

**Hist4101**  
**Liberty and Power:**  
**U.S. History to 1800**

**1. Course Number and Title:** Hist4101 Liberty and Power: U.S. History to 1800

**Prerequisites:** None

**Credits:** 3 Hours

**2. Course Description:** “Liberty and Power: U.S. History to 1800” investigates how the colonization experience in North America shaped not only the American character and its peoples’ unalterable love of liberty but much of its future history, from revolution to its founding, to its civil war, to the powerful, sometimes hegemonic, role it plays in world affairs today. The question about how inevitable that history was and what this experience portends for America’s future will guide discussion and inquiry.

The main focus of the class is on six monographs essential to understanding of this period of American history. Individual grades will be determined mainly by the quality of each student’s major project: the production of an original, MA level, paper using these books (and other sources) to probe an enduring, open-ended problem in American history: the relationship between power and liberty. This class will prepare you well for Yorktown’s MA in Government and makes an excellent first choice for newcomers to the program.

**3. Course Goals:** This course will establish an intellectual framework about the “American experience” that will guide students’ subsequent interpretation of American character and history and how they continue to influence public policy on domestic and international affairs.

**4. Course Outcomes:** Through the course’s assignments, students will achieve and demonstrate the following outcomes:

1. Investigate, identify, and debate the relative difference between an absolute government versus an institution’s hold on “liberalizing” attitudes, with particular reference to 15th century China versus the 15th century Catholic Church. Assign a relative weight to each attribute proportionate to its role in producing attitudes and environments conducive to creativity, risk-taking, adaptability to change and whether these attributes are essential to a people that “practice” individual liberty and repudiate absolute power. Pursue the question of whether these attributes are natural or artificial within cultures.
2. Analyze regional differences among the colonists in order to explain how among a culturally homogenous group (the English) different cultural and political arrangements arose. Confront and explore how motivations may overtake cultural homogeneity. Apply this inquiry to basic natural or sociological deterministic views.
3. Construct a thesis about the fluid relationship between liberty and power in the colonial setting. Frame questions about how the different settlements might differ in their interpretation of “liberty” or “power, using some of the broad generalizations about regional differences. Use this framework as to articulate how some of these differences are so fundamental that a later national consensus about them could be problematic.
4. Express, rationalize, and challenge the extreme tension between the colonists’ inherent desire for economic and religious freedom, i.e., liberty, and their need for large, stable labor forces to domesticate the wilderness to achieve a livelihood, i.e., that despite the principle of liberty that fuelled many of the colonists’ movement to the Americas, the practical exigencies of cultivating the wilderness tended to compromise even contradict this indigenous spirit.
5. Apply the framework they constructed in session 2 in terms of the particular relationship between liberty and power in the various colonies (Southern, New England, and Middle Colonies) to their political relationship with the English King. Analyze and articulate the relative importance of the colonialists’ experience in the Americas as a confirmation of Lockean concepts and how their integration in the “American” mind triggered and justified revolting from England.

6. Apply the framework they developed in Session 5 in terms of the colonial experience and Lockean philosophy to the political, economic, and military events that led up to the first shot at Lexington and Concord.
7. Identify and explain the qualities that contributed to American victory in its Revolutionary War as well as to those that resulted in the formation and dissolution of the Confederation of the thirteen states. Defend the rationale behind the Articles of Confederation as well as the backlash against its radical decentralization.
8. Construct the various classical arguments behind the two opposing views regarding the inherent dangers of a republican government: either succumbing to anarchy, from too little governance, or to tyranny, from too much governance. Working from that construct, identify the unique qualities the proposed constitutions derived from historical and philosophical knowledge, on the one hand, and the American experience, on the other.
9. Argue the merits of both the Federalist and Anti-Federalist views in terms of how each either avoids or invites anarchy or tyranny. Identify and delineate how these two opposing views of where the locus of power should reside have permeated national politics and continue to shape the contemporary debate about democratic representation.
10. Argue how the fragile government formed both as the confederation and a strong national government under the constitution managed to avoid the curse of all new democratic governments: severe instability and dissolution through lack of power-sharing, and why it eventually succumbed to a violent civil war in the 1860s.

### **5. Course Concepts**

1. The European Advantage, Overseas Exploration
2. The Settlement and Development of Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania
3. Indentured Servitude and African Slavery
4. Natural Rights and the Social Contract: the Radical Whigs and the Patriots
5. The Stamp Crisis and the Revolution, Sam Adams
6. Declaration of Independence
7. The Articles of Confederation
8. Shay's Rebellion
9. The Philadelphia Convention
10. The Ratification Process and the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists
11. George Washington, the first president, the Hamiltonians, the Jeffersonians, James Madison, and the Adams'
12. The Whiskey Rebellion, Adam's presidency, and the Revolution of 1800

### **6. Required Texts:**

Bailyn, Bernard. *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction*. New York: Random House, 1988. ISBN: 0394757793

*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992. ISBN: 0674443020

Countryman, Edward. *How Did American Slavery Begin?* New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000. ISBN: 0312182619

Hackett Fischer. *David Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1991. ISBN: 0195069056

Maier, Pauline. *American Scripture: Making of the Declaration of Independence*, New York: Random House, 1998. ISBN: 0679779086

Siemers, David J. *The Anti-Federalists: Men of Great Faith and Forbearance*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003. ISBN: 0742522601

### **7. Recommended Reading**

**8. Resources** [located in Resources in Izio]