DOANE COLLEGE
HISTORY 205: History of the U.S. before 1877 (3 credits)
Dr. Rebecca Duncan (402-560-8278) (rduncan1@unl.edu)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
A survey of the American colonial and national experience, this course is designed for
the general student with emphasis on politics and society. Students successfully completing
this course will demonstrate knowledge of the major themes and chronological periods of
American history. They will also demonstrate a deeper understanding of historical method, and
the role of interpretation and perspective in constructing historical narratives. History 205 will
examine characteristic sectional differences and what Churchill referred to as the “noblest and
least avoidable of all the great mass conflicts,” the American Civil War. This survey fulfills the
Doane Plan history requirement.

TEXT
Instructor will also provide copies of primary sources.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Upon completing this course the student should be able to demonstrate (through research,
reports, and exams):

• a knowledge of the major events, personalities, and trends in the history of the
  United States before 1877
• the ability to place past, as well as current, social, political, economic and
cultural issues into an historical context and to recognize the interrelationship of
such issues
• the ability to recognize primary and secondary sources and begin to discern and
question accuracy in historical sources
• a familiarity with the issues surrounding diversity in the United States and an
ability to consider the question of values when analyzing major areas of history.

COURSE OUTLINE
CLASS I
Introduction
Instructor will address current issues in historiography and discuss the report
assignment, the purpose of which is to introduce the student to primary and
secondary sources, as well as accuracy and legitimacy in historical writing.
Varying historical interpretations will be pointed out.
Each lecture will call attention to differences of opinion and will consider
diversity and change in historical thought. Illustrations will accompany lectures;
questions and discussion will be encouraged.
LECTURE: A Collision of Worlds
Native and European backgrounds; Spanish and British exploration; initial contacts with the American continent; settlement of Jamestown and Boston
TEXT: Chapters 1 & 2

CLASS II
LECTURE: Colonial Differences; the Battle for America
Differences among colonial settlements; the role of Benjamin Franklin; slavery and the South; religion and education in New England; Pennsylvania and the middle colonies; France and England battle for control of a continent
TEXT: Chapters 3 & 4

CLASS III
LECTURE: From Revolution to Republic
How revolutionary a revolution? Ideas, economics, and battles of the Revolution (Thomas Paine and George Washington); first days of the republic; Jefferson vs. Hamilton
TEXT: Chapters 5, 6 (optional), 7, 8 (pp. 281-296)

CLASS IV
EXAM I

CLASS V
LECTURE: Remarks on Jefferson and Jackson; the epic struggle of the American Civil War (roles of Lincoln, Douglass, and Tubman);
TEXT: Chapters 11, 13, & 14

CLASS VI
EXAM II
Report/Interpretative essay assignments

CLASSES VII & VIII
Research for assignments: the Jacksonian Era/the transformative industrial experience in America

COURSE POLICIES
Students are responsible for the required text and any additional readings. Attendance is mandatory. Absences will affect the performances on exams, since extensive material is covered in the lectures. There will be two exams which will include essay and objective questions. In case of emergency, make-up exams may be arranged, but no tests will be repeated and all results are final. Research for a report/interpretative essay, with use of both online and traditional sources, will be required. The text will serve as a first source. Late reports will result in lowering of the student’s grade. The first exam will be worth 40% of the final grade, the second 30%; the report/essay will be worth 30%. The Doane College academic integrity policy will be adhered to in this class. All projects and tests will represent the student’s own work and any use of others’ ideas or words without proper citation of sources will result in loss of all points for an assignment or exam.
Because of the extensive information contained in the lectures, and the considerable time period covered by this course, it is not possible to include an adequately representative bibliography in this syllabus. The instructor, however, will be providing the names of sources and authors throughout the term, and will be happy to suggest further sources on any topic or individual.