
V I S U A L

A U D I O

FADE IN:

Music bed: Establish and fade under ...

STOCK IMAGES students on college campus, in classes, labs, etc

NARRATOR: More and more, a college education is regarded as essential to a successful career.

STOCK IMAGE student pondering a question

Which raises a question: What is the key to a successful career *in college?*

*CG: Foundational cognitive skills: Reading, Writing, **Critical Thinking***

Most educators believe that it's the ability to develop critical thinking skills --

-- the ability not only to absorb, remember and understand information, but to analyze and evaluate it, to independently arrive at a conclusion -- and even develop new ideas. And along with that, to be able to express your ideas in writing, clearly and persuasively.

GRAPHIC: Stars & Stripes background

That's a big part of what you'll learn in History 1311, the online, freshman-level survey course in early American history, developed by educators at the University of Texas at Arlington and available through the Texas Virtual School Network.

CG: History 1311 - America Before 1865

UTA LOGO

TXVSN LOG

MONTAGE of historical images drawn from course content and available stock

Now wait a second, you say! History is about the past -- places and dates that are carved in stone, right? How does studying history teach critical thinking?

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COURSE HOMEPAGE

Because in studying American History, we go beyond the facts of *what* happened to questions of *why and how*. And we ask *you* to provide the answers.

To see how this works, let's look at how the course is structured and at some of the assignments you can expect.

The course is delivered through the BlackBoard learning management system, and it's designed to be seamless. That means you can access all course materials, including your textbook, through the course module. The course is designed to be easy to follow, too, regardless of your online experience. Every lesson and assignment leads you into the next.

You start the course by clicking the *Start Here* button in the navigation panel on the left. This opens a page with the basic information you'll need ... including course content, grades, resources, and especially, how to get help when you need it.

The Course Introduction button is exactly that. It opens a page that contains an introduction to your instructor and learning coaches.

It also introduces essential concepts, such as the

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fundamentals of critical thinking ... and the importance of thinking *historically*.

It also includes a link to your instructor's introductory video, *What Is History?*, which provides an overview of the course along with your professor's thoughts on the subject.

Link from course page

Under the *Important Information* heading, you'll find -- what else? -- important information -- like the Course Syllabus.

Link from course page

The Course Calendar serves as a timeline for your lessons and assignments. It enables you to keep track of where you are and where you need to be, to help make sure you don't miss any deadlines.

Course content is organized in units, with several study topics in each unit -- fifteen topics in all.

Within each topic, you'll find a study guide, your reading assignments, plus supplemental course material --

-- including video lectures, Powerpoints, and links to outside websites.

SHOW MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

At the end of each topic, you'll have a multiple choice quiz to complete before moving on to the next topic.

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Link from course page

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This confirms your understanding of the topic while helping to ensure that you don't get lost or fall behind.

You can't jump ahead, either. That's because each assignment is accessible only after a certain date.

But we said that this course was also about developing critical thinking skills. One way we do that is through exercises like the *Document Project*. In this assignment, you pick a topic, then find three *primary documents* related to that topic.

A primary document is one that was written by someone living in the period, like a letter or newspaper article. Your assignment will be to read and analyze those documents, then create a Powerpoint based on your analysis -- like this -- as if you were going to do a lecture on the subject.

Another example is the Group Project. In this, you'll collaborate with other members of your virtual class to create a wiki on an historical topic. Each member of your team is responsible for one section of the wiki.

Group wiki example

Through exercises like this, you'll be developing your abilities to read, write and think -- skills that you'll use throughout your college career ... and beyond.

Your skills will also be honed through participation in

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group discussion boards. In these graded assignments ...

... you'll comment on topics posted by your professor ...

... as well as reply to the comments posted by your online classmates.

When you need help, there's a forum for that, too -- a place to meet with your classmates to ask questions about assignments. In fact, you'll enjoy a high degree of interactivity with your classmates, your professor, and your learning coach.

All of us are here to help you discover how truly fascinating American history is. And how, in studying the past, you can develop the essential cognitive skills that will put a solid foundation under your future..

SCREEN SHOTS of TxVSN course catalogue.

EYECON STOCK of student and counselor meeting.

For more information on this and other UTA online classes offered through the Texas Virtual School Network, consult the TxVSN online catalogue. Then schedule a meeting with your academic advisor.

MUSIC up, hold to conclusion.

FADE OUT
