

RETHINKING AMERICAN HISTORY

A critical exploration of how and why we learned the history of our country

Course #:	22S-RAH
Format:	Seminar
Moderator:	Francie Borden Nancy Denig
Date and Time:	Tues, 2:00 - 4:00 PM 10 weeks, Starting 2/21/2022
Location:	Zoom
Max # of Participants:	16
Auditors Accepted:	No
Max # of Auditors:	

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this seminar is to provide a setting in which to examine and explore some of the key narratives, concepts, and metaphors that define and determine our own understanding of our own national history.

DESCRIPTION:

The last five years have confronted us with challenges to the comfortable assumptions about our country and its history acquired from our cultures, families, education, and reading over time. How we acquired those assumptions and the challenges modern historians, pundits, and politicians have presented to them is our starting point. We will likely find holes in our knowledge that need to be filled, but our focus will be on the uses and abuses of the historical narratives as we have experienced them. We grew up believing in American exceptionalism in the wake of victory in WWII. Since then we have seen that faith erode. Recently, Occupy, ME TOO, BLM, and MAGA have challenged our understanding of American history. What are the implications of these changed perspectives? By sharing our assumptions, we hope to develop a better understanding of others who differ from us and to gain insight into not just what divides America, but what unites us as well.

ROLE OF PARTICIPANTS:

Participants, alone, in pairs, or teams, will choose and explore an issue, era, or event in American history to share and discuss with the class, using any engaging medium they choose: e.g., presentation, hand-outs, demonstration, exercises. Presentations should be less about imparting facts and more on inspiring discussion. What you have learned about the issue—yes— but also how you have learned it? How has history presented it? How has its presentation changed over time? Why is it relevant today? Time allotments will vary in accord with subject matter and size of the session leadership.

RESOURCES:

To provide a frame for our explorations, we strongly encourage reading the "1619 Project" as presented in the New York Times August 14, 2019, and the "1776 Report"— both available on line or in expanded book form. A free subscription to Heather Cox Richardson's daily "Letters from an American" is equally encouraged.

ABOUT THE MODERATORS:

Francie Borden loved, learned, and taught history for decades and still loves learning it. Nancy Denig has been steeped in history since childhood in the lands of the Wampanoag native peoples, Pilgrims, and Puritans.