

George Mason University
Department of History and Art History

Fall 2011
Tuesday, 7:20-10:00 PM
Krug Hall, Room 205
Office Hours: Tuesday 4-6:30 PM

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HISTORY 620-001: THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

In the wake of their successful revolution, Americans of all sorts sought to create a nation that matched their own vision of a free, independent, republican society. But they often disagreed vehemently about exactly what such a nation should look like. Who should rule, and how? What economic and social policies should the nation pursue? Where did the United States fit into a larger community of nations? What did it mean to be an American? Who was included and who was excluded in that definition? This course explores these crucial issues in the history of the newly independent United States from approximately 1783 to 1828. It will focus on how recent historians have approached questions of American identity and nationalism, the ideology and practice of politics, economic change and class conflict, geographic expansion and sectional tensions, Native American strategies and reactions to the new United States, the role and status of women, the place of slavery in the republic, the evolution of African American communities and identities, and the effects and meaning of religious awakening.

REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation:

Active and informed participation in discussion is the central element of the class. Our meetings will consist entirely of discussion of the assigned readings, so it is essential that you do the reading (both the main text and any required supplemental readings) and come prepared to discuss it.

Participation is judged on quality more than quantity, but it is impossible to judge quality without a sufficient sample size, and active, regular participation is itself a form of quality--the course is more enjoyable for everyone, and more intellectually rewarding, when as many people as possible contribute consistently and cogently to our discussions.

Weekly Reaction Papers:

You must write eight (8) one-page reaction papers on the weekly reading. The particular weeks are up to you and don't need to be decided in advance, just make sure you do eight. Also note that an additional week will be taken up by your extended book review essay, and another by leading discussion (see below) -- you may not write a one-page reaction for those two weeks.

The reaction papers should have **one paragraph summarizing the book's argument** and project as succinctly and specifically as possible, and **another paragraph on your critical response** to this argument/project and its execution in the book (in this case "critical" does not necessarily mean negative, but rather engaged and analytical). Your response should focus on substantive intellectual and interpretive issues rather than matters that are primarily aesthetic or formal (e.g. there were too many big words, it was boring, you felt maps would have been useful, or you would have preferred footnotes to endnotes). These papers are due in class on the day we discuss the reading.

Essays:

In addition to the reaction papers, you will write two extended essays for this class.

1) Extended Book Review (6-7 pages): On a week of your own choosing, you must write an extended analysis of the reading for that week. This should not be a chapter-by-chapter summary of the main book's contents, but rather a higher-level analysis of the argument and the key evidence/themes that support and develop it. You should also consider the contrast or complement offered to the main book's argument and themes by the supplementary readings for that week. This paper is due in class on the day we discuss the reading you are writing on. (This must be a different week from the week you are leading discussion [see below], and you may not do a reaction paper for the week you do the book review.)

2) Final Paper: There are three options for the longer final paper topic:

Option One -- a thematic analysis of course readings. You may identify a theme or issue in the course and write a 12-15 page essay analyzing that theme, using at least four of the books and at least four of the supplementary readings. We will discuss potential topics or topic areas in class and set up a schedule for selecting a topic -- you will need to have the final topic approved, just so that I can make sure it seems workable with the material at hand. This paper is meant to focus on the assigned reading, but some outside reading may be required if it seems essential to the topic you choose.

Option Two -- topical historiography paper. If you have a specific interest in a particular topic, you may elect to write a paper exploring the existing literature on that topic, laying out the major works and interpretations, existing debates, underexplored or neglected areas, and possible future directions for research. This option requires substantial extra reading, so it is most appropriate for those who would particularly benefit from building this kind of deep background -- those intending to do research on the topic, or those for whom specific historiographical and bibliographic knowledge is important. The ideal length of these papers will vary depending on the nature of the topic explored, but 15 pages should be considered a realistic minimum. Consult with me if you wish to pursue this option.

Option Three -- primary source research paper. Students with a research agenda in early American history may do a medium-length, focused primary source research paper as the final paper for this course. Consult with me if you want to pursue this option.

The default due date for the final paper is Thursday, December 15, but for projects requiring substantial additional reading or research, we can negotiate a workable deadline.

Leading Discussion:

Once during the semester you will lead the first hour of discussion on the core reading (because of the number of students, most weeks will have a pair of discussion leaders). This is NOT intended as a presentation of your own ideas, but rather as an opportunity to shape the discussion and set the agenda for the first part of class **by asking questions designed to promote useful discussion**. Discussion leaders for the week should meet with me briefly after the preceding class to exchange ideas about substantive issues and pedagogical strategies for the discussion, and should submit a list of potential questions/ideas a day or more ahead of time for feedback and advice.

We will organize the discussion-leading schedule at our first meeting.

Grading:

Reaction Papers: 20%

Book Review: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

Class Participation (including leading discussion): 30%

REQUIRED READINGS**Structure of Weekly Readings:**

Each week, one book will serve as the core reading that everyone will read. There will also be a selection of additional supplementary readings of chapter or article length that relate to some aspect of the core reading. You will be required to read ONE of these supplementary readings each week in addition to the core reading (though in some cases several shorter readings have been bundled into a single option), and, along with others who have read the same supplementary material, to explain it to the rest of the class and bring it into the discussion when relevant. This is not a formal presentation, but it is an integral part of the way the class will operate, and it is important to your class participation grade.

Core Reading:

The following books are required reading for everyone and have been ordered at the GMU Barnes & Noble in the Johnson Center:

- Stephen Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State*. Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Max Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State*. Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*. W.W. Norton, 2008.
- Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*. Yale University Press, 1989.
- Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*. Hill and Wang, 2007.

- Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.
- Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South*. Harvard University Press, 2005.
- James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.
- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.
- David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

Required Supplementary Readings:

The supplementary readings are available online through the GMU Library. The easiest way to access them is through the library's homepage (library.gmu.edu). You can use the "E-Journals" tab to find the journal and the databases or publisher's site where it can be found. From there, you can do an author, title, or keyword search to find the article.

It is recommended that you bring a paper copy of the reading to refer to in class.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DOING THE READING

- What is the book or article's overall argument and historiographical orientation?
- What more specific arguments make up this larger whole?
- How do these points relate to other works we have read and to the field as a whole?
- In what ways do they build on precedents and ideas in other works?
- In what ways do they challenge or reject other interpretations or approaches?
- Is the argument persuasive and/or interesting?
- Is it particularly creative, important, or insightful? In what ways?
- What sorts of evidence and primary source material does the author use?
- Are these sources new or underutilized? If not, does the author use old material in new ways?
- Does the evidence support the argument?
- How does the author account for the inherent biases and limitations of the evidence?
- Does the author ignore or minimize important issues that might undermine or change the argument?

Obviously, no one is going to come into class having covered all angles of all of these questions--that's why we have discussion--but giving them serious thought before coming to class can provide the basis for more fruitful discussion.

A NOTE ON USING BOOK REVIEWS

In thinking about the answers to questions like the ones above it is perfectly legitimate--indeed, almost expected--to read book reviews from scholarly journals. Reviews are designed to help situate a book in a larger field of literature and assess what contributions it makes, so they can be valuable tools when you are learning a new field.

That said, *reviews are never an acceptable or adequate substitute for your own opinion about a book*. It is best (i.e. most productive and helpful to your own academic and intellectual development) to form your own opinions before reading reviews. Used in this way, they can serve as a spur to your own thinking as you react to the reviewer's assessment of the book and the ways in which it parallels or diverges from your own.

Reviews also vary widely in depth, quality, and focus, so it is important to read multiple reviews, particularly from more specialized journals (big journals like *JAH* and *AHR*, for instance, give reviewers so little space that the reviews are often very superficial in comparison to those in *William and Mary Quarterly*, *Journal of the Early Republic*, *Journal of Southern History*, and especially *Reviews in American History*).

HONOR CODE STATEMENT

All work in the course is governed by the George Mason University honor code:

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: **Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.***

For details on how the honor system at GMU works, consult the university catalog:
<http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=410#Honor>

More information can also be found at the GMU [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

OTHER POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Administrative Dates

Last day to add & to drop with no tuition penalty: September 6

Final drop deadline (with tuition penalty): September 30

Selective Withdrawal period: October 3-October 28

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ods.gmu.edu) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

GMU Email Accounts

Students must use their MasonLIVE email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See masonlive.gmu.edu for more information.

Useful Resources

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

Counseling and Psychological Services (caps.gmu.edu): SUB I, Room 3129, (703) 993-2380.

University Catalog: catalog.gmu.edu.

Other university policies: universitypolicy.gmu.edu.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Aug. 30: Introduction

Gordon S. Wood, "The Significance of the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 8:1 (Spring 1988): 1-20.

Sept. 6: The People and the Constitution

Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*.

Supplementary Reading

Terry Bouton, "A Road Closed: Rural Insurgency in Post-Independence Pennsylvania," *Journal of American History* 87:3 (December 2000): 855-887.

John L. Brooke, "To the Quiet of the People: Revolutionary Settlements and Civil Unrest in Western Massachusetts, 1774-1789," *William and Mary Quarterly* 46:3 (July 1989): 425-462.

Eric Robert Papenfuse, "Unleashing the 'Wildness': The Mobilization of Grassroots Antifederalism in Maryland," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16:1 (Spring 1996): 73-106.

Sept. 13: The Constitution and the State

Max Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State*.

Supplementary Reading

Jack N. Rakove, "Thinking Like a Constitution," *Journal of the Early Republic* 24:1 (Spring 2004): 1-26.

Don Higginbotham, "The Federalized Militia Debate: A Neglected Aspect of Second Amendment Scholarship," *William and Mary Quarterly* 55:1 (January 1998): 39-58.

Mark Schmeller, "The Political Economy of Opinion: Public Credit and Concepts of Public Opinion in the Age of Federalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29:1 (Spring 2009): 35-61.

Sept. 20: Publics and Politics

David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*.

Supplementary Reading

John L. Brooke, "Cultures of Nationalism, Movements of Reform, and the Composite-Federal Polity," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29:1 (Spring 2009): 1-33.

Douglas Bradburn, "A Clamor in the Public Mind: Opposition to the Alien and Sedition Acts," *William and Mary Quarterly* 65:3 (July 2008): 565-600.

Andrew W. Robertson, "Look on This Picture... And on This!": Nationalism, Localism, and Partisan Images of Otherness in the United States, 1787-1820," *American Historical Review* 106:4 (October 2001): 1263-1280.

Sept. 27: Forgetting the Ladies

Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*.

Supplementary Reading

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Dis-Covering the Subject of the 'Great Constitutional Discussion,' 1786-1789," *Journal of American History* 79:3 (December 1992): 841-873.

Linda K. Kerber, "The Paradox of Women's Citizenship in the Early Republic: The Case of *Martin vs. Massachusetts*, 1805," *American Historical Review* 97:2 (April 1992): 349-378.

Kirsten E. Wood, "'One Woman so Dangerous to Public Morals': Gender and Power in the Eaton Affair," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17:2 (Summer 1997): 237-275.

Oct. 4: Democratic Religion?

Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*.

Supplementary Reading

James D. Bratt, "Religious Anti-Revivalism in Antebellum America," *Journal of the Early Republic* 24:1 (Winter 2004): 65-106.

Susan Juster and Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, "The 'Angel Delusion' of 1806-1811: Frustration and Fantasy in Northern New England," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22:3 (Autumn 2002): 375-404.

Janet Moore Lindman, "Acting the Manly Christian: White Evangelical Masculinity in Revolutionary Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly* 57:2 (April 2002): 393-416.

Oct. 11: No Class -- Monday classes meet on Tuesday due to Columbus Day holiday.

Oct. 18: Party Politics and Public Authority on the Early National Frontier

Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic*.

Supplementary Reading

Johann N. Neem, "Creating Social Capital in the Early American Republic: The View from Connecticut," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 39:4 (Spring 2009): 471-495.

Andrew R. L. Cayton, "Land, Power, and Reputation: The Cultural Dimension of Politics in the Ohio Country," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47:2 (April 1990): 266-286.

Steven Watts, "'Through a Glass Eye, Darkly': James Fenimore Cooper as Social Critic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 13:1 (Spring 1993): 55-74.

Oct. 25: A Woman's Work is Never Done

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary*.

Supplementary Reading

Susan E. Klepp, "Revolutionary Bodies: Women and the Fertility Transition in the Mid-Atlantic Region, 1760-1820," *Journal of American History* 85:3 (December 1998): 910-945.

Mary Beth Sievens, "'The Wicked Agency of Others': Community, Law, and Marital Conflict in Vermont, 1790-1830," *Journal of the Early Republic* 21:1 (Spring 2001): 19-39.

Two brief pieces on different issues:

→ Sharon Block, "Bringing Rapes to Court," *Common-Place* 3:3 (April 2003). (<http://www.common-place.org/vol-03/no-03/block/>)

→ Christopher Clark, "The View from the Farmhouse: Rural Lives in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 24:2 (Summer 2004): 198-207.

Nov. 1: Struggling to Get By in Urbanizing America

Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*.

Supplementary Reading

Paul A. Gilje and Howard B. Rock, "Sweep O! Sweep O!: African American Chimney Sweeps and Citizenship in the New Nation," *William and Mary Quarterly* 51:3 (July 1994): 507-538.

Jeanne Boydston, "The Woman Who Wasn't There: Women's Market Labor and the Transition to Capitalism in the United States," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16:2 (Summer 1996): 183-206.

Peter Way, "Labour's Love Lost: Observations on the Historiography of Class and Ethnicity in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of American Studies* 28:1 (April 1994): 1-22.

Nov. 8: Africa, America, and the Early National Atlantic World

James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic*.

Supplementary Reading

Alexander X. Byrd, "Eboe, Country, Nation, and Gustavus Vassa's *Interesting Narrative*," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 63:1 (January 2006): 123-148.

Sara C. Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Slavery and Abolition* 28:1 (April 2007): 61-85.

Van Gosse, "'As a Nation, the English Are Our Friends': The Emergence of African American Politics in the British Atlantic World, 1772-1861," *American Historical Review* 113:4 (October 2008): 1003-1028.

Nov. 15: Slavery and Family in Jefferson's Virginia ... Literally

Annette Gordon Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*

Supplementary Reading

None, due to length of main reading.

Nov. 22: An Empire for Slavery?

Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South*.

Supplementary Reading

John M. Murrin, "The Jeffersonian Triumph and American Exceptionalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20:1 (Spring 2000): 1-25.

Steve Deyle, "'The Irony of Liberty': Origins of the Domestic Slave Trade," *Journal of the Early Republic* 12:1 (Spring 1992): 37-62.

John Craig Hammond, "'They Are Very Much Interested in Obtaining an Unlimited Slavery': Rethinking the Expansion of Slavery in the Louisiana Purchase Territories, 1803-1805," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23:3 (Autumn 2003): 353-380.

Nov. 29: Continental Perspectives

Stephen Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State*.

Supplementary Reading

Kathleen DuVal, "Debating Identity, Sovereignty, and Civilization: The Arkansas Valley after the Louisiana Purchase," *Journal of the Early Republic* 26:1 (Spring 2006): 25-58.

Andrew C. Isenberg, "The Market Revolution in the Borderlands: George Champlin Sibley in Missouri and New Mexico, 1808-1826," *Journal of the Early Republic* 21:3 (Autumn 2001): 445-465.

François Furstenberg, "The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History," *American Historical Review* 113:3 (June 2008): 647-677.

Dec. 6: Thinking About the New United States in a Wider World (tentative)

Readings TBA