

**University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
College of Letters and Science  
Department of History**

**Dr. Lex Renda  
Hist 151-201: American History to 1877  
Spring, 2021**

Office: Holton 316  
Office Fax: (414) 229-2435  
Cell Phone: (414) 351-0511  
E-mail: [renlex@uwm.edu](mailto:renlex@uwm.edu)

### **I. Course Objectives and Structure**

This course provides an introductory survey of American history from the colonial era through the Civil War period. Its goal is to challenge you to think about American history (and human history in general) as a complex phenomenon. The purpose here is not to indoctrinate you; instead, it is to encourage you to conceptualize the American past as something more engaging and more complex than a cliché-ridden "proud story with a few shameful chapters" or "shameful story with a few proud chapters."

*The instruction and testing in this course are conducted entirely on-line.* Class announcements will either be sent to you at your UWM email address or placed on the Canvas system course site. To log onto Canvas, go to <https://uwm.edu/canvas>. On your dashboard, click the icon for this course. From the course site's home page you can see all of the course components in five modules: "Overview", "Course Materials", "Discussions", "Wrap Up Messages", and "Tests". From time to time, "Announcements" will be placed at the top of the page.

*Note also that all deadline times listed in this syllabus and on the Canvas course site denote Wisconsin times.*

This course also features two teaching assistants whose primary responsibility will be the grading of the discussions. The teaching assistants' names and contact information will be included in a "welcome" email message that I shall send to enrolled students just prior to the beginning of the semester (the "welcome" message will also appear in the Course Materials module).

### **II. Required Book**

The following book may be purchased from online vendors, including the university's virtual bookstore, <http://uwm.ecampus.com> :

Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History. Volume I: To 1877*. New York: W.W. Norton, Seagull Fifth (2017) or Sixth (2019) Editions.

Note: Either the Fifth or more recently published Sixth editions are acceptable.

The less expensive “Seagull” editions listed above have the essential features of the “full” versions. They simply feature tighter scripts and do not include the marginal content flags of the full versions.

Also available for rent, at a substantially discounted price, is an electronic version of this textbook. Point your web browser to: <https://digital.wwnorton.com/givemeliberty6seagullv1> (it is possible, as well, that you may be able to rent the book digitally from the university virtual bookstore).

### III. Office Hours

My office hours are virtual. If you have an inquiry, send me an email message and I shall promptly respond to it. You can also reach me by phone in the day and (during reasonable hours) in the evening. If no one answers, leave a message and I shall return your call as soon as possible.

### IV. Course Requirements

This course consists of three graded components:

Four On-Line Quizzes	<b>32% (8% each)</b>
Three On-Line Examinations	<b>48% (16% each)</b>
Participation in On-Line Discussions	<b>20%</b>

These components are described in detail below.

#### Quizzes and Examinations

There will be four (4) on-line quizzes and three (3) on-line examinations. These tests shall be administered on the Canvas on-line course site. Once on that site, you may access both, the quizzes and the examinations, by scrolling down to the "Tests" module. There you will see links for each quiz and examination.

Each quiz consists of 25 multiple choice questions testing your comprehension of the factual material in *Give Me Liberty!* The specific chapters covered in each quiz are detailed below in the course schedule. Special emphasis in these quizzes is on the significance of selective “key terms.” These terms are listed at the end of each chapter in the textbook. In addition, the quizzes also test the factual knowledge of American history (in general) which should be gained from reading the textbook.

Each examination consists of 25 multiple choice questions testing your comprehension of interpretations of history as given in the professor’s WRAP UP messages on the Canvas course site (see below for an explanation of how to access these messages). The specific WRAP UP messages covered in each examination are detailed below in the course schedule.

When taking these quizzes and examinations, you must choose, for each question, the one response that **BEST** answers the question asked. In choosing the "correct" answers to the more

interpretative questions, you are demonstrating your comprehension of, not necessarily your agreement with, the author's or the professor's viewpoints.

**You may take up to two (2) hours to complete each of the quizzes and examinations**, but you are permitted to make **only one (1) attempt** to complete each of the quizzes and examinations. *I must be firm in adhering to this rule.* Please make sure that you have saved all your responses (including those you may have altered) before submitting your quizzes and examinations.

To accommodate your busy schedules, I have structured the quizzes and examinations in such a way so that you may take them at any time during specified time slots, each one of which is **four days in length**. The dates of these time slots are detailed below in the course schedule.

*Note: For security reasons, and out of fairness to all students, I neither distribute test answers nor return tests to students.*

**Some words of advice:** I encourage students to examine the “FAQs” document for tips on how to study for, and take, the exams and quizzes. It can be accessed from the “Course Materials” module of the Canvas course site.

### **Participation in on-line Discussions**

The course includes weekly discussions of the reading. These discussions will be based on the reading assignments in the textbook. The discussions shall be conducted on the Canvas system. Once on the Canvas course site, you may access the discussion questions by scrolling down to the "Discussions" module. There you will see links to each week's discussion questions.

**Because of the large, expected enrollment in this class, I will, in order to reduce redundancy in the discussions, create up to eight separate sections of up to 25 students each. (The discussion topics are the same for every section, but only the forum associated with your section will appear on your Canvas course screen.)**

For each question the system will allow you either to add a message in which you give an original response to a topic/question, or to reply to existing messages. The weekly on-line discussions will begin on Mondays and end on Thursday at 6:00 P.M. **Students should complete the weekly reading assignments by Monday (during the first week of class, by Wednesday).** Sometime in between **Monday morning** and (at the latest) **by Thursday at 6:00 P.M. students must add a message in which they respond, in a thoughtful manner, to one (1) of the posted questions for that week. This required message must be at least 150 words in length.** Students may post additional messages as they wish, and they may (and in fact are encouraged to) engage with each other by posting replies to each other's posts. There is no word minimum on additional messages, should students choose to post them.

The professor's WRAP-UP messages for each of the discussion topics will become available shortly after the end of each week's discussion (see below for information on these messages)

## **Rules on Posting Responses and Comments**

Following are the rules and regulations for participation. Adhering to them will ensure more smoothly managed and productive discussions:

- 1) Before participating in the discussions, student must read my **“Guide to Historical Thinking and Writing,”** which can be accessed in the Course Materials module on the Canvas course site. It contains my requirements and guidelines with regard to content, grammar, and style in historical writing, and it explains how one should approach the subject of history in general.
- 2) When adding or replying to messages, **read beforehand** all of the posted messages on the topic in question. That way you can make sure, ahead of time, that your message will contribute something new to the development of the discussion and will not be repetitive of what someone else has already said.
- 3) Please observe the rules of netiquette when posting messages. The internet is a “hot” medium, and people at times use intemperate language on the web that they would never use in a classroom. It is expected that students will exhibit courtesy and civility in all online discussions, and that they will refrain from using vulgar or offensive language. Posts that violate this requirement will be erased and students will receive no credit for them. Students authoring additional offensive posts are subject to being dropped, administratively, from the course. We are all here to learn from each other in a friendly environment. Keep in mind also that discussions are useful only when they are structured and when points of view are intelligently expressed.
- 4) If you are replying to the posts of your classmates, do so with **constructive criticism**. Keep in mind that nothing of value is added to the discussion if, in an effort to be “nice,” you reply to posts by vacuously agreeing with what has already been articulated, and without building upon those posts. At the other extreme, it is equally useless to the class if you embark on a mean-spirited fault-finding mission.
- 5) Post messages on the system without attachments, for some students may not be able to open such files.
- 6) Proofread your post before submitting it. **Spelling and grammar count in the evaluation of your participation.**
- 7) Do not use the system to discuss extraneous matters.
- 8) **Credit will not be given for late posts.** I do not accept as valid excuses for late posts either the lack of synchronization between your clock and that of the Canvas system or the existence of problems with your computer or with your internet connection. At numerous places on campus, as well as in any public library, you have access to the internet. To be frank, you have ample time to submit your required posts. If you wait until the last few minutes, you then do so at your own peril.

## **The Grading of Discussions**

Though it may not be necessary to read thoroughly every message posted for each discussion

topic, students are expected to read most of the messages and to scan all of them, so as to gain a handle on the thrust of the discussions and to avoid posting redundant messages. Note that the Canvas system keeps a record of your activity, including a log of the posts you have viewed.

The messages you post on the Canvas course site constitute your written contribution to this class. I judge them the same way I judge all written work. It is expected that your messages will be thoughtful, thought-provoking, well-written, logical, and that they will reveal appreciation of the complexity of historical events and developments. Students should consistently participate, post responses to questions that address fully the question asked and which attempt to evaluate all sides of an issue, post messages whose major points draw from the evidence in the reading and are insightful to the point that others can build upon those messages, and (should they choose to do so) comment on the messages of others with constructive criticism. Students are expected to focus on the causes and meaning of historical change more than on whether events and developments were good or bad, and, while seeing connections between the past and the present, not to impose the present upon the past.

As for the word minimum indicated above, it is intended as a guideline for students who don't know "how much is enough." Although it will be loosely enforced, in the end your words will be, as the saying goes, more "weighed than counted." I am interested in lively, structured historical discussions. If you take an active orientation toward the class material, you will excel in these discussions and the word minimum will fade in importance.

If you are dedicated to learning you will probably desire to post more than the one required message per unit, and you are encouraged to do so. **Ultimately, your class discussion grade will be based on a) the consistency of your participation (meaning that you have posted one response to a question for each unit, in a timely manner) and b) the effort behind, and quality (meaning the originality, elegance, logic, and relevance) of, your messages.**

Twice during the semester -- once in late February or early March, and then again in early or mid-April -- "progress" grades on your participation to date will be posted in the Canvas grade book.

### **Professor's WRAP UP Messages**

The professor's wrap-up messages for each of the discussion topics will become available minutes after the end of each week's discussion. To access the WRAP UP messages from the Canvas course site, scroll down to the "Wrap-Up Messages" module. You will then see links to the WRAP UP messages for each week's discussion topics, as they become available. Although these are, to some extent, mini-lectures in which I give my interpretation (as well as those of other historians) of the topics under discussion, I call them "wrap-up" messages because more often than not I adjust them to reflect what was (and what was not) expressed in the on-line discussion forum. Students' comments often induce me to re-think my opinions and perspectives, and as a consequence I find myself adding to and subtracting from what I had already written. As noted above, I will participate in the on-line discussions themselves if I think that my input will steer a discussion in a manner desired, but I do not like to express my full-fledged opinions until after the discussions have ended, lest students be unduly influenced by my viewpoints while the discussions are in progress.

## Grades

Your grades for the various course components will be posted on the Canvas course site (just click on the "Grades" tab on the left-hand panel). Your final grade for the course will be entered on the PAWS system. Following is the grading scheme for the final course averages:

98.334 or higher	A+ (functionally, an A)
95.000 - 98.333	A
91.667 - 94.999	A-
88.334 - 91.666	B+
85.000 - 88.333	B
81.667 - 84.999	B-
78.334 - 81.666	C+
75.000 - 78.333	C
71.667 - 74.999	C-
68.334 - 71.666	D+
65.000 - 68.333	D
61.667 - 64.999	D-
58.334 - 61.666	F+ (functionally, a D-)
0.000 - 58.333	F

I retain the right, in cases of significant improvement over time, to weigh more heavily work completed toward the end of the semester. I also will curve quiz, exam, and final course grades under certain conditions (See my "FAQs" document, referenced above, for additional details on these issues).

Quite often, students ask me what grades they need to get on the remaining assignments to obtain a minimally-desired final grade, or what will their final grade be if they obtain a certain grade on the remaining assignments. Here's a web site with a grade calculator that allows you easily to determine the answers to such questions: [http://www.benegg.net/grade\\_calculator.html](http://www.benegg.net/grade_calculator.html).

## **V. Course Schedule**

January 25 – 28	<b>Week One: Origins and Impact of European Conquest.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 1. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
January 28	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
February 1 – 4	<b>Week Two: Establishment of British North America.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 2. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they</i>

	<i>respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
February 4	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
February 8 - 11	<b>Week Three: Development of a Heterogeneous Society.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 3. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
February 11	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
February 15 - 18	<b>Week Four: Slavery, Liberty, and Provincial America.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 4. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
February 18	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
<b>February 17 - 20 (QUIZ #1)</b>	<b><i>STUDENTS MUST TAKE QUIZ #1 ON THE CANVAS COURSE SITE, to be completed and submitted by February 20, 11:59 P.M. The quiz covers the material in Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 1 through 4, with special emphasis on the significance of selective "key terms," listed at the end of each chapter.</i></b>
February 22 - 25	<b>Week Five: The American Revolution.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 5; Appendix, A-23 to A-26. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
February 25	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
March 1 – 4	<b>Week Six: Politics, Economy, and Society in Revolutionary</b>

	<p><b>America.</b>  Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i>, Chapter 6.  By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</p>
March 4	<p>The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.</p>
<b>March 3 – 6 (EXAM #1)</b>	<p><b>STUDENTS MUST TAKE EXAM #1 ON THE CANVAS COURSE SITE, to be completed and submitted by March 6, 11:59 P.M. The exam covers the professor's WRAP UP messages on the topics discussed in Weeks One through Five (i.e., through February 25).</b></p>
March 8 - 11	<p><b>Week Seven: The Debate over the Constitution.</b>  Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i>, Chapter 7; Appendix (as it pertains to the Constitution, including the first ten Amendments thereto).  By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</p>
March 11	<p>The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.</p>
March 15 - 18	<p><b>Week Eight: The First Party System.</b>  Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i>, Chapter 8.  By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</p>
March 18	<p>The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.</p>
<b>March 17 – 20 (QUIZ #2)</b>	<p><b>STUDENTS MUST TAKE QUIZ #2 ON THE CANVAS COURSE SITE, to be completed and submitted by March 20, 11:59 P.M. The quiz covers the material in <i>Give Me Liberty!</i>, Chapters 5 through 8, and the Appendix thereof (as it pertains to the Constitution of the United States, including the first ten amendments, a.k.a. the Bill of Rights), with special emphasis on the significance of selective “key terms,” listed at the end of each</b></p>

	<i>chapter. The quiz may also feature factual questions about the text of the Constitution and the first ten amendments thereto (a.k.a. the Bill of Rights).</i>
March 21 - 28	<i>Spring Break</i>
March 29 – April 1	<b>Week Nine: The Market and Transportation Revolutions.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 9. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
April 1	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
April 5 - 8	<b>Week Ten: The Second Party System.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 10. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
April 8	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
April 12 -15	<b>Week Eleven: The Antebellum South..</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 11. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
April 15	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
<b>April 14 - 17 (EXAM #2)</b>	<b><i>STUDENTS MUST TAKE EXAM #2 ON THE CANVAS COURSE SITE, to be completed and submitted by April 17, 11:59 P.M. The exam covers the professor's WRAP UP messages on the topics discussed in Weeks Six through Ten (i.e., in between March 1 and April 8).</i></b>
April 19 - 22	<b>Week Twelve: Class and Reform, Liberty and Control.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 12. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional</i>

	<i>messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
April 22	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
<b>April 21 - 24 (QUIZ #3)</b>	<b><i>STUDENTS MUST TAKE QUIZ #3 ON THE CANVAS COURSE SITE, to be completed and submitted by April 24, 11:59 P.M. The quiz covers the material in Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 9 through 12, with special emphasis on the significance of selective "key terms," listed at the end of each chapter.</i></b>
April 26 - 29	<b>Week Thirteen: The Sectionalization of American Politics.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 13. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
April 29	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.
May 3 – 6	<b>Week Fourteen: The Civil War and the “Second American Revolution”.</b> Read: <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 14. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
May 6	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein (accessible from the "Content" page).
May 10 - 13	<b>Week Fifteen: The “Splendid Failure” Known as Post-War Reconstruction.</b> <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> , Chapter 15. <i>By Thursday (6:00 P.M.), students to post one message in which they respond to one of the posted questions. Students may post additional messages on any or all questions, or reply to other students' messages, as they choose.</i>
May 13	The professor's WRAP UP messages for this week's discussion topics (accessible from the "Content" page) will be available by 6:00 P.M. Read them anytime afterwards but before the exam covering the material therein.

<p><b>May 11 – 14</b> <b>(QUIZ #4)</b></p>	<p><b><i>STUDENTS MUST TAKE QUIZ #4 ON THE CANVAS COURSE SITE, to be completed and submitted by May 14, 11:59 P.M. The quiz covers the material in Give Me Liberty!, Chapters 13 through 15, with special emphasis on the significance of selective “key terms,” listed at the end of each chapter. Although May 13 is technically the last instructional day of the semester, you may take the quiz on May 14, if you so choose.</i></b></p>
<p><b>May 17 – 20</b> <b>(EXAM #3)</b></p>	<p><b><i>STUDENTS MUST TAKE EXAM #3 ON THE CANVAS COURSE SITE, to be completed and submitted by May 20, 11:59 P.M. The exam covers the professor's WRAP UP messages on the topics discussed in Weeks Eleven through Fifteen (i.e., since Apr. 11).</i></b></p>
<p><b>Dates TBD</b></p>	<p><b>Course Evaluation (Voluntary)</b> Toward the end of the semester, students may (and are encouraged to) complete the course evaluation survey. The dates and manner in which the evaluation may be completed will be announced later.</p>

## **VI. Miscellaneous Matters**

### **Academic Ethics**

Students are expected to approach their work honestly, and not to cheat or commit plagiarism. All students should read the “**Academic Ethics**” document that is posted in the Course Materials module on the Canvas course site.

### **Academic Advising in History**

All L&S students have to declare and complete an academic major to graduate. If you have not yet declared a major, you are encouraged to do so, even if you are at an early stage in your college education. If you are interested in declaring a major (or minor) in History, or if you need academic advising in History, please visit the Department of History undergraduate program web page at <http://www4.uwm.edu/letsce/history/undergrad/> for information on how to proceed.

### **Award Money Available from the History Department**

The History Department makes several monetary awards to students every year, based on a variety of factors. Please be sure to update your information in the **UWM Scholarship Portal** <https://uwm.academicworks.com/> so that you are considered for these awards! You will also need to upload your most recent transcript to your profile. Contact Prof. Rebecca Shumway at [shumwayr@uwm.edu](mailto:shumwayr@uwm.edu) with any questions.

### **University Policies**

Following is a link to university policies regarding accommodations for students with disabilities, required military duties, and religious observance obligations; procedures involving complaints and grade appeals; and policies regarding incompletes as well as discriminatory and academic misconduct: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news\\_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf)

