

HIST-300-007  
Introduction to Historical Method: Jefferson's America  
Spring 2012

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Robinson B343 ~~ Office Hours: M 1:30-3:00, 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. Note that although we will use many Jefferson-related primary sources for this course--which are readily accessible in both print and digital formats--students are encouraged to do their final project, in particular, on any topic in American history between roughly 1740 and 1825.

This course fulfills in part the Writing Intensive requirement in the History major via multiple 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 (either in our assigned classroom or in Fenwick Library), while other days are set aside for one-on-one meetings to review student writing. Please note that there are assignments due in class most days, 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 formal assignments that focus on research skills specifically. The most important of these is the final project which is an annotated bibliography on any topic related to American history roughly 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 (see list below). Approved repositories and their websites, which include links to both online catalogs and requirements for access to collections, are as follows:

- Library of Congress(Washington): <http://www.loc.gov/rr/>
- National Archives (Washington and College Park, Md.): <http://www.archives.gov/research/>
- Library of Virginia (Richmond): <http://www.lva.va.gov>
- Virginia Historical Society (Richmond): <http://www.vahistorical.org/research/main.htm>
- Small Special Collections Library (Charlottesville): <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/attendance	10%
• Final Project/Annotated Bibliography	20%

Finally, please note that all students are subject to the George Mason University Honor Code (see <http://jju.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:**

#### **Mon. 23 Jan.: Introductory Meeting**

**Wed. 25 Jan.: Primary Source Analysis.** Print (where applicable) and read the following documents and be prepared to discuss them:

- Thomas Jefferson to John Page, 20 Jan. 1763, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Digital Edition*, which you can access as a database via the GMU library cite.
- Virginia Resolutions, 12 Mar. 1773, at [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/va\\_res\\_corres\\_1773.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/va_res_corres_1773.asp)
- *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query XI, in Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 132-44.
- Petition from Judith Hope, ca. 1819, at [http://www.virginiamemory.com/online\\_classroom/lesson\\_plans/petition\\_from\\_judith\\_hope](http://www.virginiamemory.com/online_classroom/lesson_plans/petition_from_judith_hope) (Look at the manuscript version, but then click on "transcript" to read all four pages of this document.)

**Mon. 30 Jan.: Secondary Source Analysis.** Read Eva Sheppard Wolf, "Natural Politics: Jefferson, Elections, and the People," in Boles and Hall, eds., *Seeing Jefferson Anew*, pp. 40-65. Find Wolf's thesis and consider the sources and evidence she uses to support it.

**Wed. 1 Feb.: Research with Zotero--Session with Andrew Smith in Fenwick A-214.** Read Rampolla, *Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, chap. 7.

**Mon. 6 Feb.:** 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.

### **Wed. 8 Feb.: Interpreting Historical Documents II (and Writing Center Road Show)**

The *Family Letters Digital Archive* is an online and searchable collection of letters written to and from members of Jefferson’s family, mostly his daughters, granddaughters, and their husbands. Primarily from the period between 1809 and 1835, most deal with family and plantation concerns, not politics. 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). Adapt the questions from the previous assignment to summarize the contents and context of your letter—and come to class prepared to discuss your document.

**Assignment for Paper #1 (Due Monday 13 February)** Write a 3-page essay summarizing and explaining the content and context of one of the following:

- the letter you chose from the *Family Letters Digital Archive*
- the Jefferson document you analyzed for Monday 5 February

Your essay must have an introduction that states both its topic and its thesis. Please underline the thesis (argument) to make sure that you have one. Also, be sure to include a correctly formatted citation (footnote or endnote) for the document you have chosen, as well as citations for any other that sources you use to complete this essay. For help with theses and notes, consult Rampolla, *Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, chaps. 4 and 7, respectively.

**Mon. 13 Feb.: 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.

**\*\*Final project (annotated bibliography) assigned.**

**Wed. 15 Feb.: Library Skills--Session with Jason Byrd in Fenwick A-214**

**Mon. 20 Feb.: Critical Assessment of Internet Sources.** Read "Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages" at <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/print/4499>

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 the criteria from "Five Criteria for 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](http://www.monticello.org) -- Official Monticello website. Includes information on house and grounds, some primary sources (e.g., 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](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).

**Wed. 22 Feb.: Documentary Editing: Making Primary Sources Accessible and Authoritative--**  
**Session with Lisa A. Francavilla, Managing Editor, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Retirement Series***

**Mon. 27 Feb.: Preparation for Paper #2 (Historiography), Part I.** Read the articles by Kastor (on the West), Rothman (on slavery), and Lewis (on women) in Boles and Hall, eds., *Seeing Jefferson Anew*.

**Assignment for Paper #2 (Due Wednesday 29 February):** Write a five-page essay comparing how the three historians you have read (see reading lists below) interpreted Jefferson's and his era's relationship to one of the following: the West, slavery, or women. Be sure to include a critical analysis of each of the assigned articles. Please note that this paper must include a bibliography and either footnotes or endnotes. Submit paper electronically via email.

**Wed. 29 Feb.: Preparation for Paper #2, Part II.** Depending on which topic you have chosen, read (and take notes on) the following articles and come to class prepared to participate in small group discussions about them.

- **The West:**

Kastor, Peter J. "The Many Wests of Thomas Jefferson. In John B. Boles and Randall L. Hall, eds., *Seeing Jefferson Anew: In His Time and Ours*. Charlottesville, 2010, 66-102.

Onuf, Peter S. "Liberty, Development, and Union: Visions of the West in the 1780s." *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 43 (1986): 179-213.

Ronda, James P. "Dreams and Discoveries: Exploring the American West, 1760-1815," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 46 (1989): 145-62.

- **Slavery**

Cohen, William. "Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery." *Journal of American History*, 56 (1969): 503-26.

Rothman, Adam. "Jefferson and Slavery." In John B. Boles and Randall L. Hall, eds., *Seeing Jefferson Anew: In His Time and Ours*. Charlottesville, 2010, 103-25.

Stanton, Lucia. "The Other End of the Telescope: Jefferson Through the Eyes of his Slaves." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 57 (2000): 139-52.

- **Women**

Gundersen, Joan R. "Independence, Citizenship, and the American Revolution." *Signs*, 13 (1987): 59-77.

Lewis, Jan Ellen. "Jefferson and Women." In John B. Boles and Randall L. Hall, eds., *Seeing Jefferson Anew: In His Time and Ours*. Charlottesville, 2010, 152-71.

Steele, Brian. "Thomas Jefferson's Gender Frontier." *Journal of American History*, 95 (2008): 17-42.

**Mon. 5 Mar.: Interpreting Material Artifacts as Sources. \*\*\* Paper #2 due.** "Picturing U.S. History" is a website devoted to interpreting material artifacts as historical sources. To prepare for class, please 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](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](http://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/lessons_burnsbrown.php)

**\*\*\* Paper #2 due.**

**Wed. 7 Mar.: Archival Research--Session with Leah Donnelly Richardson, GMU Special Collections, Fenwick Library (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)**

~ ~ *Spring Break* ~ ~

**Mon. 19 Mar.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #2 and annotated bibliography.**

**Wed. 21 Mar.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #2 and annotated bibliography.**

**Mon. 26 Mar.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #2 and annotated bibliography.**

**Wed. 28 Mar.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #2 and annotated bibliography.**

**Mon. 2 Apr.: Preparation for Paper #3, Part I.** Read (and take notes on) the following primary sources, which were 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](http://chronicles.dickinson.edu/resources/Rush/mode_of_education.html)
- Noah Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive 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](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>

**Assignment for Paper #3 (Due Monday 9 April):** Write a five-page essay on some aspect of the general topic of Thomas Jefferson and education or education in Jefferson's America. You must use (and cite) at least five of the primary sources listed on this syllabus (see reading list for today

and for Wednesday 4 April), as well as three sources (either primary or secondary) that you find on your own.

Be sure to give your paper a title! Please note, too, that this paper must include a bibliography and either footnotes or endnotes. Submit paper to me electronically via email.

**\*\*\*Revisions of Paper #2 due.**

**Wed. 4 Apr.: Preparation for Paper #3, Part II.** 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, 28 Nov. 1783, 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

**Mon. 9 Apr.:** No class meeting. Come to my office (Robinson B343) during class time if you need help or advice with your final project and/or oral report. **\*\*\*Paper #3 due.**

**Wed. 11 Apr.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #3.**

**Mon. 16 Apr.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #3.**

**Wed. 18 Apr.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #3.**

**Mon. 23 Apr.: Individual meetings to discuss Paper #3.**

**Wed. 25 Apr.: Oral presentations of final project/annotated bibliography and primary source.**

**Mon. 30 Apr.: Oral presentations of final project/annotated bibliography and primary source.**

**\*\*\*Revisions of Paper #3 due.**

**Wed. 1 May: Oral presentations of final project/annotated bibliography and primary source.**

**\*\*\*Friday 3 May: Final project/annotated bibliography due by 2:00 p.m.\*\*\***