The Age of Jefferson and Jackson focuses on the history of the United States from the inauguration of President George Washington in 1789 through the end of war with Mexico in 1848, a period of dramatic changes in America’s political, social and economic order and rapid geographic expansion into the western territories. Together we will examine the intense debates over the principles and policies that would define the American nation and the emergence of mass political parties and democratic politics. We also will explore the revolutionary advances in transportation and communication that helped to transform the American economy and national character, along with efforts to bring about social and moral reform both at home and abroad. Finally, we will contend with the troubling questions associated with slavery, race and territorial expansion, and the threat these posed to the American Union. Our goal will be to gain a better understanding and appreciation of this critical and dynamic period in American history and the men and women who shaped it.

This class will follow a seminar format. So that there is no misunderstanding what is meant by this, a seminar is defined as “bringing together small groups for recurring meetings, focusing each time on some particular subject, in which everyone present is requested to actively participate.” For this reason, student participation in weekly meetings will weigh heavily in assigning a final grade. So everyone must keep up with the required reading and attend every class.

The assigned readings will be an indispensable tool in helping you gain an understanding of this period in American history. As such, you should engage actively with the readings, take careful notes and prepare an outline of the assignment. To help you along, you will be required to turn in a one-page summary of each week’s reading that will include a short description of at least two concepts or ideas that you found most interesting or important and which shows a basic understanding of the topic at hand. Your response will also include at least one question that you still have about the topic or one fact or aspect of it that most surprised you and that you will never forget. These papers will be turned in at the end of each class meeting.

Class attendance is mandatory, even on days when 20 inches of new powder falls at Bridger Bowl! Unexcused absences, of which there are few (e.g. crippling injury or grave illness), will cost one full grade drop; three will make it nearly impossible to pass the course. So make the commitment to attend class in order to fully benefit from it.

Class discussions are critical to the success of this course. They give you an opportunity to share your understanding of the topics with your fellow students, to provide an open and collegial forum to trade ideas, to clarify your thinking and to help you to prepare and present coherent written arguments in paper assignments. Acquiring the ability to express your ideas in a group setting also will enhance your learning experience, self-confidence and overall enjoyment of the course.

In sum. Careful reading of the assignments will result in lively and informative discussion sections and ultimately a great class!
Electronic devices can be intensely distracting to your fellow students and teachers. For this reason, cellphones, laptops, tablets and other electronic devices must be turned off completely once you enter the classroom. In addition, when class begins, we shut the door on the outside world and anything associated with the 21st century, and as best we can in the time allowed immerse ourselves in early 19th century America.

Required Reading

Joyce Appleby, Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generations of Americans

John Demos, The Heathen School: A Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic

Amy S. Greenberg, A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico

Forrest McDonald, The Presidency of Thomas Jefferson

James Rogers Sharp, Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis

Kathryn Kish Sklar, Women’s Rights Emerges within the Antislavery Movement, 1830-1870

Harry L. Watson, Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America

Handout: Missouri Compromise documents

Additional primary and/or secondary source reading as indicated in the topic listings.

Suggested Reading

Daniel Feller, The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840

Daniel Walker Howe, What God Hath Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848

Sean Wilentz, The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln

Gordon Wood, Empire of Liberty: a History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815

Writing Assignments

First Paper Assignment- Due at end of discussion, Friday, March 27

Write a 5-7 page paper (double spaced, 12 point font) on the Missouri Crisis, 1819-1821. Pay particular attention to the positions regarding slavery and territorial expansion outlined by northern and southern spokesman in the debates and the role played behind the scenes by President James Monroe. Was the Compromise a reasonable solution to the problem or should the North have stood its ground? What, if any, realistic alternatives were there to the Compromise finally hammered out?
Second Paper Assignment—Due at the end of discussion, May 1

Write a 5-7 review of any one or more of the books or other readings assigned for this course. Follow the suggestions in the Carleton College handout on writing a book review.

Personal Interview: During the second half of the semester, each student will be required to schedule a 30 minute discussion with the instructor. The purpose of the interview will be to discuss the course and the student’s understanding of the period covered up to that point, likes and dislikes, suggestions to improve it in the future.

A Few Suggestions about Writing History

Thesis: You should begin with a clear statement of your argument. Inform your reader in the first paragraph what your paper is going to tell them; that is, what can the reader expect.

Each paragraph should begin with a sentence that makes a claim supporting your overall argument. The rest of the paragraph should offer evidence supporting the claim and advancing your argument.

First drafts are rarely the best a writer can do. Leave yourself time to revise your paper and strengthen your argument.

Avoid the passive voice. Write strong, clear sentences that make your meaning plain.

Don’t hesitate to take a firm position. You will have worked hard to develop an opinion on any given topic; state it clearly and with resolve!

Even in a short paper with few sources, you will need to name your sources in a footnote or endnote. Be consistent, be complete, and be accurate. Whether you are quoting or paraphrasing another writer, you must give credit, including page numbers, publication date, or the collection cited. When in doubt—acknowledge your debt. If you don’t, you lose all credibility as a historian.
Proofread for spelling or grammar. Your paper should contain no spelling errors or sentence fragments. Computer checking is often not sufficient---check the paper by hand!

The best essay will be well-crafted, error free and offer a thoughtful, clear argument supported by well-chosen evidence from your required reading and any other sources you want to bring in. I am looking for confirmation that you have thought deeply about the complex issues Americans faced and are able to present your ideas about them in a reasoned and reflective manner.

**Grading:** Your course grade will be based on the following formula:

Attendance, required reading summaries, class participation, personal interview: 60%

1st paper: 20%

2nd paper: 20%

**Discussion Topics and Assigned Reading**

**January 16:** Course requirements and introduction to the topic.

**January 23:** A More Perfect Union?


**January 30:** The Crisis of the Union and the Revolution of 1800


**February 6:** The Jeffersonians in Power


**February 13:** Forging a New American Identity

February 20: Readings: Appleby, 129-266; Feller, 138-159 (handout)

February 27: The Redeemer Nation
Readings: John Demos, *The Heathen School: A Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic*, pp. 3-126; Feller, 76-94 (handout)

March 6: Demos, pp. 129-273.

March 20: "A Firebell in the Night": The Missouri Crisis

March 27: The Ferment of Reform
Reading: Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Women’s Rights Emerges Within the Antislavery Movement, 1830-1870*

April 10: The Age of Jackson

April 17: Watson, pp. 132-274; Andrew Jackson’s Bank Veto Message, Henry Clay on the American System (handout)

April 24: Manifest Destiny and the Mexican-American War

May 1: American Nationalism Achieves an Ominous Fulfillment