

HIST-300-003
Introduction to Historical Method: Jefferson's America
Fall 2010

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Robinson B343 ~~ Office Hours: T/Th 9-10, Th 5-6, or by appointment

Course Description and Objectives:

This course uses the broad topic of Jefferson's life and times to introduce History majors to the methodology of researching, interpreting, and writing history. In the process, our reading and discussions will focus primarily on four themes: political culture and ideology in the early American republic; slavery and race relations; family and domestic life; and education in Jefferson's America.

This course fulfills in part the Writing Intensive requirement in the History major via five written assignments of varying lengths (see course schedule, below). Note that students must earn a grade of C or better in HIST-300 in order to register for the second required Writing Intensive course, HIST-499.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to adhere to the course schedule, below. As the schedule indicates, sometimes the class will meet as a group, while other days are set aside for individual meetings with the instructor to review student writing. Please note that there are assignments due in class each day, and that some minor assignments may not be listed on the syllabus. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to email me to find out your assignment for the next class meeting. If you are unprepared for class, you may be asked to leave.

Written work: Students will write and revise several papers over the course of the semester, each of which must be submitted electronically (as an email attachment, using a GMU email address) unless otherwise noted. Each student will also prepare a final project (annotated bibliography and paper outline) on a topic they choose themselves. For all written work, late submissions will be penalized one letter-grade.

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

Research work: Although students will use their research skills throughout the course, they will also complete two formal assignments that focus on research skills specifically. The final project for this course, as noted above, will be an annotated bibliography on any topic related to United States history during Jefferson's lifetime (1743-1826). Because real historians still do genuine archival research, one of the sources cited in that bibliography must be a primary source that is either a manuscript or rare book (which is not available on the internet) from the Library of Congress or an alternate research facility (the Library of Virginia in Richmond, the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, or the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia). Their websites, which include links to both online catalogs and requirements for access to collections at these facilities, are as follows:

- Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/>
- Library of Virginia: <http://www.lva.va.gov>
- Virginia Historical Society: <http://www.vahistorical.org/research/main.htm>
- Small Special Collections Library: <http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/small/>

Course grades will be determined as follows:

• Paper 1	10%
• Papers 2 and 3	30% (total)
• Revisions of Papers 2 and 3	10% (total)
• Website review	10%
• Oral report	10%
• Participation	10%
• Final Project/Annotated Bibliography	20%

Finally, please note that all students are subject to the George Mason University Honor Code (see <http://jiju.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/honor.htm>). The penalty for cheating or plagiarism on any assignment will be—at a minimum—a grade of F for this course.

Course Schedule:

Tues. 31 Aug.: Introductory meeting.

Thurs. 2 Sept.: Jefferson's America/America's Jefferson

Read Frank Cogliano, "'Thomas Jefferson is looking down at you, and he's dissatisfied': The Thomas Jefferson Paradox," at http://www.adamsjefferson.com/papers/Cogliano_Monticello_Paper.pdf; Timeline of Jefferson's Life," at <http://www.monticello.org/jefferson/timeline.html>; Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, chaps. 2 and 6.

Tues. 7 Sept.: Interpreting Historical Documents I

Each student will have been assigned one of the following documents from *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*:

- The Declaration of Independence, 1776, 235-41
- "Report of a Plan of Government for the Western Territory," 1784, 254-58
- Letter to John Banister, 1785, 392-95
- "Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank," 1791, 261-67
- "First Inaugural Address," 1801, 290-95
- Letter to Brother Handsome Lake, 1802, 305-7
- Letter to Benjamin Rush, 1803, 490-94
- Letter to grandson Thomas Jefferson Randolph, 1808, 511-14
- Letter to Isaac McPherson, 1813, 525-32
- Letter to John Adams, 1813, 533-39
- Letter to Benjamin Austin, 1816, 547-50

Your assignment is to read your document and take notes to summarize its most important contents. Then, use Peterson's introduction to *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, a history textbook, or any other

credible source (or sources) to establish the context for understanding the document. To understand the context in which your document was written and read, you should be able to answer the following questions (at a minimum):

- To whom was Jefferson writing?
- Why was he writing? What was the main point he sought to convey?
- What was happening in Jefferson's life and career at the time he wrote your document?
- What was happening in the lives of his reader(s)?
- What were some of the bigger issues concerning Americans generally at this specific time?

Come to class prepared to discuss both the contents and context of your document.

Thurs. 9 Sept.: Interpreting Historical Documents II

- Writing Center Presentation

The Jefferson Family Letters Project is an online and searchable collection of letters written to and from members of Jefferson's family, mostly his daughters, granddaughters, and their husbands. Most are from the period between 1809 and 1835. Go to <http://familyletters.dataformat.com/> and use the search function to find a letter pertaining to a particular topic (e.g., education, sewing, Dolley Madison). Use the questions from the previous day's assignment to summarize the contents and context of your letter—and come to class prepared to discuss your document.

Tues. 14 Sept.: Taking Notes and Doing Citations

- Zotero tutorial (with Allison Meyer O'Connor)
- Read Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, chap. 7, and bring book to class.

Thurs. 16 Sept.: Interpreting Material Artifacts as Sources

"Picturing U.S. History" is a website devoted to interpreting material artifacts as historical sources. To prepare for class, work through the following exercises:

- "For a Noble Man, a Prince: Images and Identity in Colonial America," at http://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/lessons_colonial.php
- "White into Black: Seeing Race, Slavery, and Anti-Slavery in Antebellum America," at http://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/lessons_burnsbrown.php

****Paper 1 due.**

Paper #1: (Submit electronically to me via email.): Write a 3-page essay summarizing and explaining the content and context of one of the following:

- the letter you chose from the Jefferson Family Letters Project
- the Jefferson document you analyzed for Tuesday 7 September

****Make sure your essay has an introduction that states both its topic and its thesis. Please underline the thesis (argument) to make sure you have one. Also, be sure to include a correctly formatted citation for the document you have chosen, as well as citations for any other sources you use to complete this essay.**

Tues. 21 Sept.: Historians Don't Do Numbers: Using On-Line Census Data **Paper #1 due.

Go to the Historical Census Browser at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>. Access census data (and do the necessary arithmetic) to answer the following questions:

- What percentage of the total population of Fairfax County was free in 1790? In 1860?
- How much did Virginia's free black population grow (in both absolute numbers and percentage of the state's total inhabitants) between 1790 and 1830.
- How many white Virginians owned slaves in 1790?
- Which state had the largest unnaturalized foreign-born population in 1820? Where did most unnaturalized foreigners live in Virginia?
- What percentage of white male adult Virginians were illiterate in 1850? Which geographical portion of the state had the highest numbers of white adult men who could not read and write?
- What is your favorite census factoid from the years 1790-1840?

Also, look at the census for 1790-1840 and consider how demographic categories and the information gathered changed over time—and think about the significance of these changes.

Thurs. 23 Sept.: Felicia Bell, U.S. Capitol Historical Society, "The Negroes Alone Work: Enslaved Craftsmen, the Building Trades, and the Construction of the United States Capital, 1790-1800." **Meet in the Johnson Center, room 116.** This presentation is part of the "Fall for the Book" even at GMU. Attendance if required. If you attend this presentation and ask a pertinent question, you will receive 1 point extra on your final grade for the semester. (If time runs out before you ask your question, you can submit it to me in writing.)

Tues. 28 Sept.: Doing History: Critical Assessment of Internet Sources

Read "Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply & Questions to Ask," online at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>.

Using the criteria described on the webpage above, find two internet sources—one good/credible and one bad/suspect—on any Jefferson-related topic. **Submit written website reviews** (of both sites) to me electronically and come to class prepared to speak briefly about your websites and how you have evaluated them. You should use at least some of the criteria from "Evaluating Web Pages," but also (in the case of the good website) explain how it might be useful for historical research on certain aspects Jefferson's America. You may write as much as you want, but your two reviews should total a minimum of 4 pages.

Here are the essential, good electronic sources for Jefferson specifically. Please familiarize yourself with these sources, but do not include them among the sites your review:

- www.monticello.org -- Official Monticello website. Includes information on house and grounds, some primary sources (family letters), and Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia.
- <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/> -- Thomas Jefferson exhibit from the Library of Congress. Includes time line, artifacts, and links to primary sources (Jefferson Papers at LC).
- <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN.html> -- *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Digital Edition*. Not a website, but an electronic resource available via the GMU library. Digitized version of the definitive published edition (i.e., books) of all letters and documents written by or to Jefferson. Digitized series currently covers 1760-1801, though print books also cover 1809-13..

- http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/MOML?dd=0&af=RN&locID=viva_gmu&srchtp=a&c=1&ste=11&d4=0.33&stp=Author&dc=flc&docNum=F100155008&ae=F100155008&tiPG=1&an=19000210401 -- *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Also not a website, but an electronic version of a ten-volume set published in the 1890s, which includes nearly all letters and documents written by Jefferson. This set is useful for the period not covered by either the printed books or the digital edition (see above).

Thurs. 30 Sept.: Doing History: Library Skills (with George Oberle, in Fenwick Library Instruction Room, A-214)

****Final project/annotated bibliography assigned.**

Tues. 5 Oct.: Education in Post-Revolutionary America

Read the following primary sources (written by Jefferson's contemporaries):

- Benjamin Rush, *Of the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic*, 1786, at http://chronicles.dickinson.edu/resources/Rush/mode_of_education.html
- Noah Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitiv Writings: On Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects*, 1790, pp. 1-37, online at http://books.google.com/books?id=pcIgAAAAMAAJ&dq=noah+webster+education&printsec=frontcover&source=in&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=13&ct=result#PPA1,M1
- Judith Sargent Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes," 1790, at <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/murray/equality/equality.html>

Take notes on these sources, which you will use in your next paper.

Thurs. 7 Oct.: Jefferson and Education in Historical Context: Writing History

Read Jefferson's letter to Nathaniel Burwell, 14 Mar. 1818, at

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=2224>, as well as the following selections from *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*:

- Letter to Robert Skipwith, 1771, 349-51
- Letter to Martha Jefferson, 1785, 366-67
- Letter to George Wythe, 1786, 398-400
- Letter to Peter Carr, 1787, 423-28
- Letter to John Adams, 1813, 533-39
- Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia, 1818, 332-46
- Letter to John Adams, 1820, 569-74

Tues. 12 Oct.: University Recess—No class.

Thurs. 14 Oct.: Special Collections and Archival Research (with Leah Donnelly, in Fenwick Library, Special Collections & Archives, 2nd floor)

****Paper #2 due.**

Paper #2: Write a five-page essay on some aspect of the general topic of Thomas Jefferson and education. Be sure to give your paper a title! (You must use at least one of the essays by Rush, Webster, and Murray to provide a comparative historical context in which to situate Jefferson's ideas about education and its uses.) Please note that this paper must include a bibliography and either footnotes or endnotes. Submit paper to me electronically via email.

Tues. 19 Oct.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #2 and annotated bibliography.

Thurs. 21 Oct.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #2 and annotated bibliography.

Tues. 26 Oct.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #2 and annotated bibliography.

Thurs. 28 Oct.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #2 and annotated bibliography.

Tues. 2 Nov.: Historiography: Interpreting and Assessing Historical Arguments

Read William Cohen, "Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery," *Journal of American History*, 56 (1969): 503-26, and William W. Freehling, "The Founding Fathers and Slavery," *American Historical Review* 77 (1972): 81-93—both all available electronically via JSTOR—and Paul Finkelman, "Jefferson and Slavery: Treason Against the Hopes of the World," in Peter S. Onuf., ed., *Jeffersonian Legacies* (Charlottesville, 1993), 181-224, at

http://books.google.com/books?id=K1m1tRIh7xQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=jeffersonian+legacies&source=bl&ots=M2ZR4gE37w&sig=3s7PD0ODCX76O7Xa6SZXRmPGW_s&hl=en&ei=SX9ETMe0JoXGlQeY14CKDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CBsQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false. When reading these articles, focus on the authors' arguments and supporting evidence. Which argument do you find more persuasive? Take notes on these sources, which you will use in your next paper.

Revisions for Paper #2 due.

Thurs. 4 Nov.: No class.

Tues. 9 Nov.: Jefferson and Slavery: Primary Sources

Read *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 177-93, in Peterson, ed., *Portable Thomas Jefferson*, and Jefferson's letters to Henri Grégoire, Edward Coles, and John Holmes in *ibid.*, 517, 544-47, 567-69

Thurs. 11 Nov.: Jefferson, Slaves, and African Americans: Primary Sources

Read Jefferson's exchange of letters with Benjamin Banneker, available online at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h71t.html> and <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h72t.html>; Memoirs of Madison Hemings, Israel Jefferson, and Joseph Fossett at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/slaves/#1> (click on appropriate links)

**** Paper #3 due.**

Paper #3: Write a five-page essay comparing how the three historians you have read have interpreted Jefferson's record on slavery and race relations. Be sure to include a critical analysis of each of the assigned articles. You must also cite at least five primary sources as part of your critical analysis (either in support of or to cast doubt on one or more of the historical interpretations under review). Please note that this paper must include a bibliography and either footnotes or endnotes. Submit paper electronically.

Tues. 16 Nov.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #3.

Thurs. 18 Nov.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #3.

Tues. 23 Nov.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #3.

Thurs. 25 Nov.: Thanksgiving Recess—No class.

Tues. 30 Nov.: Open office hours. I will be in my office during class time to meet with students who need advice or help with their final projects.

**Thurs.: 2 Dec.: Oral presentations of final project/annotated bibliography and primary source.
Revisions for Paper # 3 due.**

Tues. 7 Dec.: Oral presentations of final project/annotated bibliography and primary source.

**Thurs.: 9 Dec.: Oral presentations of final project/annotated bibliography and primary source.
Final project/annotated bibliography due.