Instructor: Chuck Welsko  
Office: TLC 3202  
Office Hours: MW, 2:00-3:15pm (in TLC 3202); MW 9:00am-2:00pm (Center for Public History/Lower Level of Ingram Library); T 9:00am-4:00pm (Center for Public History/Lower Level of Ingram Library) and by appointment  
Email: cwelsko@westga.edu  
Office Phone: (678) 839-6037  

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  
This course is about people and identity. More specifically, it is about the history of the people that came to, settled, and lived in North America from the late fifteenth century through the end of the American Civil War and Reconstruction. We will cover a lot of ground, but the course is an opportunity for us to engage and question the early parts of American history. Throughout the semester we will trace the development of America from the arrival of its indigenous populations through the conclusion of the Civil War. Over the course of the semester, we will engage primary sources produced by historical actors as well as scholarship by historians who study the past. In doing so, you will have the opportunity to produce your own interpretation of American identity and how inclusion (or exclusion) has influenced the history of North America and the United States as a nation. It is my hope that this course will offer you insights into American history and more importantly, refine your ability to think and write critically everyday, as historians and citizens.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:  
The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the contours of American history and provide you with a basic knowledge of key events, individuals, and concepts that shaped the early history of the United States. While we will discuss dates and facts, this is not a course designed to make you masters of trivia games, but rather to help you think more broadly about the American past and how it developed. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:  

- Identify and explain the political, social, economic, or cultural dimensions of US History  
- Interpret primary and/or secondary sources  
- Develop critical thinking skills  

This course satisfies the University of West Georgia’s Core Area E.

COURSE TEXTS:  
There is no assigned textbook for this course, however if you would like access to one in order to study or read further upon topics covered in class, you can use this link for a free, online textbook: https://www.bibliopen.org/p/bopen/9780226300658. I can provide a list of chapters/material from this book (Building the American Republic, Volume 1) that aligns with our other assigned readings.

CLASSROOM GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS:

The goal of this course is to help us learn how to think, both like historians as well as critically about competing viewpoints and pieces of evidence. To that end, these are the suggested guidelines for classroom behavior that will help you succeed in this class.

• Students should arrive on time and remain for the entire class period. Missing most or significant portions of class frequently will hinder our ability to grow as learners and scholars. Of course, life happens and anything from sickness to car trouble to any number of difficulties can come up. Please communicate with me if you have any difficulties and I will work with you to help you succeed. Frequent tardiness, early departures (unless previous coordinated with me), or excessive absenteeism will prohibit your learning and impact your grade.

• One of the keys to a solid education is asking questions, so with that in mind, please ask questions throughout class. I cannot promise that I will always have an answer, but I will endeavor to do my best to provide an answer or help us learn the answer. I do ask however, that you avoid private conversations in class, in order to prevent you from distracting other learners from the class discussions.

• We live in a technological era. The pervasiveness of technology (cell phones, laptops, iPads, to name a few) touch every corner of our lives. I recognize the temptation to check your texts, email, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, but I would encourage you to turn off these distractions for your time in class. You may use technology to assist you in your note taking or studying, but if such technology disrupts class or hinders the learning of other students, I reserve the right to prohibit or curtail their use in class.

• Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Academic Integrity policy of the University. This covers issues of cheating, plagiarism, etc. I will personally deal with all such cases and any plagiarism or cheating will result in at least a failing grade for that assignment and possibly a failing grade for the course.

• For more information on classroom behavior and academic integrity please see the student handbook at this link: https://www.westga.edu/handbook/.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Assignment Breakdown

Quizzes=15%
Mid-Term Exam=15%
Final Exam=15%
Primary Source Workshops=15%
Response Papers (two papers)=30% (15% per paper)
Participation=10%

Total=100%

Grading Scale

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

Quizzes:
We will take quizzes throughout the semester (six in total) that cover a range of topics from class. These assignments will be short and held predominately on Wednesdays. Their goal is to gauge our progress through course materials while also providing you with a platform to engage the readings, lectures, and discussions in a thoughtful, but concise manner. Think of them as a way to collect your thoughts and to improve your skills of critical thinking and writing across the semester. The quizzes themselves will be a mixture of identification (ID) terms and short answer questions.

Also, because I know that life happens and I hope that we will all improve over the course of a given semester, I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester—thus only your five best scores will count toward the final grade.

Exams:
There will be two exams during the semester, the Mid-Term exam will be conducted in class during the semester, while the Final Exam will occur at the assigned time at the end of the semester. Like the quizzes, these assessments will provide you with the opportunity to engage the material covered in class, but in a broad manner. Where the quizzes center on specific time periods and readings for a given week, both exams will allow you to approach broader issues covered over the span of the semester. An important note, while the skills applied for both exams (critical thinking, argument creation, and clear writing) will be transcendent across the semester, the content will not be cumulative: the Mid-Term will cover material for the first half of the class, the Final will cover the second half of the semester.

Each of the exams will consist of multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, ID terms, and a short essay that will provide you the opportunity to articulate your understanding of American social, cultural, and political history from across the semester. Because the exams are an important point of synthesizing your progress across the semester it is essential for you to take the exam on the assigned day, to preserve the fairness of the exam for all students. Please reach out to me ahead of time if you are aware of any complication that would prevent you from making the scheduled exam time. It is the instructor’s discretion to excuse a student from an
exam and issue a make-up exam, but please know that any such make-up will differ from the original exam.

**NOTE:** A student who misses an exam without contacting me ahead of time will receive a zero for the exam. Again, please note the specific date and time of your final exam at the end of the course calendar.

**Primary Source Workshops:**
Over the course of the semester we will hold a variety of primary source workshops that will allow us to engage the voices and experiences of individuals who lived through the periods we study. These workshops have two clear goals: 1) to provide you with hands-on experienced interpreting and evaluating primary documents and 2) to demonstrate the variety of perspectives and experiences the individuals we will study had regarding historical events.

In advance of these workshops, I will assign primary sources (posted on CourseDen) for you to read. During class, we will complete activities and conversations on these sources that range from group discussions to in-class debates to games. As we will see, there was no uniform response to historical events. Like today, historical actors responded to extraordinary and typical events with variety—some with rage, others hope, or even passing fancy. By engaging these sources we can develop an appreciation for the variety and complexity of responses to the past, offering us more approaches to interpret and understand the past.

**Responses Papers:**
As this class focuses on the experiences of individuals and the conceptualization of identity, our readings for the course will center on the experiences of everyday people. Throughout the semester we will read three assigned monographs that broadly cover U.S. history from the Revolutionary Era to the Civil War. For two of those books I ask that you write a response paper that evaluates the reading and connects it to other parts of our class (such as primary sources, lectures, and other readings).

I will provide additional instructions and guiding questions at least a week before each is due. However, each paper should follow this general format: type-written in 12-point font (Times New Roman or equivalent), double-spaced, with one-inch margins. The papers themselves should be about three (3) pages in length (or about 1,000 words). I should note however that this page limit is not set in stone. Writing exactly 1,000 words (or more) will not guarantee an excellent paper, nor will writing a shorter one conclude a poor grade. From my personal experience however, I can recommend that extremely short papers (just a single page for example), rarely prove adequate to the task, and excessively long papers (five or more pages) often miss the point of the exercise.

In short, there is no perfect formula for length. These papers can serve as an opportunity for you to hone writing skills, formulate ideas, and engage the materials covered in class alongside the work of other historians. For each paper, I will provide full instructions at least one week prior to its due date.

**Participation/Attendance:**
I want you to come to class. Not because I want you to listen to me, but because I have found that my students do better when they attend class. As this course does not have a required
textbook, there is no assigned reading that addresses all the material we will cover. In fact, we will build our own narrative and interpretation of American History throughout the semester—that is my overarching goal, that each of us will come away from this course with a better understanding of how individuals experienced and shaped the past.

To reach that goal, I need your help. Though I will provide lectures and overviews of what happened, conversations and discussions will shape our understanding and learning—we can only do that if we work together, completing the readings ahead of time, showing up to class, and engaging one another in thoughtful discussion. It is also worth mentioning that I have a broad definition of participation in class: it includes engaging in constructive dialogue with myself and other students, asking questions, working diligently in groups, cooperating with other students, and engaging with me outside of class (attending office hours, asking questions). All of these are acceptable methods of participating in class and I encourage you to take part in those that you feel most comfortable (and for you to reach outside your comfort zone).

This is my way of saying that class participation is essential for preparing you to succeed, not just in this course, but also in your professional lives. Arriving on time, asking questions, respectfully engaging others, and being actively engaged in class, as in life, will allow you to be extremely successful. I encourage you to come to every class, to participate in a way that you feel comfortable, and to respect the opinions of all individuals.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

I will take attendance, in one form or another (sometimes I will pass around a sign-in form or collect assignments and in-class writings), in most classes. You are permitted two absences (one week’s worth of class sessions) to cover all situations—planned or unplanned. I do not nullify absences for sicknesses, as I do not and cannot look at medical absences. For every absence after the two allotted, I will take off 1 point from your overall grade at the end of the semester.

That said, I encourage you to reach out to me if you know that you will miss a class. If you come to me ahead of time, we can work together to keep you engaged in class and the material we are covering. In case of long-term, justified absences, please contact me as soon as you can. Occasionally there are times when extenuating circumstances interrupt a student’s semester (a long-term illness, family tragedy, traumatic events) and require accommodations on a larger scale for multiple classes. In these cases, I would refer you to the Student Affairs and Enrollment Management office. This office will help provide you with the direction and services so you can recover from an unforeseen event that may affect your academic standing.

**CHEATING/PLAGIARISM:**

Academic Integrity: The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course.

The term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to: (1) giving or receiving of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems,
or carrying out other assignments; (3) the acquisition or use, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff; or (4) engaging in any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion.

The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICIES:

For all university-wide policies—including academic support, the honor code, credit hour policies, and mental health support—please see: https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php

CLASS and ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

I encourage you to complete all of the readings listed for the date before class begins, as this will allow you to maximize your contributions and learning from each session. Many of our readings will come from documents/readings put up on CourseDen (noted as CourseDen Documents) or from one of the three books assigned for this class.

NOTE: I reserve the right to change the readings and elements of the course if I deem it necessary.

*Week 1:*
August 15 (Introductions, Syllabus, Welcome)
No readings or work to do ahead of time

*Week 2*
August 20 (The Americans and Europe before 1492)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: “Where does American History Begin?”

August 22 (New World Encounters: Contact and Conflict)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: Early Accounts of Contact
Quiz #1

*Week 3*
August 27 (British Exploration and Colonization)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: British Colonization Readings

August 29 (Settling the Chesapeake and New England Colonies)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: Colonization Primary Sources
Primary Source Workshop

*Week 4*
September 3: NO CLASS, Labor Day
September 5 (Building and Living in the British Empire)
Reading: Suggested start, Young, The Shoemaker and the Tea Party
Quiz #2

Week 5
September 10 (Expanding the Empire: Imperial Wars)
Reading: CourseDen Document: “The British and Indian War”

September 12 (The Bill Comes Due: Colonial Resistance to the British Empire)
Reading: Make sure to have read Young, The Shoemaker pages 33-51 and 85-107 & CourseDen Documents: Coming of the Revolution Primary Sources
Primary Source Workshop

Week 6
September 17 (The American Revolution Part #1)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: The Declaration of Independence

September 19 (The American Revolution Part #2)
Reading: Finish Young, The Shoemaker and the Tea Party
In-Class Discussion of Young, The Shoemaker and the Tea Party

Week 7
September 24 (Building a Better Nation, Sorta)
Paper #1 Due

September 26 (Making a New Culture and a Different People)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: Excerpt from Unbecoming British
Quiz 3

Week 8
October 1 (America on the World Stage: Louisiana and Diplomacy)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: “The Origins of the Monroe Doctrine Revisited”

October 3 (America on the World Stage: International Tensions and the War of 1812)
Review for Mid-Term Exam

Week 9
OCTOBER 8: Mid-Term Exam

October 10 (Market Expansion and Technological Revolutions)
Reading: CourseDen Document, “Artificial River” & Market Revolution Primary Documents
Primary Source Workshop
Week 10
October 15 (The Rise and Fall of Good Feelings)
No readings

October 17 (A New Political and Global Age)
Reading: Recommended Start Miles, *House on Diamond Hill*
**Quiz #4**

Week 11
October 22 (The Age of Jackson)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: Indian Removal and Mass Democracy

October 24 (Nullification, Tensions, and a Nation Dividing)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: The Age of Jackson Primary Documents
**Primary Source Workshop**

Week 12
October 29 (Slavery and the National Landscape)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: Frederick Douglass

October 31 (The World of Southern Blacks)
Reading: Finish Miles, *House on Diamond Hill*
**In Class Discussion of Miles, House on Diamond Hill**

Week 13
November 5 (Northerners and their Institutions)
**Paper #2 Due**

November 7 (Reform Movements and Reshaping the Nation)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: Excerpt from *Kingdom of Mathias*
**Quiz #5**

Week 14
November 12 (Westward Expansion: Mexico and Texas)
Reading: Recommended Start of Hodes, *The Sea Captain’s Wife*

November 14 (Manifest Destiny, Manifold Dilemmas)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: Westward Expansion
**Primary Source Workshop**

November 19 and 21, NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break
Week 15
November 26 (1850: The Decade of Discontent)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: The Compromise of 1850 and responses

November 28 (John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and Secession)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: The Apostles of Disunion
Quiz #6

Week 16
December 3 (The Civil War Part 1)
Reading: CourseDen Documents: Civil War Primary Sources

December 5 (The Civil War Part 2)
Reading: Finish Hodes, *The Sea Captain’s Wife*
In-class Discussion of Hodes, *The Sea Captain’s Wife*

Paper 3 Due on December 7 by 5:00pm

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday Dec. 12, 2:00-4:00pm