

Tuesday

3:30-6:20 p.m.

Cultural Change in British America

Professor Timothy Hall

HST 496 (#22060678)

HST 711A (#22060706)

Eighteenth-century Anglo-Americans lived amid a whirl of change that rapidly expanded their horizons of awareness and made available to many a new range of experience and choice. Colonial newspapers proliferated, informing readers of events across the Atlantic, in the Caribbean, and along the American coastline. Commerce flourished, giving ordinary colonists access to a widening range of newly-affordable goods that their parents had regarded as luxuries. Strangers encountered each other with greater frequency as ocean travel increased, peddlers and preachers traveled new roads and people left their homes in the east for cheaper lands west and south. Ethnic diversity multiplied as large numbers of Scots, Scotch-Irish, and Germans joined English migrants to the west. Yet this expanded range of choice, experience, and diversity for some came at a tremendous cost for others. Conflict among European states made its impact felt in intensifying colonial warfare. Revitalization movements began to draw American Indians from many tribes into new pan-Indian alliances to resist further European settlement. Virginia marked its entry into the eighteenth century by passing the Slave Code of 1705, and slavery quickly became entrenched throughout the colonial South. Africans from various culture areas had to adapt in ways that would empower them to forge truly African American communities, where people could find nurture and support they needed to live amid the indignity and oppression of slavery.

These developments provoked deep reflection and sharp debate over fundamental issues of identity such as race, ethnicity, religion, nationality. They challenged New World peoples' sense of self and place within a complex network of obligations and relationships involving family, community, province, nation, and Empire. The contests over identity held profound and far-reaching implications, bound up as they were with questions of access to rights, liberties, and power.

Students in this seminar will read, discuss and research topics exploring various ways in which eighteenth-century Americans interpreted, debated and acted on the meanings of their experience in an expanding commercial empire. It will focus on research in a rich collection of eighteenth-century sources and will culminate in the writing and presentation of a major research paper.