

Introduction to Historical Method:
Revolutionary Virginia, 1750-1789

History 300, Section 001
Dr. T. McCord
W 7:20-10:00 pm
Innovation Hall (IN) Room 206

This is a demanding course for history majors, which has several objectives. First, it is to introduce the student to methods of historical scholarship including the selection of topics, the techniques of historical research, and the use of both primary documents and secondary literature. To help familiarize the student with the resources of the Fenwick Library, Mr. Jason Byrd will conduct an orientation that will help students seek information about revolutionary Virginia. Secondly, the course will focus on writing skills and the organization of material into a clear and readable paper. Among the points to be emphasized will be the creation of a thesis statement, the development of one's writing style and the proper style for bibliographies and notation. A visitor from the Writing Center will inform us how that office can be of help in these matters. Thirdly, the student will be introduced to the concept of historiography with a special emphasis upon the American Revolution in Virginia. Finally, a visitor from the Career Development Office will provide helpful information about future employment for history majors.

History 300 is required of history majors as a preliminary course to History 499—the senior seminar in which a substantial research paper is written. Therefore, this course partially fulfills the Writing Intensive requirement for history majors including three short essays totaling about 3000 words and a research paper of about 2500 words.

Requirements of the course will include the research paper of 8 to 10 typewritten and double-spaced pages on a topic of your choice within the revolutionary period of Virginia. The topic must be narrow and manageable. A prospectus, a bibliography, an outline, and a first draft will be required on the dates listed below. Also, each student will write three short essays of up to three pages in length, double-spaced, on specific topics that will be announced. And, because the course partly is designed as a seminar, class participation is important and it will directly affect your grade.

Class participation will comprise 20% of one's total grade. According to the university catalogue, "students are expected to attend the class periods of the course for which they register. In-class participation is important to the individual student and to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation." Therefore, for every two unexcused absences (absences without a medical doctor's excuse, or without permission of the instructor in advance) there will be a full grade drop in one's participation grade. Participation includes giving an oral report on one's research topic, which is worth half of the participation grade (10% of one's total grade). Attendance at each oral presentation is mandatory. It is not only in one's best interest to attend, but it is also a matter of common courtesy to do so. The prospectus, the bibliography and the outline will not be graded, (they will be reviewed), but failure to hand in any of these assignments also will result in a full grade drop in your participation grade.

Final grades will be calculated as follows: Short papers 50%
 Final paper 30%
 Class participation 20%

The following books are required:

Gutzman, *Virginia's American Revolution: From Dominion to Republic 1776-1840*
 Strunk and White: *The Elements of Style*
 Turabian: *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*

Other reading assignments will be directly related to the short essays.

Every effort must be exerted to hand in the assignments on the date due. Nevertheless, the class schedule is subject to change depending upon the directions that class discussion may take, the number of students enrolled, the weather, and unforeseen events. Thus, to keep up with schedule changes, class attendance, again, is vital. Indeed, if one thinks that he or she has the potential to miss classes, whether job-related or otherwise, it is best to drop the course until a later time.

DATE

- Jan. 25. Introduction & revolutionary overview (31st last add day & last drop day w/o penalty)
- Feb. 1. Overview continued. FIRST ESSAY DUE. Begin Gutzman.
 8. Jason Byrd talk about Fenwick Library resources in Johnson Center Library Room 228.
 Discuss the corrected essays.
 15. Career counselor talk on opportunities for history majors. SECOND ESSAY DUE. Overview continued and aspects of methodology.
 22. Discuss second corrected essays. PROSPECTUS DUE. (24th last drop day)
 29. THIRD ESSAY DUE. Writing Center speaker. Research methodology.
- Mar. 7. THESIS STATEMENT, BIBLIOGRAPHY & OUTLINE DUE. Discuss third corrected essay.
 Historical writing: Strunk and White; Turabian
 14. SPRING BREAK
 21. Historiography. Brief tutorials regarding thesis statements.
 28. FIRST DRAFT DUE. Historiography
- Apr. 4. Tutorials
 11. Tutorials
 18. Tutorials and ORAL REPORTS
 25. ORAL REPORTS. FINAL DRAFTS DUE
- May 2. Hand back research papers. Conclusions

OFFICE HOURS, E-MAIL ADDRESS, AND PHONE NUMBERS

Office hours: Robinson B 226C, Tuesday 11:15-11:45 am; Wednesday 2:00-2:30 pm
 E-mail: tmccord@gmu.edu (Avoid using it if your message is urgent, for I am not always in the office.)
 Telephone: History Department 703.993.1250; home 703.222.7338; no office phone

