History 499 (Spring 2020)
Senior Research Seminar on Revolutionary America

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 5:00-7:00 p.m. and by appointment

This course is the capstone of the History major. Students are required to do a major research paper on a topic dealing with the era of the American Revolution. The paper requires students to demonstrate that they have mastered the skills of historical research, analysis, oral presentation, and written communication. Papers must be 20-25 typed, doubled-spaced pages, plus bibliography. This course is an RS-designated course,* fulfills the Writing Intensive requirement for the History major,** and is a Synthesis course*** for the university’s General Education requirement. IT IS EXPECTED THAT STUDENTS WILL SPEND A MINIMUM OF 10 HOURS/WEEK DOING RESEARCH FOR THIS COURSE.

Books:

Suggested References for Historiographical Background and Bibliography:

Date: Topic/Assignment:

Jan. 27 Introduction: Researching the Revolutionary Era

Feb. 3 Identifying a Topic/ Finding Primary and Secondary Sources
Reading: Gordon Wood, The American Revolution: "Gutting a Book";
Storey, Writing History, Chapters 1 and 2
Written Assignment: Identify TWO potential topics for your research paper, drawing from either my list of potential topics, or the Wood book, or your own knowledge. FOR EACH TOPIC, write a paragraph in which you pose a series of questions that you would like to answer in the paper. Cite the pages in Wood's book that most relate to your topic. Also, using Wood's bibliography or other sources, list at least FIVE secondary sources that will help you learn more about your topic.

Feb. 10 INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS IN MY OFFICE, Robinson 371B. When you come for your appointment, bring a list of potential PRIMARY SOURCES and where you found the primary sources (what collections, databases, libraries, archives)
for each of your TWO topics. In addition to the list, bring a printed short example of the kinds of primary sources that you plan on using for each topic.

Feb. 17 Sources and Methods

MEET AT FENWICK LIBRARY. Room 1014B (Please bring your laptops or other devices for doing research.)

Written Assignment: PROCESS PAPER # 1--Settle on your topic and turn in a paper (approx. 250-300 words) that describes your paper topic and the research process that led you to that topic. What are the primary questions you seek to answer? What books and primary sources have been most important in your research process thus far? How has your research focus evolved over time? COME PREPARED TO ASK INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF DR. GEORGE OBERLE, HISTORY REFERENCE LIBRARIAN.

TURN IN DATABASE EXERCISE AT THE END OF CLASS.

Feb. 24 Historical Texts and Context

Reading: Storey, Writing History, Chapter 3.

Written Assignment: PROCESS PAPER #2--Write a short paper (approx.1-2 pages) that summarizes one of your primary sources and describes the historical context and background (i.e., date, authorship, surrounding events) of the source. Be prepared to discuss your findings.

March 2 INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS IN MY OFFICE, Robinson 371B

Submit your preliminary annotated bibliography. The Bibliography should have three sections: Representative Primary Sources; Secondary Source Books (at least ten); Scholarly Articles (at least three). Briefly discuss (in about three sentences) the source's major focus and/or themes and/or thesis. YOU MUST USE the correction citation style based on the Chicago Manual of Style (available through Fenwick Library databases or in the handout I have given you).

March 16 Finding a Thesis/Writing the Analysis/Framing an Argument

Reading: Storey, Writing History, Chapter 5; Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does It Means to Think Historically?" (handout)

Written Assignment: PROCESSS PAPER # 3: Write a short (approx. 2 pages) paper that connects two or three of your primary sources. You may compare and contrast the sources; explain how they fit together; or show how they tell part of a larger story. Be prepared to discuss your findings.

March 23 Organization/Writing Strategies/Peer Review/Plagarism

Reading: Storey, Writing History, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9.

Written Assignment: Submit your historiographical discussion (approx.. 2-3 pages). Make sure you have discussed AT LEAST THREE-TO-FOUR relevant secondary sources (scholarly books or articles) that help provide the scholarly context for your own research. Explain how your topic relates to the existing
historiography. Will your paper expand upon, modify, revise, or challenge what historians have said about the topic?

March 30       Oral Presentations (Group A)
Written Assignment: ALL STUDENTS MUST SUBMIT A THESIS STATEMENT AND A BRIEF OUTLINE FOR THEIR PAPERS.

Oral Presentations: Prepare a 5-minute oral report in which you BRIEFLY summarize your topic. Although you may make your presentation either in the form of a Poster or Powerpoint or Pressy, you should use the Poster Template (to be provided) as the basis for your presentation. Be sure to explain what your subject is, the chronological boundaries of your project, the kinds of primary sources you are using, and your research questions, and your hypothesis or tentative conclusions. Practice your presentation. Time limits will be strictly enforced.

April 6       Oral Presentations (Group B)

Oral Presentations: Oral Presentations: Prepare a 5-minute oral report in which you BRIEFLY summarize your topic. Although you may make your presentation either in the form of a Poster or Powerpoint or Pressy, you should use the Poster Template (to be provided) as the basis for your presentation. Be sure to explain what your subject is, the chronological boundaries of your project, the kinds of primary sources you are using, and your research questions, and your hypothesis or tentative conclusions. Practice your presentation. Time limits will be strictly enforced.

April 13 INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS IN MY OFFICE, Robinson 71B

April 20 PAPERS DUE BY 1:30 P.M.--No class

This is NOT a draft. This is the first version of the entire paper complete with proper footnotes (though you need not include a formal bibliography with this version). Send an email copy to the person assigned to read your paper and send a one-paragraph Abstract to everyone else in the class. Put a hard copy of the paper, along with the Abstract, in my mailbox in the History Office or on my office door. Papers are due by 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

If you would like the title of your Undergraduate Senior Essay to appear on your transcript, go to the link at masonimpact.gmu.edu and follow the prompts to submit your paper.

April 27 Critiques/Discussion of Papers

Written assignment: Write a one-to-two page critique of the paper assigned to you. Provide one hard copy for me and one copy for the author.

Oral critique: The reviewer should prepare a short presentation (NO MORE than three minutes) that summarizes the reviewed paper's thesis and discusses the paper's major primary source base(s). The reviewer should then discuss the paper's greatest strength and single greatest area in need of improvement. Focus should be on the author's research, evidence, and analysis, not on writing style.
May 4  Historical Skills and Lifelong Learning

Written Assignment: Process Paper # 4--Write a short paper (1-2 pages) in which you discuss your research process and trajectory. How did your paper's focus evolve over time? What proved to be the most useful primary sources for your paper? What secondary work was most helpful? What most surprised you about what you found? What aspect of the research process do you think you handled most effectively? What would you do differently next time?

Students are encouraged to make an appointment to meet with the professor as they prepare the final versions of their papers.

FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE BY noon on Monday, May 11.

Papers should be 20-25 pages in length, plus Bibliography and Notes, typed, double-spaced. In the Bibliography, secondary sources should be listed under three headings: Primary Sources; Secondary Source Books (at least ten); Scholarly Articles (at least three). Online sources/databases/websites should be listed under the appropriate category listed above. Papers MUST use the Chicago Manual of Style citation format, or points will be deducted from the grade.

Please turn in ONE hard copy in my mailbox along with the first version of your paper containing my comments. IN ADDITION, send me an email with your paper as an attachment.

Grading:
Oral presentations and discussion: 15%
Preliminary writing assignments (including Process Papers): 15%
Research paper (60% first version/40% second): 70%

Students MUST turn in all preliminary written assignments in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

OTHER INFORMATION
Criteria for evaluating Research Papers:
* States an original thesis or historical interpretation
* Uses primary sources effectively
* Relates work to existing secondary literature in the field
* Synthesizes and analyzes diverse sources
* Links the subject to broader historical questions or historiography
* Integrates skills and knowledge acquired in other disciplinary contexts
* Writing is clear and grammatical; essay is well-organized, coherent, and follows citation norms of the field
Criteria for evaluating Oral Presentations:
* Demonstrates ability to present one’s work in a clear and organized manner
* Completes the essential elements within the allotted time
* Engages and maintains the audience’s attention
* Demonstrates ability to handle questions from the audience
* Demonstrates ability to synthesize elements from different disciplines

Drop Deadlines
The last day to drop a class without a tuition penalty is Feb. 5. If you drop by Feb. 11, there is a 50% tuition penalty. THE FINAL DROP DATE is Feb. 24, when there is no tuition refund.

Statement on Plagarism and Academic Integrity
All GMU students are bound to abide by the Honor Code (http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/). Plagiarism is a broadly defined term that includes a wide spectrum of violation that involves appropriating another person’s words or ideas as if they were your own. It includes, but is not limited to, the use of another person’s words without attribution or proper citation; submission of work that is not one’s own, whether the work is stolen, purchased, or used with the author’s permission; the too-close paraphrasing of another person’s words or ideas. If you don’t know whether something constitutes plagiarism, ask the instructor. Students suspected of Honor Code violations will be turned over to the university Honor Board for disciplinary action.

Academic Accommodations
If you are a student who needs academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

History 499 is:
*RS-Designated course: This class is designated as a Research and Scholarship Intensive Course, which means that students are given the opportunity to actively participate in the process of scholarship. Students will make a significant contribution by creating an original research paper that synthesizes the student's reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources into a coherent historical essay.

**Writing Intensive course. This class is designated as a Writing Intensive course and fulfills the Writing Intensive requirement in the History major. It does so through the completion of a 20-25 page original historical research paper. The paper will be completed through a draft/feedback/revision process. The first version is due on Nov. 9 or 16. I will provide suggestions for revision. The revised paper is due on Dec. 14.

***Synthesis course. This course is designated a Synthesis course. The purpose of a Synthesis course is to provide students with the opportunity to synthesize the knowledge, skills, and values gained from the general education curriculum. Synthesis courses strive to expand students' ability to master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills across the disciplines.
The purpose of this research paper is to explore a specific, NARROWLY defined topic relating to the American Revolutionary Era, defined as the entire period from 1760-1820, using primary sources and the relevant secondary literature. Your interests may guide you in choosing a topic, but you MUST restrict the scope of your project in order to pursue a manageable topic, doable within one semester. In other words, you should not seek to answer a research question such as: "What were the causes of the American Revolution in Virginia?" but rather: "Why did elite planters in Fairfax County, Virginia, come to support the American Revolution between 1765 and 1776?" And then you need to figure out if the primary sources exist to answer your question.

Finding an adequate primary source base is the first step toward writing a good research paper. These sources can include: newspapers, pamphlets, letters and correspondence, magazines and periodicals, legislative records, laws, novels and poetry, petitions, court records, church records, political cartoons, maps, wills, etc. These sources may be available through online databases, in printed volumes, or at particular libraries and archives (Library of Congress, Fairfax County Courthouse, Society of the Cincinnati, Virginia Historical Society, Massachusetts Historical Society, etc. etc.). You can find many primary source databases for early American history in the Fenwick Library online catalogue reference section at: http://infoguides.gmu.edu/early-america.

Here are some examples of good topics. You may choose one of these topics, modify any of these topics, or find a topic of your own choosing, in consultation with me.

1. Use the manuscript collections at the Society of the Cincinnati Library in Washington, DC to examine George Washington's role in the creation of the Society.
2. Go to the Virginia Room at the Fairfax Library to look at materials related to the Fairfax Resolves passed prior to the American Revolution.
3. Use manuscripts at Holy Trinity Church in Washington, DC to study the relationship between Catholics and slavery during the Revolutionary era.
4. Use the online Papers of the War Department from the 1780s and 1790s to examine American policies toward Native Americans immediately after the American Revolution.
5. Use the online version of the Pennsylvania Gazette newspaper to understand the experiences of indentured servants during the American Revolution.
6. Use the printed and online debates of the ratifying conventions to understand why some Virginians opposed the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.
7. Use pamphlets available online from the Early American Imprint Series (Evans) to understand why people like Andrew Oliver, Samuel Seabury, and Thomas Hutchinson opposed the American Revolution.
8. Using their published writings, compare and contrast the experience of women such as Mercy Otis Warren, Judith Sargent Murray, and Abigail Adams during the American Revolution.

9. Look at Broadsides available in American Memory collection online through the Library of Congress to understand the importance of boycotts against Britain prior to the American Revolution.

10. Look at the American Periodicals Series online to examine connection between the American Revolution and either the Haitian Revolution or the French Revolution.

11. Examine the *Virginia Gazette* online to explore the impact of the American Revolution on runaway slaves.

12. Use the printed papers of General Nathanael Greene and the online Papers of George Washington to explore the relationship between Washington and Greene.

13. Look at the printed papers of John and Abigail Adams to understand the effects of the American Revolution on their marriage and family life.

14. Use newspapers on Historical Newspapers database to study responses in colonies outside of Massachusetts to the Boston Massacre or Boston Tea Party.

15. Use the online Peter Force/American Archives collection to examine the response of colonial legislatures to British policies from 1764-1776.