

History 300 (Spring 2021)

Introduction to Historical Methods: "Exploring Mason's Legacies."

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Class meets on Thursday 7:20-10:00 p.m. via Zoom (see link in Blackboard).
Contact me via email, goberle@gmu.edu –regular office hours on Thursday, 4:00-6:30 p.m. or by appointment.

This course uses the broad topic of the ongoing legacy of our University's namesake, George Mason, to the region and our nation. As such, the course is broadly defined to allow students to select topics from the colonial era through the modern era. Students may focus on local history, political or military topics of their choice or on subjects relating to women, slavery, education, religion, or culture more generally. The objective of this historical methods class is for students to be introduced to the work of historians and to begin doing the work of a historian themselves. Students will be provided with a core set of skills to draw upon and utilize in upper-level coursework, in preparation for taking the capstone course, History 499. Students will learn how to develop research questions, find, and analyze both primary and secondary sources, organize their analyses into arguments that are supported by evidence, and present those arguments effectively in both written and oral forms.

HIST-300 is part of Mason's Students as Scholars initiative. Students who enroll in this "Students as Scholars Inquiry" course will develop a research question, answer that question by using historical research and writing methods, and situate their findings in an appropriate historiographical context. HIST-300 is part of the Mason CORE and also fulfills in part the Writing Intensive requirement for the History major via multiple written assignments of varying lengths. Note that students must earn a grade of C or better in HIST-300 to register for the second required Writing Intensive History course, HIST-499.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to follow the course schedule, which is set out in detail here (below). **We will meet remotely via Zoom on Thursday at 7:20 unless otherwise noted.** Attendance is essential for success in this course, which meets only once weekly. In-class work is significant and often useful for completing the graded written assignments. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with the work on your own and to submit assignments on time. If you come to class unprepared for the day's work, you may be asked to leave.

Reading: There is required reading for nearly all class sessions. Students who miss class must submit a brief summary (200-250 words) of each of that day's assigned readings to avoid losing significant points for participation/discussion. Unless otherwise noted, all class readings are available in the "Course Content" section of Blackboard.

Written work: Students will complete several written assignments, each of which must be submitted electronically through the course Blackboard site unless otherwise directed. For these assignments, please see the course schedule and also the specific directions in the "Assignments" section of Blackboard. Late submissions will be penalized, typically by a deduction of one letter-grade per week.

Oral work: Students will do one informal presentation, in addition to participating regularly in group work and class discussions. Because discussion and in-class work are integral to this course, attendance will be taken

This class will meet online in synchronous class meetings and will also require meeting with the professor for individual appointments as noted in the course schedule below.

Required Reading

Alfred Fabian Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael, eds., *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

Rael, Patrick. *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History: A Guide for College Students*
Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2004. <https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/>

Required articles and excerpts from books to be posted on Blackboard in Course Readings Section

Grades

Course grades will be determined as follows:

- Will/inventory Assignment 10%
- Special Collections assignment 10%
- Preliminary Annotated Bibliography and Proposed Topic 10%
- Primary source assignments (Select 2 out of 3. due by 4/15: 2 x 10%) 20%
- Oral presentation 10%
- Final Omeka project 10%
- Class Participation/discussion 10%
- Final project proposal and annotated bibliography 20%

Assignments will be submitted via Blackboard unless otherwise directed or arranged.

Points earned correspond to the following letter grades:

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	0-59

Rules/Suggestions for Online Learning: This course meets synchronously—in other words, on a specific day and time—and the objective is to come as close to an in-person seminar as possible.

That goal should be attainable in part because our group is relatively small. These simple protocols should further enhance the quality of our weekly discussions:

- All participants should try to remember to mute their audio unless they are speaking. Background noise from multiple sources can be extremely distracting.
- Please consider using live video during our seminar. Ideally, we should all get to know each other, which would be very difficult if we cannot see each other. If you are in a weird place, if your house is a mess, or if you just want some privacy, Zoom allows you to insert a generic or custom virtual background. Go to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/virtual-backgrounds/> for some university-provided options.
- To avoid confusion and to make sure that everyone has a chance to participate in class, we will use the hand-raising function during class discussion

Tentative Schedule (Subject to change)

1. Thursday, January 28, 2021

- Overview of Syllabus, Course and Blackboard Course Site.
- *Finding Kate*: What primary sources does Ph.D. candidate Sara Collini use to reconstruct the life of an enslaved woman at George Washington's Mount Vernon?
- Tutorial on "Top 5" research resources for early American history: <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/early-american> (also accessible via Blackboard as "Library Research Guide").
- Mason's Legacy- Reading George Mason's Will and exploring the inventories
- Sign up in class to read one of four articles for next week.

2. Thursday, February 4, 2021

How to read a scholarly source and piece things together.

Read

- Rael's "Reading Sources" 2.a-2.d <https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/reading/>
- Copeland, Pamela C., and Richard K. MacMaster. "George Mason IV: The Sage of Gunston Hall." In *The Five George Masons*, 229-45. University of Virginia Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/j.ctt1b4cxfd.14>.
- Group 1 Read and Discussion in class
 - Peter Wallenstein, "Flawed Keepers of the Flame," *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography* 102, no. 2 (April 1994): 229-260.
- Group 2 Read
 - Peter R. Henriques, "An Uneven Friendship: The Relationship Between George Washington and George Mason," *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography* 97, no. 2 (March 1989): 185-204.
- Group 3 Read
 - Joseph Horrell, "George Mason and the Fairfax Court," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 91, no. 4 (1983): 418-39.
- Group 4 Read

- Brent Tarter, "George Mason and the Conservation of Liberty," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 99, no. 3 (1991): 279–304.
- Begin transcribing wills and inventories in class. Each student will participate in the transcription. These transcriptions will be important for your wills/inventory assignment due in a few weeks.
 - Stevens Thomson Mason
 - Mary Mason
 - Thomson Mason
 - George Mason V

What is the difference between a will and an inventory?

3. Thursday, February 11, 2021

Finding and using secondary sources

- Read Rael's "Historical Arguments" 3.a-3.e and this visual guide to the research process see <https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/research/the-research-process/>
- Read "Introduction" and the assigned chapter in Young's *Revolutionary Founders...*
 - Write a two-page analysis of the assigned essay.
 - What historical question is the author posing (and attempting to answer)?
 - What types of primary sources does she use to find evidence to answer this question? (Letters? Diaries? Court records? Legal codes? Newspapers? Maps?)
 - What is the author's thesis (i.e., the concise answer to the research question)?
 - Which arguments of other scholars does the author address, and why? (Be sure to read the footnotes, as well as the text, to complete this part of the assignment.)
 - How does the author answer the "So what" question? What big issue(s) does the author address? How does the author make the case for the importance of their work?
 - Using the suggested topics lists or ones that you have discussed with me start to develop ideas for a research topic. Try to think about the topic by asking questions. See some examples below.
 - What was George Mason's stand on slavery?
 - What impact did manumission laws have on Virginia in the years following the American Revolution?
 - What role did the Bicentennial Celebration of the Constitution have on the reputation of George Mason?

Introduction to the Library Resources

- Before class watch Videos in Course Content area of Blackboard
 - Video-Using the Library Catalog
 - Video-Using Journal Databases
 - In class workshop using library resources

4. Thursday, February 18, 2021

Read one of the newsletters from the Historic Records Center. Available here.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit/historic-records-center/newsletter>

and

Edith Moore Sprouse, "Outrage Near Spring Bank: Slave Resistance in Fairfax County, *Yearbook; The Historical Society of Fairfax County Virginia*, v29, 99-116.

Using an archive

Guest Speaker Ms. Georgia Brown, Assistant Archivist -Historic Records Center Fairfax County Circuit Court

- Virtual Visit to the SCRC
 - Watch video before class and participate in class discussion and in-class work

Special Collections assignment due at the end of class

5. Thursday, February 25, 2021

Developing a research project

- Read full sections of Rael
 - "Working with Sources" <https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/working-with-sources/>
 - "Research" <https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/research/>
- Read excerpts of "The Confessions of Edward Isham." in the course content area of Blackboard

Guest Speaker Mr. Christopher Barbuschak-Virginia Room Archivist/Librarian Fairfax County Public Library

6. Thursday, March 4, 2021

Individual Meetings to discuss project ideas. NO CLASS

Will/inventory Assignment DUE

7. Thursday, March 11, 2021

Primary Source Workshop 1: Using Published Books, Pamphlets and non-periodical sources

- Read Seth Cotlar, "Every Man Shall Have Property?: Robert Coram and the American Revolution's Legacy of Economic Populism," in Alfred Fabian Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael, eds., *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011). Pay attention to the use of sources for our discussion.
- America's Historical Imprints
<http://mutex.gmu.edu/login?URL=http://infoweb.newsbank.com/?db=EAI>X (Evans, 1639-1800; Evans SupplementLCP; Shaw-Shoemaker, 1801-1819; Shaw-Shoemaker, 1801-1819 LCP supplement)

- Watch before class: Video tutorial
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHEOT3S1OMo&list=PLrT5d5PDyOJHUBYaqx3HH6MGk595UHenR&index=3>
- Each student will select a genre heading listed which looks like it may be useful to their work. Explore an appropriate database to start gathering sources for your topic. Please send me an email listing the genre/area you are exploring by **3/10/2021**.
- Students will select three sources in that genre/area and write a description of the content.
 - What are some strengths of this as a source and what are weaknesses? What kind of historical questions can be asked and/or answered by the source? What can you do with a collection of documents from this genre?
 - Students will also explore and discuss basic historical questions we ask of all sources.
 - Who produced the document?
 - To (or for) whom was s/he writing?
 - What was the author's purpose in creating this document?
 - What was the main points/he sought to convey?
 - What was happening in the author's life and career at the time s/he wrote your document?
 - What was happening in the lives of the document's presumed reader(s)?

We will also discuss other major collections of published content as primary sources including Sabin Americana, Hathi Trust etc. You will present your preliminary findings to in our discussions in class.

8. Thursday, March 18, 2021

Primary Source Workshop 2: Periodicals as a Primary Source

Students will explore a relevant periodical database and identify relevant content for their projects. Write an explanation of the search strategy you used to explore the resource and explain why you selected the database and the strategy. There is an assignment on Blackboard that will be used to start us in a close reading of newspapers then you will explore the databases for relevant sources for your project.

Read Labaree, Benjamin W. "The Idea of American Independence: The British View, 1774-1776." *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 82 (1970): 3-20.

Complete *Massachusetts Spy* Worksheet

9. Thursday, March 25, 2021

Introduction to Omeka: Guest Speaker Ms. Alyssa Fahringer-Digital Humanities Specialist

- Read: Omeka, [Getting Started with Omeka - Examples and Case Studies](#)
 - Examine some sites and think about how they are constructed. Think about how you might want to organize your site.

- Read: Todd Moye, "Goin' North: Stories from the Great Migration to Philadelphia (Review)," *Oral History Review* 43, no. 2 (2016): 425-427.

Preliminary Annotated Bibliography and Proposed Topic DUE

10. Thursday, April 1, 2021

Primary Source Workshop 3: Petitions and Government Documents

- Read Roy E. Finkbine, "Belinda's Petition: Reparations for Slavery in Revolutionary Massachusetts," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 64 (2007): 95-104; Fredrika Teute Schmidt and Barbara Ripel Wilhelm, "Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 30 (1973): 133-46.
- Students will explore a relevant government document resources and databases and identify relevant content for their projects. Write an explanation of the search strategy you used to explore the resource and explain why you selected the database and the strategy.

11. Thursday, April 8, 2021

Individual Appointments to discuss project

12. Thursday, April 15, 2021

In class work on Omeka project

Primary source assignment(s) due

13. Thursday, April 22, 2021

Presentations Group 1

14. Thursday, April 29, 2021 Last Class

Presentations Group 2

Final Omeka project and Annotated Bibliography project DUE 5/3/2021

Suggested Topics: These are topics which can be explored to find a researchable set of questions and will yield a good project.

- Mason Family and Education in late 18th-century early 19th century Virginia.
- Mason, Marriage, and Family Life in late 18th-century early 19th century Virginia.
- Mason's Role as a Member of the Virginia Gentry and early American democracy.
- The Influence of Mason's Declaration of Rights on other state constitutions
- Religion in early American life—(A study of the religious life on a plantation would be very interesting.)
- Mason's reasons for opposing the US Constitution compared with those of antifederalist Mercy Otis Warren
- Mason/Mason Family relationships with indigenous peoples.
- Comparative Biography
- Comparative analysis of enslaved populations at Gunston Hall and Mount Vernon (Monticello)

- Gunston Hall compared with another eighteenth-century English (and/or Virginia) mansion of the time
- Comparison of ports of Colchester and Alexandria and/or Dumfries.
- Transportation (Canals, Railroads, roads) and political arguments over internal improvements in Virginia/Maryland etc.
- Mason family and the War of 1812 Service
- Armistead Mason
- Revolutionary War Service
- Mexican American War and the role of the Mason family/slavery/westward expansion
- George Thompson Mason
- Mason's Views on Slavery compared with those George Washington
- Mason's Success as a Businessman, Land Speculator, and Planter
- Plantation Management in late eighteenth early nineteenth century Chesapeake
- Food-ways/Dining in Plantations (Lots of sources at Gunston Hall and Mount Vernon)
- Taverns and Social life
- Women and Reading
- Haitian Revolution
- Partisanship in early America (let's talk about specific ideas)
- Ideas about liberty and freedom amongst Virginians.
- Members of the Mason Family as a lens or way to explore questions in society
- Confederate Masons
- James Murray Mason US politician (Senate and House of Representatives) and Confederate envoy to Great Britain. (Trent Affair)
- George Mason 16 April 1830 – 3 February 1895
- Thomson Mason Family (Loudoun County)
- Comparative analysis between Mason family figure and comparable figure such as John Mason and Bushrod Washington.
- Specific Explorations of Enslaved people at Mason Homes and Plantations.
- Study of slavery in Fairfax/Loudoun etc. Comparative analysis.
- Owners of Gunston Hall (Colonial Dames) or similar institution:
<http://www.mountvernon.org/the-estate-gardens/the-mansion/owners-of-mount-vernon/>
- Heritage Tourism and/or Monuments and Memorials
- The duel and dueling
- County court as community center in early America
- Specific programs of study-“Legacies of George Mason” program of the 1980s at George Mason University.
- Civil Rights movement at George Mason University in the 60s and 70s.
- Roger Wilkins-Robinson Professor at GMU, Pulitzer Prize Winning Journalist and Civil Rights Activist.
- Kate Mason Rowland (early George Mason collector and family member—United Daughters of the Confederacy.)
- Bicentennial Celebration of the Constitution
- Robert Rutland (Editor of the Papers of George Mason—and others)
- History of Gunston Hall and Historical sites
- Historical Preservation and Monuments
 - Gunston Hall
 - Statues
 - Stamps and George Mason Medal

- Publishing
- Naming (counties,
- Medical knowledge in early America.
- Social impact of bastardry laws in early Virginia
- Slave patrols and policing in northern Virginia area.
- Resistance to policing and slave laws in northern Virginia.
- Exploring the George Mason University Campus History
- Exploring aspects of the peoples in the Mason Neck Region
 - Gunston Hall
 - Environmental Protection
 - State and County parks
 - Point of View Center
- Other ideas...Please ask. There are many comparative biographical projects as well as projects on slavery, enslaved people, women, military, education, economics/trade in region, Atlantic World.

A Note on Research during the Pandemic

Your project must include primary and scholarly secondary sources—and, for the latter, both books and articles. Fortunately, for research in early American history, many credible and useful sources are available digitally, including the following:

- Open-source collections of primary sources, the most important of which is Founders Online.
- Databases to which the Mason library subscribes, which are available via the library catalog/website, the most important of which include America's Historical Imprints, Early American Newspapers, and American Periodicals. For more information, go to <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/early-american>
- Also see guides for other time periods if your research is focused in a later period.
 - <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/sources-US-1820s-1880s>
 - <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/US-History-1880-1930>
 - <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/modern-US-history>
- Digital editions of scholarly journals are also available from Fenwick Library. The best way to search for journal articles is by using the database America: History and Life. That being said, you will also need to read or consult books to complete your final project. Fenwick Library has some (mostly recent) scholarly monographs available as ebooks; many other books are available electronically during the pandemic via Hathi Trust. For more information on Hathi Trust Emergency Access, see <https://timesync.gmu.edu/libnews/?p=10303>. In addition, you will have access to actual books from most of the stacks via preorder and contactless pick-up. Inter-Library Loan is also available, albeit not as extensively as usual. For more information on library services during the fall semester, go to <https://library.gmu.edu/faq-page#t127n34362>. In the unlikely event that you cannot otherwise obtain access to a book that is absolutely essential for your topic, you can obviously buy the item.

Selected Important Dates from Academic Calendar:

See <https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/spring-2021/>

Last Day to Drop with 100% Refund	Fri. Feb 12	Mon. Jan 25 (Final Drop)	Fri. Mar 19 (Final Drop)
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Last Day to Drop (Last Day for 50% Refund)	Tues. Feb 16	N/A	N/A
Unrestricted Withdrawal Period	Wed. Feb 17 - Mon. Mar 1	Tue. Jan 26 - Sun. Feb 7	Sat. Mar 20 – Thurs. Apr 1
Mid-term Evaluation Period: 100-200 level classes - Grades Available via PatriotWeb	Sun. Feb 21 – Wed. Mar 24	N/A	N/A
<u>Selective Withdrawal Period</u> - Undergraduate Students Only (100% tuition liability)	Tues. Mar 2 - Thurs. Apr 1	Mon. Feb 8 - Sun. Feb 14	Fri. Apr 2 – Thurs. Apr 8