This course uses the broad topic of the ongoing legacy of our University’s namesake, George Mason, to the region and our nation, as a means to introduce students to history as a discipline. 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 both a Mason Impact and Research (RS) designated course. 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). 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 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 face to face class meetings and will also require meeting with the professor for individual appointments as noted in the course schedule below.
Required Reading


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

**Grades**

*Course grades* will be determined as follows:

- Secondary Source Analysis of a Journal Article 5%
- Secondary Source Efficient Reading Book 5%
- Will Assignment 10%
- Special Collections assignment 10%
- Topic Proposal and Bibliography Assignment 10%
- Primary source assignments (Select 2 out of 3. due by 4/15: 2 x 10%) 20%
- Final Omeka project 30%
- Class Participation/Discussion/Presentation 10%

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

**Tentative Schedule (Subject to change)**

**Class 1: Tuesday, January 25, 2022**

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](https://infoguides.gmu.edu/early-american)
Analyzing a primary source: Reading George Mason’s Last Will and Testament

Sign up for reading of article for next week.

Class 2: Tuesday, February 1, 2022
Close Reading of Secondary Sources and understanding how scholars structure their work
This exercise requires you to read a journal article using the eye of a historian. Last week you signed up to read one of the three articles below. Make sure you take notes as you read.

As you read, you should constantly ask questions. Here are some examples.

- What is the author’s argument, and am I persuaded? If so, what evidence is particularly persuasive? If not, what evidence does not fit? Or what would it take for me to believe the author’s point?
- What does the author care about? What are some of the key terms she uses again and again? What terms does she use for controversial ideas and events?
- How did the author write this book? What sources did she use? Only primary sources, only secondary, or a mixture? Is there one source that provided most of her material? Who are the people in the book—are it only about rich white men, or are other groups’ stories told as well?
- Why did my professor assign this article? How does it fit into the course? Does it agree with other secondary sources and the professor’s lectures, or is there a debate? How does this book square with things I’ve learned outside of class? (It may help to read with your class notes at hand.)
- What do I think of this book? What is missing from the book—what would I like to know more about? What is surprising? What is funny? What made me angry?

Each of you must submit a 1-2 page essay that summarizes the key points of the article. Here are examples of things that should be covered in your work:
- 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?) o What is the author's thesis (i.e., the concise answer to the research question)?
- Make sure you this is turned in and that you have access to it (print or electronic copy) in class for our discussion,

Group 1 Read and Discussion in class

Group 2 Read

Group 3 Read

In class discussion of articles in groups.

Introduction to using wills and inventories as sources in class assignment.

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.

Where do you find Wills/Inventories?

George Mason V
Stephens Thomson Mason
Ann Mason

Select chapter of Glover’s book for next week.

Class 3: Tuesday, February 8, 2022

Using Libraries to find Secondary Sources and Using them efficiently.


Each student must submit a 1-2 page essay that summarizes the key points of the Introduction, Chapter assigned/selected, and Epilogue. Try to include the following:

- 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)? Do this for each chapter you are reading.
- 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 she address? How does she make the case for the importance of her book?

Bring this document to class for our discussion.

Introduction to the Library Resources

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

Developing a bibliography and citations-Zotero


If there is time you can continue working on Will transcription in class.

Class 4 Tuesday, February 15, 2022

Using an archive and improving on existing scholarship writing a research question

Read

• Rael’s “Reading Sources” 2.a-2.d https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/reading/

Virtual Visit to the GMU SCRC

• Watch video before class and participate in class discussion and in-class work

Special Collections assignment due at the end of class
Watch
- Writing Center: How to write a Research Questions

Read

Class 5 Tuesday, February 22, 2022
No Class-Discussion of your potential topics: Each student will make an individual appointment with me. Each student will come with a potential topic and research question to explore. Please bring a bibliography with at least 1 book and a total of three secondary sources to the meeting that relate to the topic. Make sure you have a citation in both the bibliography and the footnote form.

Please make sure your transcriptions have been emailed to me. I will put them in a shared folder in BB so each of you can use it for your will comparison assignment due next week.

Class 6 Tuesday, March 1, 2022
Guest Speaker Georgia Brown See the content in BB.
Read one of the newsletters from the Historic Records Center. Available here. https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit/historic-records-center/newsletter

- 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 full sections of Rael
  - “Working with Sources” https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/working-with-sources/
  - “Research” https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/research/

In class-BRAINSTORMING topics
- 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?
  - Were the judges of the Fairfax County Court actively involved in governing the county between 1740-1768?
  - 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?

No Class-Discussion of your potential topics: Each student will make an individual appointment with me. Each student will come with a potential topic and research question to explore. Please bring a bibliography with at least 1 book and a total of three secondary sources to the meeting that relate to the topic. Make sure you have a citation in both the bibliography and the footnote form.

Will Comparison Assignment DUE
Class 7 Tuesday, March 8, 2022
Primary Source Workshop 1: Using Published Books, Pamphlets and non-periodical sources


- America’s Historical Imprints
- Watch before class: Video tutorial
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHEOT3S1OMo&list=PLrT5d5PDyOJHUBYaqx3H6MGk595UHenR&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHEOT3S1OMo&list=PLrT5d5PDyOJHUBYaqx3H6MGk595UHenR&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.

Submit your Topic Proposal and Bibliography Assignment

Tuesday, March 15, 2022
NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

Class 8 Tuesday, March 22, 2022
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.

Complete Massachusetts Spy Worksheet

Class 9 Tuesday, March 29, 2022

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.

Class 10 Tuesday, April 5, 2022
Primary Source Workshop 3: Petitions and Government Documents
- 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.

Tuesday, April 12, 2022
No Class-Individual Appointments to discuss project

Class 11 Tuesday, April 19, 2022
In class Workshop on Omeka Project. Alyssa Fahringer will join us.
Primary source assignment(s) due: Please remember you are to complete and submit the assigned topics for 2 of the 3 primary source workshops we had.

Tuesday, April 26, 2022
Presentations Group 1

Tuesday, May 3, 2022
Presentations Group 2

Final Omeka project and Annotated Bibliography project DUE 5/8/2021

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-vernnon/
• 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
• 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.
  o https://infoguides.gmu.edu/sources-US-1820s-1880s
  o 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.