HISTORY 389-007: THE WAR OF 1812

“America’s Forgotten War” does not occupy much space in public consciousness, but this wide-ranging conflict was essential in shaping the political, military, geographic, and economic future of the new United States, as well as the futures of Canada, Florida, the British, French, and Spanish empires, and Native American communities both east and west of the Mississippi. In this class, we will explore the origins, events, and outcomes of this forgotten war, covering topics ranging from the high politics of the Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe administrations to the daily lives of American soldiers and sailors to Native American independence movements in the heart of the continent. While the results of the war may have been indecisive in the short term, the long-term consequences of the conflict held tremendous significance for the United States and the peoples of North America. In order to understand this conflict and its significance, we have to think in new ways about American history, moving beyond the internal national history of the new United States to explore Atlantic and continental contexts and the whole range of actors within those contexts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Class Participation and Preparation: This course is heavily based on reading and discussion—your attendance and active participation are crucial to its success. Evidence of preparation (i.e., having done and thought about the reading and any discussion questions), quality of discussion, engagement with other students’ ideas, and appropriate behavior all factor into the class participation grade.

Preparation includes bringing a copy of the reading, something to write with, and paper to write on in order to be ready for any in-class writing or exercises we may do. (This is subject to accommodation for students with disabilities that may interfere with their ability to write using traditional media.)

Short Assignments: Many weeks there will be a brief written assignment based on the readings or other exercises used to encourage thought and discussion. Details and instructions for each specific short exercise will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard. Often these will simply be reactions to the reading; other times they might be explorations of primary sources; sometimes they might be assignments designed to help you
prepare for the essays (see below). They don’t usually require much sustained writing, but they should be the result of real consideration and effort.

Short Assignments are graded mostly on a completion and effort basis—if the assignment is completed and demonstrates serious engagement and effort, it will receive full credit. If it only demonstrates superficial engagement or token effort, they will receive some degree of partial credit.

In-Semester Reflections: Two times during the semester, you will be asked to complete a reflection on what you have learned during the preceding section of the class. These will have three main parts: 1) a section where you describe the most important information and ideas you’ve learned in that section of the class; 2) a section where you describe and assess your own understanding and engagement over that period of time; 3) a consideration of what you and the class can do to ensure your continued success and understanding of the material.

Essays: You will write two five- to six-page essays based on course materials, one in the first half of the semester and one in the second half. Details of these assignments will be distributed in class.

Final Reflection: There will be a final reflection due during exam period. This reflection is designed to help you think about the larger implications and significance of what we have covered this semester, what you have learned, and how it might shape your understanding of history and events going forward. This is not a major, high-stakes “final” exam or project, but rather a more open-ended, relatively low-stakes opportunity to synthesize and take stock of what you have learned.

Grading:
- Participation 15%
- Short Exercises 15%
- In-Semester Reflections 15%
- Papers (together) 45%
- Final Reflection 10%

IN-CLASS BEHAVIOR
Behaviors such as frequent tardiness, leaving early, packing up to leave before class is over, sleeping, eating, talking when others are speaking, texting, checking email, using social media, and doing work for other classes have a strong negative effect on your own learning as well as on your classmates’ ability to concentrate in class. Please make the effort to respect the class and your classmates—avoid or minimize disruption and distraction and help create an engaged, positive environment in class!

EXPLORING CHARGED TOPICS
Our course may cover issues of race, slavery, gender, sexual exploitation, violence, and oppression that still have resonance today. In dealing with these issues, it is important to be
both respectful of the historical experience of the people involved and aware of the larger implications of that history in our world. This means making the effort to learn the appropriate vocabulary for discussing these issues in an analytical and scholarly way and avoiding uncritically echoing language that replicates the attitudes and assumptions of the past. This does not mean shying away from dealing with these issues if you are unsure of how to talk or write about them—we will do our best to confront them frankly and directly, and the course is designed to help you do so.

Because this is a learning process and these are complex and charged issues, we should presume good faith and give everyone the benefit of the doubt when people struggle with some of these concepts. At the same time, we should all work to earn that benefit of the doubt by engaging in good faith, by learning from our mistakes, and by being open to new perspectives and ways of seeing this complex history and what it means to people today.

**DUE DATES AND LATE WORK**

All assignments are officially due at the time specified in the assignment. Meeting these due dates is important for the pacing of the class, for student interaction, and for the way in which assignments are designed to build upon one another. This is particularly important for short assignments, which are often designed to be part of class discussion on the day that they are due.

That said, I also recognize the complexity of working and learning under the current circumstances. Work that is turned in up to a week after its due date will be accepted with no questions asked and no penalty. **If you need more time than that, please contact me in order to make a plan.**

My goal is to make sure you are able to complete the required work and get what you want out of the class, but that requires clear communication and planning in the event of major challenges.

**IMPORTANT:** In order to be counted and graded, **all work besides the final reflection must be turned in by the end of reading period** (currently scheduled as Tuesday, May 10) unless you have contacted me and we have agreed upon another specific plan.

***In general, if you have any kind of problem that interferes with your work for the class, please consult with me as soon as possible.***

**HONOR CODE STATEMENT**

All work in this 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.*
More information can also be found at the GMU Office of Academic Integrity.

All suspected violations of the honor code will be presented to the Honor Board.

OTHER POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Administrative Dates
Last day to add: Monday, January 31
Last day to drop with no tuition penalty: Monday, February 7
Last day to drop (with 50% tuition refund): Monday, February 14
Unrestricted Withdrawal Period (no tuition refund): Tues., Feb. 15 to Tues., Mar. 1
Selective Withdrawal Period (no tuition refund): Wed., Mar. 2 to Mon., April 11

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 Mason email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

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.

REQUIRED TEXTS
The following books are required reading for this class:

• Eustace, Nicole. 1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. (You can purchase this or download from JSTOR via Mason Libraries.)

Additional required readings listed on the syllabus are available via Blackboard or through GMU’s subscriptions to various online databases, which can be accessed via the GMU Library’s homepage (library.gmu.edu).

Other readings may be handed out in class or distributed electronically, and those will also be considered part of the required reading.

You should ALWAYS make sure you have access to the readings to refer to in class.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

(NOTE: this schedule is subject to change due to a variety of factors—weather, illness, class interest, etc… Any changes will be announced in class, and an updated syllabus will be uploaded to Blackboard. Please make sure to keep informed about any changes.)

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION
M, Jan. 24: Course Introduction

W, Jan. 26: The History of History: Interpretations of the War of 1812
Reading:

WEEK TWO: SHAPING THE NEW UNITED STATES
M, Jan. 31: Tensions and Challenges in a New Nation
Reading:
• George Washington’s Farewell Address (September 19, 1796)
  http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents_gw/farewell/transcript.html
  (The important substantive stuff starts around page 5.)

W, Feb. 2: Political Partisanship and the Election of Thomas Jefferson
Reading:

WEEK THREE: CONTINENTAL POLITICS
M, Feb. 7: The Long War for the West
Reading:
• François Furstenberg, “The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History,” American Historical Review 113, no. 3 (June 2008): 647-677.

W, Feb. 9: Native Perspectives on Continental Politics
Reading:

WEEK FOUR: ATLANTIC POLITICS
M, Feb. 14: The New Nation in an Atlantic World
Reading:
**W, Feb. 16:** Why So Much Concern for Sailors?

**Reading:**

**WEEK FIVE: DECLARING WAR**

**M, Feb. 21:** American Diplomacy in a World at War

**Reading:**
- Stagg, Chapter 1, “War,” in *The War of 1812*, pp. 18-47.

**W, Feb. 23:** The Politics of Declaring War

**Reading:**
- Jasper M. Trautsch, “‘Mr. Madison’s War’ or the Dynamic of Early American Nationalism?” *Early American Studies* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 630-670.

**WEEK SIX: FALSE STARTS AND FAILURES**

**M, Feb. 28:** 1812

**Reading:**

**W, Mar. 2:** Thinking about Canada

**Reading:**

**WEEK SEVEN: PAN-INDIAN INSURGENCY IN THE OLD NORTHWEST**

**M, Mar. 7:** The Prophet and the Warrior

**Reading:**

**W, Mar. 9:** 1813

**Reading:**

**WEEK EIGHT: SPRING BREAK**

**M, Mar. 14:** No Class—Spring Break

**W, Mar. 16:** No Class—Spring Break
WEEK NINE: CULTURAL MEANINGS OF THE DRIVE FOR WAR
M, Mar. 21: Population, Passion, and United States Nationalism
Reading:
• Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism*, Preface and Chapter 1 (pp. ix-35).

W, Mar. 23: Explaining Failure
Reading:
• Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism*, Chapter 2 (pp. 36-75).

WEEK TEN: REPRESENTATIONS OF WHAT THE FIGHT WAS FOR
M, Mar. 28: Honor and Romance
Reading:
• Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism*, Chapter 3 (pp. 76-117).

W, Mar. 30: Family
Reading:
• Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism*, Chapter 4 (pp. 118-167).

WEEK ELEVEN: THE CHESAPEAKE CAMPAIGN
M, Apr. 4: 1814
Reading:
• Stagg, Chapter 4, “1814,” in *The War of 1812*, pp. 109-139.

W, Apr. 6: Class and Regional Tensions
Reading:

WEEK TWELVE: SLAVERY AND THE WAR
M, Apr. 11: Disruptions of Slavery in the Chesapeake
Reading:

W, Apr. 13: Burning the Capital
Reading:

WEEK THIRTEEN: ENDING THE WAR
M, Apr. 18: A Negotiated Peace
Reading:

W, Apr. 20: Winning the Peace
   Reading:
   • Eustace, 1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism, Conclusion (pp. 211-235).

WEEK FOURTEEN: AMERICAN EXPANSION AFTER THE WAR

M, Apr. 25: Flex Day (for catching up or reviewing—exact plan TBA)

W, Apr. 27: American Expansion after the War
   Reading:

WEEK FIFTEEN: WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

M, May 2: Looking Back
   Reading

W, May 4: Catch-up and Review for Final

FINAL REFLECTION WILL BE DUE FRIDAY, MAY 13