Historic Philadelphia**

To do for today:

In preparation for Professor Smith’s visit, please visit

<http://www.mappinghistoricphiladelphia.org/>

**Thursday, March 8: Group Four Presentation on Civil War Sources**

<http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/> & <http://www.civilwarshades.org/>

**\*\*Assignment #2 due via Moodle to Sidecar by 5pm on Friday 3/9\*\***

**Tuesday, March 13: Sidecar Session 2**

Unit 3: America’s Enlightenments:  
Exploring Gender and Science in Early America

**No Formal Unit Background Reading:** If you are interested in exploring additional secondary sources related to topics covered in this unit, please let Professor Arcenas know!

**Thursday, March 15: Enlightenment I**

To read for today:

-Susan Scott Parrish, “The Female Opossum and the Nature of the New World,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, Vol. LIV, No. 3 (July 1997): 475-514. (Moodle)

-Caroline Winterer, *American Enlightenment* (Yale, 2016), selections (Moodle)

To complete for today:

In preparation for our class meeting today, brainstorm 3-5 discussion questions you could imagine asking your classmates that would spark an interesting discussion or conversation about today’s readings.

## **Tuesday, March 20: Enlightenment II**

To read for today:

- Lee Dugatkin, *Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose: Natural History in Early America*, chapter 2 (Moodle)
- J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur: "What Is an American?" from *Letter from an American Farmer* (1782) (Moodle)
- Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query VI (1787) (Moodle)
- Thomas Jefferson to Comte de Buffon, "A Moose from New Hampshire," Oct. 1 1787 (Moodle)
- Comte de Buffon, "Of the Animals Common to both Continents," from *The natural history of animals, vegetables, and minerals; with the theory of the earth in general* (Moodle)

To complete for today:

**\*\*Assignment #2 due in Class to Professor Arcenas\*\***

## **Thursday, March 22: Pizza & Film Screening: *A Midwife's Tale***

**SPRING BREAK – March 24<sup>th</sup> – April 1st**

## **Tuesday, April 3: NO CLASS**

In lieu of class today, attend UM Presidential Lecture Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> at 8pm: Andrea Wulf, "The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World." In preparation for Wulf's lecture, please spend a few minutes perusing her personal webpage:

<http://www.andreawulf.com/>

**Thursday, April 5: *A Midwife's Tale* and Wulf Lecture Discussion & Group Five Presentation on *A Midwife's Tale*** <http://dohistory.org/home.html>

**\*\*Assignment 3 due to Sidecar via Moodle by 5pm on Friday 4/6\*\***

## **Tuesday, April 10: Sidecar Session 3**

**Thursday, April 12: Group 6 Presentation on the Worlds of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello** <http://home.monticello.org/>

To read for today:

- Thomas Jefferson to William Hamilton, "Gardens for Monticello," July 1806 (Moodle)
- Dell Upton, "An American Icon [Monticello]," in Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (New York, 1998), selections (Moodle).

## Unit 4: Revolutionary America

### **Unit Background Reading:**

Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, chapters 1-4.

### **Tuesday, April 17: Before Independence I**

To read for today:

-Thomas Jefferson, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, 1774 (Moodle)

To investigate for today: <https://www.masshist.org/revolution/index.html>

To do for today: Select two documents from the Massachusetts Historical Society's webpage and be prepared to talk about them in class today.

To complete for today:

**\*\*Assignment 3 due in class to Professor Arcenas\*\***

### **Thursday, April 19: Before Independence II**

To read for today:

-Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).  
(Please also read Kramnick's introduction.)

To complete for today:

Imagine you were an American colonist in early 1776 and have just received a copy of Paine's pamphlet. Adopting the persona and perspective of a colonist, in approximately a page, express your ideas about and reactions to what Paine was saying.

### **Tuesday, April 24: Declaring Independence**

To read for today:

-Danielle Allen, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration in Defense of Equality* (Liverlight, 2014), selections. (Moodle)  
-Thomas Jefferson, Draft of the Declaration of Independence (1776) (Moodle)  
-Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (1776) (Moodle)

To complete for today:

In preparation for our class meeting today, write a 1-page letter to a friend reflecting on how Allen's book changed (or did not change) how you read the Declaration of Independence.

### **Thursday, April 26: Podcasting Revolutionary Politics**

To listen to for today:

-Select one podcast episode covering some aspect of Revolutionary America broadly construed and listen to it. Here is a list of possible podcasts, but feel free to explore and find your own. Please come to class prepared to talk about your podcast with your classmates.  
<https://www.benfranklinsworld.com/> ; <https://thejuntocast.com/> ; <http://backstoryradio.org/>

To complete for today:

Podcast worksheet available on Moodle.

**\*\*Assignment 4 due to Sidecar via Moodle by 5pm on Friday 4/27\*\***

**Tuesday, May 1: Sidecar Session 4**

**Thursday, May 3: Course Conclusions**

**\*\*Assignment 4 Due to Professor Arcenas by 10:00AM on Friday, May 11th \*\***

**Further Readings in Digital History/Digital Humanities:**

*Debates in the Digital Humanities* (2016). <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/>

Hurley, A. "Chasing the Frontiers of Digital Technology: Public History Meets the Digital Divide." *The Public Historian* 38, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 69–88.

Gibbs, Frederick W. "New Forms of History: Critiquing Data and Its Representations." *The American Historian*, 2016. <http://tah.oah.org/february-2016/new-forms-of-history-critiquing-data-and-its-representations/>

Rosenzweig, Roy. "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era." *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 3 (2003): 735–62. doi:10.1086/529596.

Drucker, Johanna. "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display" 5, no. 1 (2011). <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html>

Theibault, John. "Visualizations and Historical Arguments." *Writing History in the Digital Age*, 2011. <http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/evidence/visualizations-and-historical-arguments-theibault/>