

George Mason University
Department of History and Art History

Spring 2022
Tuesday, 7:20-10:00 PM
Music/Theater Building, rm 1004
Office Hours: M 1-2 PM, T 5-6 PM, and by appointment

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HISTORY 631: ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

This course provides a graduate level introduction to the history and historiography of the American Revolution. We will explore the frameworks that twentieth- and twenty-first-century historians have used to understand the political, social, and cultural transformations of the Revolutionary era, covering the period from roughly the beginning of the Seven Years War through the “settling” of the Revolution in the early nineteenth century. In addition to tracing classic political, intellectual, and social interpretations, we will look at how recent work on race and gender has complicated straightforward stories of the Revolution and how current Atlantic, continental, and world-historical frameworks might suggest new ways of interpreting and understanding the Revolution.

REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation:

Active and informed participation in discussion is **the** central element of the course. Our meetings will consist entirely of discussion of the assigned readings, so it is essential that you do the reading (both the main text and any required supplemental reading) and come prepared to discuss it. You can use the questions on the “Helpful Questions” document (in the “Resources & Reference” section of the Blackboard site) as a way to get started on thinking through the reading.

Discussion serves as a way of exploring and thinking about historical works and questions that gives us a more complete and complex understanding than any single point of view can provide. Classes are more enjoyable and intellectually rewarding for everyone when as many people as possible contribute. Participating in scholarly discussions of this type is a skill in and of itself, and working on this skill is part of the purpose of the course. Thus, regular, positive contributions to discussion are a baseline expectation for the class.

“Weekly” Short Analysis Papers:

Over the course of the semester, you must write eight (8) one- to two-page papers concisely analyzing the main book for a particular week. (Page-length guidelines are based on double-spacing and a 12-point font, which means roughly 300-600 words is the goal.) The specific weeks/books you write on are up to you and don’t need to be decided in advance; just make sure you do eight. Also note that an additional week will be taken up by your book review essay (see below)—you may not submit a short analysis paper for that week.

These short analysis papers should first focus on **summarizing the book's argument and key specific points** as succinctly as possible without sacrificing accuracy and nuance. After summarizing the book's argument, the paper should provide **your critical response** to this argument and its execution in the book—in this case “critical” does not necessarily mean negative, but rather engaged and analytical.

This means that these papers should focus on **substantive intellectual and interpretive issues** rather than matters that are primarily aesthetic or formal (e.g., there were too many big words, it was boring, you felt maps would have been useful, or you would have preferred footnotes to endnotes).

The goal of these reactions is **not** primarily to present a qualitative or subjective opinion on whether you liked a book or not, nor is it to provide a recommendation to help an imagined reader decide whether she wants to read this book, but rather to do the best job you can concisely explaining and assessing the book's argument and its significance in a scholarly, academic context.

These papers are due via Blackboard by class time on the day we discuss the reading. Make sure to use the appropriate link in the “Assignments” section of the Blackboard site to upload your paper.

Book Review Essay:

On a week of your own choosing, you must write a more extended six- to seven-page (double-spaced, 12-point font) analysis of the reading for that week. This should not be a chapter-by-chapter description of the main book's contents, but rather a detailed analysis of the book's argument and method, exploring the key evidence and themes that support and develop that argument. You should also consider the contrast or complement offered to the main book's argument and themes by both of the supplementary readings for that week. This paper is due via Blackboard by class time on the day we discuss the reading.

Final Paper:

There are four options for the longer final paper topic—the first option is the default option that is most widely useful for most students. The other options are more specialized and geared towards students in particular situations in which those assignments may be more useful to their academic and intellectual progress.

Option One: Set questions on course readings. Some time towards the end of the semester, I will write up three to five questions about major themes in the course, and you will write an extended (12-15 page) historiographical essay in response to one of them, drawing on a wide sampling of the course readings. This is the default option, and the one that is usually the most useful for M.A. students seeking to synthesize what they have learned this semester and for Ph.D. students preparing for exams.

Option Two: Your own thematic analysis of course readings. You may select a particular theme from the course that interests you and write a 12-15 page historiographical essay on that theme, drawing on *at least* four of the books we read and *at least* four of the supplementary readings. Consult with me if you wish to pursue this option (some themes

might require some additional reading, if there are essential works on those themes that were not among the course readings).

Option Three: Individualized historiography paper. If you have a specific interest in a particular topic in the era of the American Revolution (broadly construed), you may elect to write a paper exploring the existing literature on that topic, laying out the major works and interpretations, existing debates, underexplored or neglected areas, and possible future directions for research. This option requires substantial extra reading, so it is most appropriate for those who would particularly benefit from building this kind of deep background—those intending to do research on the topic, or those for whom specific historiographical and bibliographic knowledge is important. The ideal length of these papers will vary depending on the nature of the topic explored, but 15 pages should be considered a realistic minimum. Consult with me if you wish to pursue this option.

Option Four: Primary source research paper. Students with a research agenda in early American history may do a medium-length, focused primary source research paper as the final paper for this course. Consult with me if you want to pursue this option.

The final paper is due via Blackboard during exam week, on a date to be determined during the semester (this date will be ten or so days after our final class meeting).

Grading:

Reaction Papers: 25%

Book Review: 20%

Final Paper: 25%

Class Participation: 30%

READINGS**Structure of Weekly Readings:**

Each week (except the first week), one book will serve as the core reading that we all will read. There will also be a selection of supplementary readings of chapter or article length that relate to some aspect of the core reading. You will be required to read one of these supplementary readings each week in addition to the core reading, and, along with others who have read the same supplementary material, to explain it to the rest of the class and bring it into the discussion when relevant.

Core Reading:

The following books are required reading for everyone:

- Carté, Katherine. *Religion and the American Revolution: An Imperial History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.
- Farber, Hannah. *Underwriters of the United States: How Insurance Shaped the American Founding*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.
- Gould, Eliga H. *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Hattem, Michael D. *Past and Prologue: Politics and Memory in the American Revolution*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020.

- Irvin, Benjamin. *Clothed in Robes of Sovereignty: The Continental Congress and the People Out of Doors*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Jasanoff, Maya. *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011.
- Klepp, Susan E. *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, & Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Maier, Pauline. *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972.
- McDonnell, Michael A. *The Politics of War: Race, Class, & Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Sachs, Honor. *Home Rule: Households, Manhood, and National Expansion on the Eighteenth-Century Kentucky Frontier*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015.
- Taylor, Alan. *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
- Zabin, Serena. *The Boston Massacre: A Family History*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020.

Recommended/Optional Background Reading

If you are not generally familiar with the history, chronology, and major events of the Revolutionary era, the following book provides a good overview and reference:

- Taylor, Alan. *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2016.

Accessing Required Supplementary Readings:

The supplementary readings are usually journal articles or chapters in edited collections of essays. I will provide links to these readings in the “Supplementary Readings” section of the class Blackboard site.

You can also find the journal articles (and some chapters) by visiting the GMU Library's homepage (library.gmu.edu) and using the main search box. A combination of the author's last name and a distinctive combination of words from the title usually works to locate the article or chapter.

Recommended Resources

If you do not already have these, the following books are very useful companions to graduate study in History (and other fields):

- Strunk, William, Jr. and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. New York, Longman Publishers, 1999. Avoid older editions or alleged “updates” as well as repackagings of the versions that do not list E.B. White as coauthor. There are legitimate critiques of this book, but it remains a short, elegant, and straightforward reference for clear writing.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style* (currently in 17th edition, but any recent edition is fine). You can also access this [online via Mason Libraries](#). This is the key reference for citation practices in History as well as a whole range of usage questions.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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.***

For details on how the honor system at GMU works, consult the university catalog (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>). More information can also be found at the GMU [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

OTHER POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Administrative Dates

Last day to add: Monday, January 31

Last day to drop without 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

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 GMU 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.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

January 25: Introduction and Historiography

[Michael Hattem, "The Historiography of the American Revolution: A Timeline,"](#) (2017).

Michael A. McDonnell and David Waldstreicher, "Revolution in the Quarterly? A Historiographical Analysis," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74:4 (October 2017): 633-666.

February 1: Ideologies and Practices of Resistance in the Imperial Crisis

Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*, (1972).

Supplementary Readings

Gordon S. Wood, "Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (January 1966): 4-32.

Gary B. Nash, "Social Change and the Growth of Pre-Revolutionary Urban Radicalism," in *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, ed. Alfred F. Young (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 3-36.

February 8: The Social World of the Imperial Crisis

Serena Zabin, *The Boston Massacre: A Family History*, (2020).

Supplementary Readings

Peter Messer, "'A scene of Villainy acted by a dirty Banditti, as must astonish the Public': The Creation of the Boston Massacre," *New England Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (December 2017): 502-539.

Mitch Kachun, "From Forgotten Founder to Indispensable Icon: Crispus Attucks, Black Citizenship, and Collective Memory, 1770-1865," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 249-286.

February 15: Retelling the Past and Imagining the Future

Michael D. Hattem, *Past and Prologue: Politics and Memory in the American Revolution*, (2020).

Supplementary Readings

Liam Riordan, "A Loyalist Who Loved His Country too Much: Thomas Hutchinson, Historian of Colonial Massachusetts," *New England Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (September 2017), 344-384.

Eileen Hunt Botting, "Women Writing War: Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Mather Crocker on the American Revolution," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 18 (2016): 88-118.

February 22: Managing a War and Creating a Nation in Philadelphia

Benjamin H. Irvin, *Clothed in Robes of Sovereignty: The Continental Congress and the People Out of Doors*, (2011).

Supplementary Readings

David Waldstreicher, "Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 1 (June 1995): 37-61.

Kate Haulman, "Fashion and the Culture Wars of Revolutionary Philadelphia," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (October 2005): 625-662.

March 1: Virginia in the Revolution

Michael A. McDonnell, *The Politics of War: Race, Class, & Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia*, (2007).

Supplementary Readings (optional due to length of main book)

Mark Egnal, "The Origins of the Revolution in Virginia: A Reinterpretation," *William and Mary Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (July 1980): 401-428.

Cassandra Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math: The Question of Slave Defections in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (April 2005): 243-264.

March 8: Loyalism, Nation, and Empire

Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*, (2011).

Supplementary Readings

Eliga H. Gould, "American Independence and Britain's Counter-Revolution," *Past and Present*, no. 154 (February 1997): 107-141.

Edward Larkin, "Loyalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*, ed. Jane Kamensky and Edward R. Gray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 291-310.

March 15: No Class-Spring Break**March 22: Empire and Religion in an Age of Revolution**

Katherine Carté, *Religion and the American Revolution: An Imperial History*, (2021).

Supplementary Readings

Peter W. Walker, "The Bishop Controversy, the Imperial Crisis, and Religious Radicalism in New England, 1763-74," *New England Quarterly* 90,

no. 3 (September 2017), 306-343.

Susan Juster, "The Evangelical Ascendancy in Revolutionary America," in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*, ed. Jane Kamensky and Edward R. Gray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 407-426.

March 29: Reproduction, Marriage, and Family in the Revolutionary Era

Susan E. Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, & Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820*, (2009).

Supplementary Readings

Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (October 1987): 689-721.
Sarah M.S. Pearsall, "Women in the American Revolutionary War," in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*, ed. Jane Kamensky and Edward R. Gray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 273-290.

April 5: Land, Politics, and Local Struggles through the Era of the Revolution

Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820*, (1990).

Supplementary Readings

Terry Bouton, "A Road Closed: Rural Insurgency in Post-Independence Pennsylvania," *Journal of American History* 87, no. 3 (December 2000): 855-887.
Shelby M. Balik, "'Persecuted in the Bowels of a Free Republic': Samuel Ely and the Agrarian Theology of Justice, 1768-1797," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 15 (2013): 89-122.

April 12: The Problems of Prospective Patriarchs

Honor Sachs, *Home Rule: Households, Manhood, and National Expansion on the Eighteenth-Century Kentucky Frontier* (2015).

Supplementary Readings

Jessica Chopin Roney, "1776, Viewed from the West," *Journal of the Early Republic* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 655-700.
Lauren Duval, "Mastering Charleston: Property and Patriarchy in British-Occupied Charleston, 1780-82," *William and Mary Quarterly* 75:4 (October 2018): 589-622.

April 19: A Mercantile Republic: Finance, Commerce, and State-Building

Hannah Farber, *Underwriters of the United States: How Insurance Shaped the American Founding* (2021).

Supplementary Readings

Stephen Mihm, "Funding the Revolution: Monetary and Fiscal Policy in Eighteenth-Century America," in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*, ed. Jane Kamensky and Edward R. Gray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 327-353.

Tom Cutterham, "'A Very Promising Appearance': Credit, Honor, and Deception in the Emerging Market for American Debt, 1784-92," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (October 2018): 623-650.

April 26: State-Building in Continental and Atlantic Contexts

Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire*, (2012).

Supplementary Readings

David Armitage, "The Declaration of Independence and International Law," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January 2002): 39-64.

Gautham Rao, "The New Historiography of the Early Federal Government: Institutions, Contexts, and the Imperial State," *William and Mary Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (January 2020): 97-128.

May 3: TBD