

WINTER 2015
HIST 131 U.S. HISTORY TO 1865
Professor Christin Cleaton-Ruiz



This course is designed as an introduction to the history of the United States through the Civil War. It is never possible to cover everything, so we will focus on particular issues, conflicts, changes that reveal how societies function and change over time. It will analyze how people thought and acted at different moments, how they lived and worked. It is important to consider not just what happened in the world of presidents and congressmen, but also in the daily lives of a diverse body of inhabitants of this country. We will consider especially issues of identity and power in society, how groups come together and define themselves, include or exclude, and relate to other sectors of society. African-Americans, Native Americans, women, immigrants, and other groups will form a significant thread of our discussions this semester. The goal of this course is not to memorize all the “facts” of U.S. history, but rather to begin to consider how the definition of this nation has been and continues to be contested from within and without.

To understand the origins of the United States, our sources will include textbook, films and a few historical documents. Assignments include reactions to readings and films as well as class discussions.