

HIST-403
The Revolutionary Era in American History
Spring 2020

Prof. Cynthia A. Kierner
Robinson B343; ckierner@gmu.edu
Office hours: Monday 12:30-2:00, or by appointment

How revolutionary was the American Revolution? This course examines the Revolution as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon that accompanied the War of Independence but one whose ultimate significance remained unsettled for at least decade after the Treaty of Paris. The course begins roughly in 1763 and follows American colonists through the imperial crisis that led to the declaration of independence and years of war with Britain, followed by the creation of a national republic and attempts to forge a distinctive American identity. Although we will, of course, discuss the War of Independence, please note that this is *not* a course in military history.

Course Organization: Generally speaking, Mondays will be for lectures and Wednesdays for discussion of assigned reading and/or group work (sometimes to prepare for writing assignments). There is assigned reading for each class meeting, though online quizzes (see below) pertain specifically to the Monday readings. Please bring the assigned text (either paper or digital) to class the day we will discuss it.

Required texts for this course, in addition to some course material posted on Blackboard, are as follows:

- Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History*
- Jane T. Merritt, *The Trouble with Tea: The Politics of Consumption in the Eighteenth-Century Global Economy*
- David Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification*

Written work for this class falls into three categories:

- Quizzes: There will be 10 quizzes posted on the course Blackboard site in the "Quizzes" section. Each quiz corresponds to a particular Monday's assigned reading and must be taken to prepare for class during the week in which that reading is assigned. All quizzes are four multiple-choice questions, timed (30 minutes), and open-book. You should at least skim the assigned reading before opening the quiz to avoid running out of time. If you have done the reading, the quizzes *should be easy*. (The idea is not to trick you, but rather to prepare you for class.) Your best scores from 8 of 10 quizzes will count toward the final course grade. My advice would be to do all of the quizzes, in case illness, forgetfulness, or other circumstances lead you to miss one later in the semester. No extensions or make-ups will be given.

Each quiz will be available on Blackboard from Thursday morning at 6:00 a.m. through the start of class at 10:30 a.m. on Monday. For instance, Quiz 1 will be available at 6:00 a.m. on Thursday 30 January; access to the quiz will close on Monday 3 February at 10:30 a.m.

- Writing: Two short written assignments (2-3 pages, double-spaced) and one somewhat longer essay (3-5 pages). These assignments are described briefly below and in detail in the "Assignments" section of Blackboard, which is where you will submit your work. Late submissions will be penalized, typically at a rate of 5 points per day (on a 100-point scale), or roughly half a letter-grade.
- Final exam: The final exam for this class will be on Wednesday 6 May, 10:30a.m.-1:15 p.m. The final exam will be in-class and open notes. If you miss the exam, you will receive a grade of 0 (zero) unless you submit a formal and specific written medical excuse (i.e., a doctor's letter) within 24 hours. Make-ups will be offered at the discretion of the instructor.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

Quizzes (8 of 10 quizzes; 4 questions each)	25% (actually 24%--1% is free!)
Writing assignment 1 (due 2/24)	10%
Writing assignment 2 (due 3/23)	10%
Writing assignment 3 (due 3/13)	15%
Final exam	25%
Participation	15%

This course uses Blackboard, which you can access via the MyMason portal. The syllabus, quizzes, assignments, readings, and grades each have their own section on the course Blackboard site. I will also post the PowerPoint files used for Monday lectures. These files, however, will be very minimal outlines with images; they will not replicate most lecture material. Students are responsible for taking their own in-class notes. (And you really need to do that because the final exam will be open notes!)

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact Disability Services at 993-2474, <http://ds.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services.

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.

Electronics policy:

Cell phones and other communicative devices are not allowed in this class. Please keep them stowed away and out of sight. Laptops or tablets (e.g., iPads) are permitted for the purpose of taking notes on Monday's lectures, though studies have shown that taking notes by hand is a much more effective way for students to process and retain the content of classroom lectures and discussions. Conversely, having access to a laptop or tablet will be useful—even essential—on most Wednesdays, when you may need to access readings or research databases.

On any day, however, engaging in activities not related to the course (e.g., gaming, email, shopping, etc.) will result in a significant reduction in your participation grade.

Course Schedule

Wed. 22 Jan.: Introductory session: What's new about the American Revolution?

Mon. 27 Jan.: America in 1763. (Read Wood, *American Revolution*, 4-17)

Wed. 29 Jan.: Britain Victorious. Read the documents in "Colonists Respond to British Victory" (on Blackboard).

Mon. 3 Feb.: The Stamp Act Crisis. Read Wood, 17-24 (Quiz 1)

Wed. 5 Feb.: Representing the Stamp Act. Read E. P. Richardson, "Stamp Act Cartoons in the Colonies," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 96 (1972): 275-97 (on Blackboard).

Mon. 10 Feb.: The Road to Rebellion. Read Wood, 27-44 (Quiz 2)

Wed. 12 Feb.: Popular Protest and Partisan Violence. Read Benjamin Irvin, "Tars Feathers, and the Enemies of American Liberties," *New England Quarterly*, 76 (2003): 197-38 (on Blackboard).

Mon. 17 Feb.: Shipping, Shopping, and the Global Context. Read Merritt, *Trouble with Tea*, 1-101

Wed. 19 Feb.: Read Merritt, *Trouble with Tea*, 102-24. In-class work: *People of the Founding Era* database.

Mon. 24 Feb.: The Case for Independence. Read Wood, 47-62 (Quiz 3) **Writing Assignment 1 Due (see directions on Blackboard)**

Wed. 26 Feb.: Read "Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms" and Paine, *Common Sense* (both on Blackboard).

Mon. 2 Mar.: Making Republics. Wood, 65-74 (Quiz 4)

Wed. 5 Mar.: Film: "Mary Silliman's War": Please email me one issue or idea from the film—a single sentence will do—that we can discuss after Spring Break.

~~Spring Break~~

Mon. 16 Mar.: The War for Independence. Wood, 74-88 (Quiz 5)

Wed. 18 Mar.: Making the Common Cause. Read Parkinson, *Common Cause* (on Blackboard). In-class work: *Virginia Gazette*.

Mon. 23 Mar.: American Republicanism. Wood, 91-109 (Quiz 6) **Writing Assignment 2 Due (See directions on Blackboard)**

Wed. 25 Mar.: Postwar Migrations. Read Maya Jasanoff, "The Other Side of Revolution: Loyalists in the British Empire," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 65 (2008): 205-32; Evan Taparata, "'Refugees and You Call Them': The Politics of Refugee Recognition in the Nineteenth-Century United States," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 38 (2019): 9-17 only (both on Blackboard)

Mon. 30 Mar.: Reforms and Its Limits. Wood, 113-35 (Quiz 7)

Wed. 1 Apr.: Revising the Civic Calendar. Read Simon P. Newman, "Principles or Men? George Washington and the Political Culture of National Leadership, 1776-1801," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 12 (1992): 477-507 (on Blackboard).

Mon. 6 Apr.: Slavery and Liberty. Read Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution*.

Wed. 8 Apr.: The Founders and Slavery. Read William Freehling, "The Founding Fathers, Conditional Antislavery, and the Nonradicalism of the American Revolution" and Richard S. Newman "'We Participate in Common': Richard Allen's Eulogy of Washington and the Challenge of Interracial Appeals," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 64 (2007): 117-28 (both on Blackboard).

Mon. 13 Apr.: A More Perfect Union. Wood, 139-58 (Quiz 8) **Writing Assignment 3 Due (See directions on Blackboard)**

Wed. 15 Apr.: The Campaign for Ratification. Read *Federalist Papers* (#s 1, 10, 51, 65, 66, 68, 84, and 85 (all on Blackboard)

Mon. 20 Apr.: A Constitutional Republic. Read Wood, 158-66 (Quiz 9)

Wed. 22 Apr.: Forging a National Culture. Read Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*; Rush, *Thoughts Upon Female Education*; Webster, *The American Spelling Book*; and "Essay on the City of Washington" (all on Blackboard)

Mon. 27 Apr.: Merritt, *Trouble with Tea*, 125-51 (Quiz 10)

Wed. 29 Apr.: To the War of 1812.

Mon. 4 May: Concluding Session: Themes, Issues, and the Thinking about the Final Exam.

****Final Examination (bluebooks only; open notes) is on Wednesday 6 May, 10:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m.**

As noted above, this exam is worth 20% of the total course grade. Students must write their exams in paper examination books—they are usually blue—which can be purchased at the university bookstore; failure to do so will result in a three-point deduction from the exam grade.

This exam is open-notes, which means that you may bring any writing that is the product of your own work into the exam room and refer to it when you answer the questions. You may consult:

- Class notes (handwritten or hard copy of notes taken on a laptop)
- Your notes on assigned reading
- Notes or outlines you made for your other written work
- Written work you submitted for this course

If you can think of anything else that you would like to bring—or if you have other questions—please let me know. You may not use an electronic device during the exam period to consult your notes or to compose your answers.

The rationale behind this type of exam is, on the one hand, to prevent you from having to memorize dates and details and, on the other, to encourage you to take notes and engage in other forms of active learning that will help you to better understand the course material.