

The History of Princeton

This course will focus on the history of the Princeton community, its pivotal roles in our county, state and national histories (including its significant role in the American Revolution). We will trace its history from pre-European times to modern times examining the many changes that have occurred in the community. The history of three of its most prominent institutions (Princeton University, Princeton Theological Seminary and The Institute for Advanced Study) will be closely studied along with how they have influenced the development of the community and shaped its demographics and attitudes. The lives of prominent citizens of the community who have shaped its institutions and who have had broader impacts on state and national issues will also be studied.

In the context of the course we will study the following events related to migration and immigration: 1) The pressures forcing the migration of the Lenni-Lenape (Delaware) Indians from New Jersey to Oklahoma, Wisconsin and Ontario. 2) The immigration of the Quakers from England to America (specifically the mid-Atlantic region (Pennsylvania and Princeton). 3) The role that Princeton (and New Jersey) played in the reverse migration of Afro-Americans to Africa through the American Colonization Society 4) The role that the development of the University and particularly its adoption of gothic architecture in the late 19th century may have played in the immigration of Italians to the Princeton area and 5) The immigration of European Jewish refugees to and through Princeton in the middle of the 20th century.

The course will consist of lectures supplemented with vintage and contemporary pictures and photographs along with questions and discussion from the class. An important objective of the course is to provide historical context and significance to many of the houses and buildings that we pass each day walking or driving through Princeton. There is no required reading for the course. References that might be interesting or elaborate on subjects discussed in class will be provided during the course.

Leader: Kurt Steiner, PhD, is a docent of the Historical Society of Princeton and regularly leads historical tours of Princeton for local and out-of-town groups.

Wednesdays: 10:00 a.m. to noon, 8 weeks: September 25 through November 20 (no class on 10/9)

Location: The Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville, Maximum 30 seats

