

History 300-04-Introduction to Historical Methods: The Information Revolution in America, 1750-1876

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History

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Course Information

Information Revolution in America, 1750-

1876 - 11822 - HIST 300 – 004

Credit Hours-3

Thursday 7:20-10:00

Fenwick Library 1014A

Required purchases (texts and supplies)

- Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
- Alfred Fabian Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael, eds., *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).
- Kate L. Turabian, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago Style for students and researchers*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, Third edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014).
- Recommended
 - Anthony Brundage, *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*, Fifth edition (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2013).
 - Portable Flash Drive

Class Contacts: names and telephone numbers of at least two classmates.

1.

2.

Introduction and Description of the course:

This class introduces students to the study of history. Fundamentally, the core questions of the class include what do historians do and how do they do their work.

This course, *Introduction to Historical Methods*, is designed as one of the research courses for the history major. As such, it provides students with the opportunity to focus on the process of writing an original research paper based on the use of primary sources. The seminar will utilize a limited chronological period ranging between 1750-1860 and the broad topic of the information revolution in this period as a vehicle to teach the methods of historians. By the end of this class, students will be able to find, utilize, and evaluate a variety of sources in order to produce an extended, formal essay on a topic. The student will select their topic using the methods demonstrated in the class and will be able to communicate their knowledge about this subject orally, and in writing, to a variety of audiences.

What is the information revolution?

This writing intensive course will focus on the broad topic of the information revolution in America between 1750-1876. This revolution came in the form of new institutions, such as specialized learned societies, military academies, new types of colleges, as well as museums and libraries; in the

emergence of scientific disciplines, and in the emergence and proliferation of new ways to disseminate knowledge across the republic, offering access to a greater number of people.

Objective of the Course:

The objective of this historical methods class is to introduce students to the work of historians and to begin doing the work of an historian themselves. This course fulfills the *Writing-Intensive* requirement in the history major and for the university. It does so through the successive stages, namely the topic statement, a bibliography, small research tasks, and drafts; these are due on dates indicated on the syllabus. Upon completion, students will obtain a core set of skills to draw upon and utilize in upper-level coursework, in particular in preparation for taking the capstone course, History 499.

HIST-300 is part of Mason's Students as Scholars initiative. Students who enroll in this "Students as Scholars Inquiry" course will develop a research question, answer that question by using historical research and writing methods, and situate their findings in an appropriate historiographical context. HIST-300 also fulfills in part the Writing Intensive requirement for the History major via multiple written assignments of varying lengths. Note that students must earn a grade of C or better in HIST-300 in order to register for the second required Writing Intensive History course, HIST-499. This course focuses primarily on developing skills, all of which have real-world applications. Students will access information, work with historical texts, publish a transcription of an early War Department manuscript, and write a grant proposal according to guidelines prescribed by the National Endowment for the Humanities. They will also learn about ways in which historians and other humanities scholars have become both producers and consumers of digital technologies. Class locations, which change from week to week, are noted on the course schedule.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to follow the course schedule. Attendance is essential for success in this course, which meets only once weekly. In-class work is significant and there are assignments due in class most days (as noted in the course schedule). If you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with the work and to submit your assignments on time. If you come to class unprepared for the day's work, you may be asked to leave.

Written work: The course is designated as a writing intensive course. Students will complete several written assignments over the course of the semester, each of which must be submitted electronically through the course Blackboard site. The Writing Intensive regimen culminates in a 3500-word research paper. (approx. 15 pages double spaced.) The department requires that students earn a C to meet the departmental rules regarding successful completion of the major.

For specific assignments, please see the course schedule and also the specific directions in the Assessments section of Blackboard. Late submissions will be penalized, typically by a deduction of one letter-grade.

Oral work: Students will do one formal oral report, in addition to participating regularly in informal class discussions. Please come to class prepared to discuss that day's assigned work or reading. Because discussion and in-class work are integral to this course, attendance will be taken.

Detailed instructions for assignments are located in the Course Materials Section in our Blackboard shell. Students will submit assignments in the Assessments section of Blackboard by the assigned due date unless otherwise directed.

Grading:

Grades in this class will be calculated as follows:

Participation and Completion of Assigned Class Workshops and reading discussions: 40%

- Two Ways of Viewing Revolution 5 points
- Developing a topic 5 points
- Secondary Source Analysis 5 points
- Special Collections Source Types Worksheet 5 points
- Books/Imprints 10 points
- Newspapers and Periodicals 5 points
- Special Collections 2 5

Creating and Disseminating Historical Knowledge 60%

- Revision of topic and Annotated Bibliography 15 points
- Historiography Peer Review 5 points
- Historiographical essay 10 points
- Draft of Research Proposal 5 points
- Oral Presentation and Poster 15 points
- Final Research Proposal 10 points

Required Readings:

- Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
- Alfred Fabian Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael, eds., *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).
- Kate L. Turabian, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago Style for students and researchers*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, Third edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014).

Suggested General Topics:

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| • Military Academies | • Presentation of "new" |
| • Business Periodicals or Standards for Business | natural/historical wonders (Feegee Mermaid/Sea Serpent/Kentucky Mummy) |
| • Scientific Surveys | • Encyclopedia or other publishing projects |
| • Proliferation of Libraries/Museums/Historical societies | • Development or carrying out of census. |
| • Development of Scientific Societies | • Proposals of education systems. |
| • Naturalists | • Others??? |
| • People | |

Useful information:

Writing Center (writingcenter.gmu.edu): A114 Robinson Hall, 703-993-1200

Counseling and Psychological Services (caps.gmu.edu): 703-993-2380

Learning Services (academic skills help housed within CAPS; see

<http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/>)

Last day to add or drop with no tuition penalty: 1/30/17
Last day to drop (with 67% tuition penalty): 2/24/17
Selective withdrawal period: Mon Feb 27 – Fri Mar 31

Course Schedule:

Class 1: Thurs. 1/26/2017 Introductory Meeting of Class in Fenwick Library 1014A

Readings

- Discussion of Course Expectations and the Readings.
- History, Historians, and thinking historically
- Developing and planning a research project
 - Topics
 - Sources
- Overview of Library Resources

Workshop: Developing a topic and working with sources.

Draft a tentative research topic in order to search for background research and find at least one reference source and one secondary source that will help you with your tentative topic. 5 points.

Class 2: Thurs. 2/2/2017 Class meets in Fenwick Library Room 1014A

- **Read** the introductions and browse at least one chapter to both *Strength of a People* and *The Revolutionary Founders*.
- **Read "Paragraph Structure" in the Course Content section of Blackboard.**
- **Read** Young, Alfred F. "George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution." *William & Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (October 1981): 561–623.—In Blackboard
- **Writing: Follow the directions for the "Two Ways to View the Revolution" assignment posted in the "Assessments" section of Blackboard. Complete the assignment and submit via Blackboard by 7:20 p.m. on Thursday 2 February (5%).**

Workshop

- **In-class video: *Finding Kate*: What primary sources does Ph.D. student Sara Collini use to reconstruct the life of an enslaved woman at George Washington's Mount Vernon?**
- Students will be able to identify the characteristics of scholarly works and will bring a tentative research topic to class in order to find appropriate scholarly works using library resources. Bring to class either a print copy of the "George Robert Twelve Hewes..." article or a device that will allow you to annotate.

Reading Discussion and in class assignment: analyzing a scholarly source Young, Alfred F. "George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution." *William & Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (October 1981): 561–623.—In Blackboard—We will annotate the article together using the document in the Assessment Section- Secondary Source Assessment and students will submit assignment in Blackboard. Due at end of class 10:00 p.m. Thursday 2 February (5%).

Class 3: Thurs. 2/9/2017 Class Meets in Special Collections and Research Center in Fenwick Library.

Class Objective: Students will be introduced to the diversity of primary sources available in Special Collections and Archives and to examine these resources for evidence. Students will be able to identify the core identifying characteristics of sources based upon the assignment worksheet in Blackboard posted in the Assessments section. Students will complete the assignment and submit to Ms. Bramlett at the end of the session.

Workshop: Visiting Special Collections and examining Primary Documents: An Introduction.

Special Collections Visit and assignment: Complete the Special Collections Worksheet—In Blackboard—Due at end of class 10:00 p.m. Thursday 9 February (5%).

Class 4: Thurs. 2/16/2017 Class meets in Fenwick Library 1014A

Class Objective:

In-class discussion about the selected sources below and discussion of source documents and using personal papers.

Students will be able to “read” the different sources like an historian and analyze where the source comes from to determine the value as evidence.

Reading:

- Cotlar, Seth. “‘Every Man Should Have Property’: Robert Coram and the American Revolution’s Legacy of Economic Populism.” In *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*, Edited by Alfred F. Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011, 337-353.

Check America’s Historical Imprints and find this source. It is the main source that Cotlar uses.

Coram, Robert. *Political inquiries: to which is added, a plan for the general establishment of schools throughout the United States. By Robert Coram, author of some late pieces in the Delaware gazette, under the signature [sic] of Brutus.* Wilmington: Printed by Andrews and Brynberg, 1791.

Reading discussion and discussion of what is a genre?

Sample of using America’s Historical Imprints (see Blackboard)

Workshop: Finding and Using Published Sources

1- Discussion of following sources:

- Broadside: [Collection Sale of Pierre du Simitiere](#)
- Government Document: [United States Secretary of State, Register of officers and agents, civil, military, and naval, in service of U.S.; with names, force, and condition of all ships and vessels belonging to U.S.,.... Washington: Jonathan Elliot, 1816](#)
- Diary [excerpt]: [Albigence Waldo, 1777](#)
- Letter: [Thomas Jefferson to John Banister Jr., 15 Oct. 1785](#) (typescript) and [also here](#) (manuscript)
- Map: [The United States of America laid down from the best authorities, agreeable to the Peace of 1783](#)
- Image/cartoon: [Congressional Pugilists, 1798](#)
- In-class work: discussion [Papers of the War Department](#) transcription project (Alyssa Fahringer)

2- Reading, Finding and Using Books/Imprints as primary sources. Introduction to several databases including *America's Historical Imprints*. Complete assignment "Books as Sources."

Due: Using Books/Imprints 10:00 p.m. 2/16/2017

Complete Using Books as Primary Sources—In Blackboard—Due at end of class 10:00 p.m. Thursday 16 February (10%).

Class 5: Thurs. 2/23/2017 Class Meets in Fenwick Library Room 1014A

Workshop: Finding and Using Published Sources: Newspapers and Periodicals

Reading:

- Use the issue of the *Massachusetts Spy* in the course content section of Blackboard.
- Read one of the following articles based on your group and complete the assignment Using Primary Sources-Published Sources: Newspapers and Periodicals

Students will find these articles below by using *America: History and Life*. Read your article before class and make sure you look for patterns on how the author uses periodical sources in the article.

1. Breen, T. H. "Baubles of Britain": The American Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century." *Past & Present*, no. 119 (May 1988): 73–104.
2. Greenberg, Kenneth S. "The Nose, the Lie, and the Duel in the Antebellum South." *American Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (February 1990): 57.

Due: Periodicals and Magazines 2/23/17

Complete Using Periodicals as Primary Sources—In Blackboard—Due at end of class 10:00 p.m. Thursday 23 February (5%).

Class 6: Thurs. 3/2/2017

Workshop: Visiting Special Collections and Discussion

Special Collections Visit 2

Due: Revision of topic and Annotated Bibliography

Class 7: Thurs. 3/9/2017

Individual meetings to discuss student topics. Students will sign up for an appointment. Meet in my Office Fenwick Library Room 2211

SPRING BREAK 3/13/2017-3/19/2017

Class 8: Thurs. 3/23/2017 Class Meets in Fenwick Library Room 1014A

Discussion of microhistories-Discussion of Confessions of Edward Isham

Reading:

- Victoria Bynum, "Mothers, Lovers and Wives: Images of Poor White Women in Edward Isham's Autobiography." In *The Confessions of Edward Isham: A Poor White Life of the Old South* ed. Charles C. Bolton, and Scott P. Culclasure, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998. (In Blackboard)
- Autobiography of Edward Isham (in Blackboard)

Class 9: Thurs. 3/30/2017

Workshop: Historiographical essay, writing, and participating in the scholarly conversation.
Bring your current bibliography and discuss the sources that you have.

Read: The two Freehling essays.

- William W. Freehling, "The Founding Fathers and Slavery," *American Historical Review*, 77 (1972): 81-93 (available electronically via the Fenwick Library catalog or *America: History and Life*)
- William W. Freehling, "The Founding Fathers, Conditional Antislavery, and the Nonradicalism of the American Revolution," 1994 (pdf posted in Course Contents section of Blackboard)

Due: Draft Historiography Essay in class 3/30/17-Peer evaluation of Historiography essays.
Final Version Due: 3/31/17.

Class 10: Thurs. 4/6/2017 Fenwick Library Room 1014A

Poster Creation and the SPARC Lab

Using sources responsibly for Historians

Read

- Peter Charles Hoffer, *Past Imperfect: Facts, Fictions, and Fraud--American History from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007). 141-171
"Falsification: The case of Michael Bellesiles"

Digital History and Developing Presentations

This class will introduce students to examples of methods and scholarship using digital history methods. TBA

Class 11: Thursday 4/13/2017 Fenwick Library Room 1014A

Trip to Library of Congress: Details 1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m. at the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress.

Class 12: Thurs. 4/20/2017 Fenwick Library Room 1014A

Workshop: Peer Review Session

Peer feedback on draft research proposal. Submit your revised draft of research proposal (in light of peer review) via Blackboard by 4/21/17.

Draft of Research Proposal

Class 13: Thurs. 4/27/1/2017

Class will meet in Fenwick Library Room 1014A

Student Presentations

Class 14: Thurs. 5/4/2017

Class will meet in Fenwick Library Room 1014A

Student Presentations

Revised final proposal with annotated bibliographies due by Friday, May 5, 2017 at 5:00 p.m.