

# Course Expectation Resource Sheet - HST 121

*“What can students expect if they choose this course?”*

**Course:** HST 121 - Survey of the History of the United States to 1877

**Department:** History

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Prerequisite:** None

**Catalog Description:** Formation of the United States and its civilization from the Age of Discovery through the Reconstruction Era, with emphasis on the influence of the Frontier and the Native American, European and African heritages; the constitutional development of the federal government; the evolution of the nation’s economic system, social fabric and diplomatic experiences.

**Catalog:** 2025-2026 **Last Updated:** 9/19/2025

**Gen Ed Course:** Yes

**Gen Ed Area:** PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**Gen Ed Requirement:** Constitutions of US & Missouri & American History & Institutions (GEC 113)

**CORE-42 Course:** Yes

**CORE-42 Area:** Social & Behavioral Sciences (Civics)

**MOTR Code - MOTR Title:** HIST 101 - American History I

**Is credit also available through:**

[Advanced Placement \(AP\)?](#): Yes

[College Level Exam Program \(CLEP\)?](#): Yes

[International Baccalaureate \(IB\)?](#): Yes

*(click link for more information and required scores)*

## Responses and Advice from Department Representatives

*Last Updated: 2/12/2026*

**The following responses apply to:** Both seated and online courses

### What expectations do you have for students in this course?

We expect that students will learn about the major events and peoples that shaped American history from Ancient America through reconstruction. This expectation requires students to enter with basic reading and writing skills. Students will refine these skills as they learn historical thinking and how to think critically about U.S. history.

### What types of study skills do you expect students to use in this course?

Students should attend class and take careful notes during class. They should also have basic writing skills that will enable them to take essay exams and write short papers. They should also have skills in reading comprehension. They will refine these skills in this course.

### What study techniques seem to work best for students who do well in this course?

Students who keep up with the reading and attend class are best prepared to study effectively for the exam. Studies indicate that students who take good notes and review those notes throughout the class do well on exams, while students who do not take notes, do not come to class and/or play on their computers struggle with exams and writing assignments because they do not learn deeply.

**What behaviors or habits seem to cause students to struggle in this course? What types of struggles do you see most often? What recommendations do you give to students who struggle in this course? What other advice do you offer to students for success in this course?**

Coming to class and doing assignments, including readings, guarantees success providing that students are actively engaged with the material. Students who struggle generally do not come to class, do not read actively or at all, and fail to do all of the assignments. Failure to communicate with professors especially when struggling is another reason that students fail to improve their performance if they are struggling or have questions.

**How do you describe the course to students when they ask “What is this class about?” (without using the catalog description)?**

I tell students that this course explores the key questions that we continue to debate today, such as what did the American Constitution mean to early Americans? How did early Americans define themselves and what they believed to be Americans? How did marginalized groups advocate for their rights? Why do historians disagree when answering these questions?

**Beyond meeting a General Education requirement, what benefits can students realize from choosing this course?**

For most of the students who take this course, they will learn where they came from. All students will learn how and why the key institutions and values that they understand as “American” developed and were contested. They will learn about and even debate how Americans place themselves in the world and how the United States has made itself from different cultures and peoples. They also develop the skills of historical thinking and placing things in context which are key components of critical thinking that will serve them well regardless of their major. By honing their written and communication skills, they will meet the expectations of future employers who value critical thinking and communication skills.

**Other than your major/minor/certificate students, what groups of students could find this course relevant to their degree program or career path?**

Any student who wishes to hone the “soft skills” that employers note are important to the future success of applicants and their employers. Studies indicate that this generation of college graduates struggle with those skills (see “The Eight Essential Employability Qualities”). These skills emphasize communication, critical analysis, problem solving, and learning and adaptability among others. Students who learn historical thinking and how to make and communicate evidence-based arguments are at an advantage in today’s job market.

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