History 403 (FINAL, REVISED)

Era of the American Revolution (2022)

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Office: Horizon Hall, Room 3216
Office hours: Mondays, 10:00 a.m.-noon and by appointment

Required books:
Pauline Maier, American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence (1997)

The American Yawp, at http://americanyawp.com, is a free online textbook that will provide the basic historical facts and overarching narrative for the events that we will discuss in a more focused way in class. The assigned sections will give you a fuller grasp of the class lectures, readings, and discussions.

Blackboard readings can be found under “Course Content” for HIST 403.

STUDENTS MUST BRING EACH DAY’S READING TO CLASS, either digitally or in hard copy.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic/Readings/Assignments</th>
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| Jan. 24| Introduction: Many American Revolutions  
Reading: Begin reading Calloway, The Scratch of a Pen (entire). |
| Jan. 26| Empires and Indians on the North American Continent  
| Jan. 31| Reading: Continue reading Calloway, The Scratch of a Pen (entire) |
| Feb. 2 | Class Discussion: Calloway, The Scratch of a Pen (entire)  
Writing--Calloway paper due. On p. 65, Calloway asserts: “In attempting to manage its new empire [after 1763], the British government had to deal with competing groups, incompatible goals, and increasingly vicious contests over the spoils of victory, and it sometimes found itself in the middle.” Discuss this issue using three examples drawn from three different chapters of the book. Use evidence from the book to support your points. Be sure to explain what changed after 1763. Papers should be 750-800 words (approx. 3 pages), typed in12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced. |
Feb. 7 Elite Principles and Popular Resistance during the 1760s & 1770s

Reading and Discussion: The American Yawp, (Chapter 5: I, II, at http://americanyawp.com; Resolves of the Pennsylvania Assembly on the Stamp Act, Sept. 21, 1765 (Blackboard); Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser, Oct. 31, 1765 (Blackboard)

Writing--Blog 1: Look at the masthead (the area within and above the horizontal lines) for the Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser, Oct. 31, 1765. This newspaper was published the day before the Stamp Act was set to go into effect in the colonies. In a blog of 200-250 words or so (one paragraph), discuss the various protest symbols that the printer included on the masthead and what they mean in the context of the impending imposition of a British tax on newspapers.


Feb. 14 Reading and Discussion: The American Yawp, Chapter 5: IV at http://americanyawp.com. Begin reading Maier, Sacred Scripture, pp. ix-xxi, 3-170; Sons of Liberty assignment (see below)

Writing--Blog 2: Go to the COMING OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION /FORMATION OF THE COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE page at the Massachusetts Historical Society website. Google either “coming of revolution massachusetts historical society committees of correspondence” or go to: https://www.masshist.org/revolution/committees.php

Read the Introduction on this webpage. Then take a look at the document, “Patriotic Province of Virginia.” You may read either the original document or the transcription. In your Blogpost, answer questions 1-6 under “Questions to Consider.”

Feb. 16 Reading and Discussion: Continue reading Maier, Sacred Scripture, pp. ix-xxi, 3-170. Fairfax County Resolves (1774) (Blackboard); Letter from George Washington to George William Fairfax, June 10, 1774 (Blackboard)

Feb. 21 Reading and Discussion: Continue reading Maier, Sacred Scripture, pp. ix-xxi, 3-170. Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation (Nov. 1775) (Blackboard); GW letter to Gen. Joseph Reed, Dec. 15, 1775 (Blackboard)

Writing--Blog 3: Re-read the transcript of Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation and George Washington’s letter to Joseph Reed. In a blog of 200-250 words (one paragraph), discuss why the printer of the Pennsylvania Journal attacked Lord Dunmore and his proclamation, even though he chose to publish it. Also, explain what George Washington meant when he called Dunmore an “Arch Traitor to the Rights
of Humanity”? Do you think these are the reactions Lord Dunmore sought or expected when he issued his proclamation? Explain.

Feb. 23  
Declaring Independence and the American War  

Feb. 28  
*Class Discussion:* Maier, *Sacred Scripture*, pp. ix-xxi, 3-170  
*Writing--Maier paper due.* On p. 48-49, Maier notes that were at least ninety state and local “declarations of independence” that were written in various places before Thomas Jefferson penned the “official” Declaration of Independence adopted by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia in July 1776.

According to Maier, how did these state and local declarations influence the Continental Congress as they were drafting the “official” Declaration of Independence? Discuss at least three provisions, principles, or complaints that appeared in these declarations as well as in the official Declaration of Independence. Also, explain how knowing about these state and local declarations of independence changes our understanding of the “official” Declaration of Independence. Use evidence from the book to support your points. Papers should be 750-800 words (approx. 3 pages), typed, double-spaced.

March 2  
The War for Independence: Soldiers, Slaves, Women, Loyalists, and Native Americans  
*Reading and Discussion:* *The American Yawp*, Chapter 5: V at http://americanyawp.com; Howard Peckham, “Independence: the View from Britain” (Blackboard); Philip Mead, “‘Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings’: The Betrayals of Private Joseph Plumb Martin, Continental Soldier”

*Writing--Blog 4:* In a Blogpost of 200-250 words, discuss at least two of the reasons why the British, according to Peckham, objected to, rejected, or dismissed the Americans’ Declaration of Independence.

March 7  

March 9  
*In-class film:* Watch *Mary Silliman’s War*

*Writing—Blog 5:* Based on your viewing of *Mary Silliman’s War*, write a Blogpost of 200-250 words in which you discuss how the fact that Mary Silliman
was a woman meant that she experienced the Revolutionary War differently from either her husband or from other Patriot men in Fairfield, her Connecticut town. Was her womanhood a strength or a weakness during the war? Provide at least two examples drawn from the movie.

March 21
**Inclusions and Exclusions in the First State Constitutions**
*Reading and Discussion: The American Yawp*, Chapter 5: VI at [http://americanyawp.com](http://americanyawp.com); [George Mason], *Virginia Declaration of Rights* (1776) (Blackboard); [Thomas Jefferson], *A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia* (1786) (Blackboard)

March 23
*Reading and Discussion: The American Yawp*, Chapter 6: IX at [http://americanyawp.com](http://americanyawp.com); *The Rights of Suffrage* (1792), p. 4, main paragraph (Blackboard)

**Writing—Blog 6:** Watch the five short videos contained in an online exhibit at the Museum of the American Revolution: *When Women Lost the Vote: A Revolutionary Story, 1776-1807* (total 20-25 minutes long) at [https://www.amrevmuseum.org/virtualexhibits/when-women-lost-the-vote-a-revolutionary-story](https://www.amrevmuseum.org/virtualexhibits/when-women-lost-the-vote-a-revolutionary-story). In a Blogpost of 200-250 words, explain how women got the vote under the first New Jersey under the first New Jersey state constitution and why they lost it in 1807. In your opinion, is it more surprising that women were allowed to vote at this time or that the vote was taken away from them?

March 28
**Slavery, Race, and Freedom in Revolutionary America**
*Reading and Discussion: The American Yawp*, Chapter 7: II at [http://americanyawp.com](http://americanyawp.com). Watch 2 short, 3D videos (approx. 4 minutes each) of French slaving vessels, the *Marie-Seraphique* and *L’Aurore*, found on the SLAVE VOYAGES website at: [https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/ship#3dmodel/0/en](https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/ship#3dmodel/0/en).

March 30
*Reading and Discussion: Lemuel Haynes, “Liberty Further Extended” (1776) (Blackboard); Selections from Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) (Blackboard)

**Writing—Blog 7:** After reading the excerpts from Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*, explain, in a Blogpost of 200-250 words, why Jefferson believed that Black people were “inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.” Give three examples and discuss what kind of evidence he uses to support these claims. How valid is this evidence?

Optional: For more information on Jefferson and slavery, go to [http://monticello.org](http://monticello.org).

April 4
**Confederation and Constitution**
*Reading and Discussion: The American Yawp*, Chapter 6: II at [http://americanyawp.com](http://americanyawp.com); Shaysite Petition (1786); Letter from George Washington to John Jay, Aug. 15, 1786 and George Washington to Henry Knox, February 3, 1787 (Blackboard); John L. Smith, Jr., “How Was the Revolutionary War Paid For?” *Journal*
of the American Revolution, Feb. 23, 2015 at https://allthingsliberty.com/2015/02/how-was-the-revolutionary-war-paid-for/

Writing—Blog 8: In a Blogpost of 200-250 words, explain why George Washington, in his letters to John Jay and Henry Knox, rejects the Shaysites’ complaints and especially their resort to violence. Why does he think that these events in Massachusetts reflect a more serious crisis in the country more generally? What consequences does he fear if decisive action is not taken?

April 6 A More Perfect Union?

Reading and Discussion: The American Yawp, Chapter 6: III; Constitution of the United States (1787), available at www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution; 3/5 Clause article (Blackboard)

April 11

Reading and Discussion: The American Yawp, Chapter 6: V; Constitution of the United States (1787), available at www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution

Writing—BLOG 9: Do a close reading of Article V of the US Constitution. In a Blogpost of 200-250 words, explain the various methods by which the Constitution can be modified or amended. What part of the Constitution couldn’t be amended before 1808? What part of the Constitution still can’t be changed without the consent of all the states? Why did the Framers put such stringent restrictions on changing these particular features of the Constitution?

April 13 Who Are “the People”? Ratification and the Bill of Rights

Reading and Discussion: Start reading Dunbar, Never Caught (entire); The American Yawp, Chapter 6: IV at http://americanyawp.com; Federalist # 51 (Blackboard)

April 18

Reading and Discussion: Continue reading Dunbar, Never Caught (entire); George Mason’s “Objections to the Constitution” (1787); James Wilson, Speech at the Pennsylvania Ratifying Convention against a Bill of Rights (1787)

Writing--Blog 10: One of the reasons, among many, that George Mason opposed the US Constitution was because it lacked a Bill of Rights. James Wilson’s speech was meant to convince skeptics that there was no need for the Constitution to have a separate Bill of Rights. In a Blogpost of 200-250 words, discuss at least two to three of Wilson’s most significant arguments. Would Mason have found Wilson’s arguments convincing?

April 20

Reading and Discussion: Continue reading Dunbar, Never Caught (entire); [George Mason], Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776) (Blackboard); US Bill of Rights (1792) (Blackboard)

April 25 In-class Film: Watch Empire of Reason and Live-Tweet the Ratification in New York State!!!
Reading: Continue reading Dunbar, *Never Caught* (entire).

April 27  

**Political Combat of the 1790s and the Election of 1800**

Reading and Discussion: Continue reading Dunbar, *Never Caught* (entire); *The American Yawp*, Chapter 6: VI, VII, VIII, X; John R. Howe, Jr., *“Republican Thought and the Political Violence of the 1790s”* (Blackboard)

Writing—Blog 11: On pp. 150-151 of his article, John Howe asserts that: “During the 1790s, American political life was highly distorted, characterized by heated exaggeration and haunted by conspiratorial fantasy. Events were viewed in apocalyptic terms with the survival of republican liberty riding in the balance. Perhaps most remarkably, individuals who had not so long before cooperated in the struggle against Britain and even in the creation of a firmer continental government now found themselves mortal enemies, the bases of their earlier trust somehow worn away.” In 200-250 words, describe at least three issues that fanned the flames of partisan antagonism during the 1790s. Mention at least one principle or belief that, according to Howe, both sides still shared in common.

May 2  

**Class Discussion: Dunbar, *Never Caught* (entire).**

Writing—Dunbar paper due. Although Ona Judge’s story is extraordinary and unusual, it also reveals larger patterns and ideas concerning slavery in the US during the 1790s. What particular circumstances in Philadelphia during the mid-1790s allowed Ona Judge to escape the bonds of slavery? What does her desire for freedom tell us about the nature of chattel slavery, above and beyond whether a particular slaveowner treated a slave exceptionally poorly or not as badly? What does the Washingtons’ use of increasingly desperate measures to find and return Ona Judge tell us about white peoples’ assumptions about their slave property? Use evidence from the book to support your points. Papers should be 750-800 words (approx. 3 pages), typed, double-spaced.

May 4  

**The American Revolution in History and Memory**

Reading and Discussion: Maier, *American Scripture*; pp. 170-215; Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (Blackboard); Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments (1848) (Blackboard)

Take-home Final Exam: Due on Monday, May 16 by noon via email.

Grading:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation:</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written assignments:</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3 essays on assigned books; 10 of 11 blogs*)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam:</td>
<td>35%</td>
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*Students are expected to do all 11 blogs, though one blog with the lowest score will be dropped. Each Blogpost will be given a score from 0 to 3, with 0=Not done or not
responsive to the question or source; 1=Minimal engagement with question and source; 2=Good engagement with question and source; 3=Excellent engagement with the question and source. Blogs are typically expected to be 200-250 words. Students are urged to adhere to the word limits.

**Assignments:** All written work (blogs and papers) are due by class time on the day assigned, unless the student has obtained prior permission from the professor. Essays are due in hard copy. Blogs should be posted on HIST 403 Blackboard website under the “Discussion Board” heading for that date. Also, if you must miss a class, please inform the instructor ahead of time.

*Obviously, Covid absences will be treated differently, but the student must inform the instructor as soon as they test positive. Written work due during Covid absences must still be submitted, though extensions will be routinely given.*

**Classroom Norms and Device Usage Guidelines:** Students are expected to pay attention, take notes during lectures, and actively participate in class discussions. PARTICIPATION is a significant component of your final grade. The professor reserves the right to call on students even if they do not volunteer. Electronic devices should be used only for taking notes or consulting course materials.

**Drop Deadlines:** The last day to drop a class with 100% tuition refund is February 15. The Selective Withdrawal period, with no tuition refund, is from March 2-April 11.

**Academic Accommodations:** Students who require academic accommodations should contact the Disability Services at (703) 993-2474 or ods@gmu.edu, who will then be in touch with me.

**Honor Code:** The Honor Code states: "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ABIDE BY THE UNIVERSITY’S HONOR CODE. If you do not fully comprehend the meaning of plagiarism, please consult the university’s website. Violations of the Honor Code will be brought to the Office of Academic Integrity. For further information, see [https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code).