

AMST 100
New England
Roger Williams University
6:45 - 9:30 W
CAS 121
Fall Semester, 2004

Michael R. H. Swanson, Ph. D.
Office: CAS 110
Hours: T, Th: 11:00-12:30
W: 5:30 - 6:30, F: 1:00-2:00
Phone: 254 - 3230
E-mail: amst335@msn.com

Course Introduction

History and Culture of the New England region examining the varieties of New England life from Colonial Plymouth to modern Boston, as well as the continuities of New England tradition in education, religion, seafaring, and milling. 3 credits

Roger Williams University Catalogue

Well, we'll do some of the above. American Studies as a mode of investigation borrows insights and methodologies from a wide variety of disciplines. This time around, we will be using concepts drawn from cultural geography, gender studies and material culture studies to a greater degree than ever before. I've made these changes out of a conviction that these have been under represented in the courses I've offered to this date. The books used are likely to be quite different from other books with which you are familiar, and we'll have to work hard at understanding the concepts which underlie the work.

The chief question we're going to be investigating is how the land and land settlement patterns influenced the shape of New England Culture as it emerged. We'll be looking at the New England Village in fact and myth, at the web of social relationships which underlay village life, at some of the types of homes which formed the state on which that life was lived out, and at contributions New England makes to American Culture generally, through the activities of persons important in New England history, and through some of the attitudes and ideologies which seem important in contemporary New England.

Texts:

Wood, William
New England's Prospect,
edited with an introduction by Alden T. Vaughan
Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993

Wood, Joseph S.,
The New England Village
Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1997

Hansen, Karen V.

*A Very Social Time: Crafting Community in
Antebellum New England*

Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996

Nylander, Jane C.

*Our Own Snug Fireside:
Images of the New England Home, 1760-1860*

New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993

Mansfield, Howard

In the Memory House

Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1993

We'll use these five texts in the order given. After the first units of this course we'll be working in more than one text simultaneously, so you will need to purchase them all early in the semester.

I will also ask you to download and read some materials from the internet, as well. It will be most efficient if you buy a three ring notebook in which to keep those materials.

Internet Requirement

More and more, academic literacy and scholarship cannot be said to be complete without a knowledge of the internet as a resource and tool. There will be a number of exercises in this course which will require significant time spent online. Those of you with computers will not find this too difficult. In fact, internet resources are available 24 hours a day, barring the occasional system crash. For those of you who do not own a computer or do not have access from your home or dorm room, there are many public machines available in the Library and on the second floor of the Gabelli School of Business. If you are uncomfortable with using the "net", I'll be happy to assist you during office hours or by appointment. Resources and tutorials are available through this class' website.

I have created a website for this course at <http://amst335.homestead.com>. This is a work in progress, and you will be expected to visit it weekly as assignments for the following week will be posted there on Wednesday. There is a special mailbox for this course. I encourage you to submit work for this course electronically, preferably by e-mailing me attachments, or by turning in a floppy disk with your work on it. This will facilitate my ability to comment extensively on what you're producing, and will save you the chore of deciphering my handwriting, which grows more and more mysterious every year.

Work and Evaluation

The vast majority of the work you prepare for a grade in this course will be written outside of class. Most assignments will be fairly short (3-5 pages), and I'll accept an informal style of documentation. However, I won't be happy with work which is mentally or grammatically sloppy. Some of this work will be more like take-home examinations in other words, there will be a question or questions to which each of you will respond. The rest of it will be more free form: perhaps involving some private investigation of your own with a report of the results. I expect these assignments will come about once every other week, give or take. Initially, I will make these assignments as handouts which I distribute in class. I will also post them at the website. In the interest of tree-saving, I hope by the middle of the semester to post everything on the net, and only provide paper copies on request. Note: you will be able to print off anything which is web-based. There will also be a required class presentation, based on work which you will turn in in writing.

Grading will be based on *approximately* these proportions:

FOUR short papers as described above... 20 per cent of your grade each. One of these will be on a person who has made a contribution to New England Culture, and this will form the basis of your class presentation.

Class Presentation based on one of those papers, 10%: I would expect this paper to be of greater length and more fully developed conceptually than the others.

Attendance and Participation, Quizzes if there are any, 10%

Attendance will be recorded. **Three unexcused absences will lower your grade a notch. FOUR unexcused absences will result in a grade of F.** Appropriate excuses include illness, a family emergency, or a scheduled activity of another class or Roger Williams University athletic team. I will circulate a sign-in sheet for you record your attendance. **Use the mailbox to ask questions or to communicate with me regarding absences.**