

Sample Course: American History: 1600 to 1800

Purpose

The purpose of the course is to think historically about the major trends and patterns in American History, 1600-1800.

Key Question

What are the major patterns & trends in American History, 1600-1800?

Information

The students will work with a variety of primary and secondary sources of information: records, diaries, letters, biographies, newspapers, and historical accounts from textbooks and articles.

Skills of Interpretation

The students will learn how to gather and interpret data from a variety of historical sources.

Essential Concepts

The students will need to learn how to use basic historical, economic, political, religious concepts, as well as those from social life and values.

Assumptions

The fundamental assumption behind this course is that it is possible for entry level students to gain insight into the patterns and events in American life, 1600-1800, that shed light on contemporary problems.

Implications

Students who reason well about events in 17th and 18th Century American life should be able to see connections with events in the 20th Century.

Point of View:

Students will learn how to reason as both a conservative and liberal historian, integrating economic, political, and social analysis.

The General Plan for the Course

The course will be designed so that on a typical day, students will be engaged in historical reasoning about crucial questions regarding major trends and patterns by using primary and secondary sources (interpreting the significance and meaning of that information).

They will work in groups on those questions but will write up individual papers. Once completed, their individual papers will be assessed by student groups which will make specific recommendations for improvement based on criteria focused on the variables that affect the quality of historical reasoning. Their final grade will be determined by the professor by grading 3 papers chosen at random from their portfolio.

{This article is adapted from the resource: *Critical Thinking Basic Theory and Instructional Structures.*}