

HIST-300-002
Introduction to Historical Methods: Washington's World
Fall 2022

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Horizon Hall 3165

Office hours: M 12-1, Wednesdays 5-6, or by appointment (in-person or remotely)

This course uses the broad topic of the era of George Washington (1732-1799) to introduce History majors to the methodology of researching, interpreting, and writing history. Students who enroll in this class develop research and writing skills by completing various assignments over the course of the semester. HIST-300 also fulfills in part the Writing Intensive requirement for the History major. Note that students must earn a grade of C or better in HIST-300 in order to register for the second required Writing Intensive History course, HIST-499.

The final project for this course will be a contribution to [*ARGO: American Revolutionary Geographies Online*](#), a digital repository of maps from the revolutionary era (1750-1800), hosted at the [Fred W. Smith Library for the Study of George Washington](#) at Mount Vernon. The class will choose a map to annotate, and each student will research and write an essay (a longer and a shorter condensed version) about a certain feature of that map or the information it conveys. Final project submission will include the essays and an annotated bibliography to document and describe the research process. High-quality work will be published, after editing, as part of the *ARGO* project.

The content of this course focuses primarily on the development of research and writing skills. A library skills session will introduce students to different types of sources historians use for their research; follow-up sessions on each of these various categories of resources will take up much of our class time for the remainder of the semester.

Our workshop-style class is scheduled to meet once weekly, on Mondays between 1:30 and 4:10. Some weeks we will devote that entire (very long) class period to course-related subject matter. Other weeks, when we have less material to cover, our meetings may be shorter. The workshop approach is designed to enable students to do most—though certainly not all—of their research in class with the help of the instructor, who will be available during and after class to help students with their research projects. The requirement to submit a draft of the semester project approximately two weeks before the final due date should help students to produce quality work (and get quality grades).

Because there are relatively few class meetings and because we will be doing a significant amount of work in class, missing class increases the likelihood of receiving an unsatisfactory grade for this course.

A few other points:

- You will need a Mason ID card for this class (to check books out of the library). If you do not have a Mason ID, go to Sub 1, Room 1203, to get one before our 9/26 library session. For more information, see <https://masonid.gmu.edu/about-mason-id/>.
- Please bring a laptop to class. Students will need access to online materials for all class sessions. A tablet might suffice, but please do not expect to use your phone to do research.
- On class days, all written work is due by 1:30 (when class meets); essay drafts and final projects (which will be submitted on non-class days) must be submitted by 5:00 p.m.
- The university provides many student services—including help with writing, counselling, and accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information on resources and support services for undergraduates, go to <https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/undergraduate/resources-and-support-services>.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to follow the course schedule, which is set out in detail below. 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 a modest amount of 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 Reading" section of Blackboard.

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

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

Grading:

Course grades will be determined as follows:

- Secondary source analysis of book (due 10/11) 10%
- Secondary source analysis of article (due 10/17) 10%
- Primary source analysis (due 10/31) 15%
- Draft of long essay and un-annotated bibliography (due 11/18) 15%
- Annotated bibliography (due 12/5) 15%
- Final long and short essays (due 12/5) 20%
- Participation 15%

Course Schedule

Monday 22 August: Introductory Session. Introduction to *ARGO*. **Guests Drs. Alexandra Montgomery and Anne Fertig, Fred W. Smith Library for the Study of George Washington.** *The class will be introduced to possible maps for our semester project during this class session. What is a map annotation essay? What is an annotated bibliography? Please read the two student-authored essays from 2021 (in the Course Readings section of Blackboard) to find out.*

Monday 29 August: Maps as Historical Texts. Read Martin Brückner, "The Spectacle of Maps in British America, 1750-1800," in Brückner, *Early American Cartographies*, 389-441. **Guests Drs. Jim Ambuske, Alexandra Montgomery, and Anne Fertig.** Also review the "Map Options" and "Style Guide" documents posted in this day's "Course Reading."
In-class: Discussion of assigned reading; students will vote to choose the map for our semester project.

Monday 5 September: Labor Day—No Class.

Monday 12 September: Readings TBD. (Readings will be posted after the class chooses a map so as to provide ideally useful background knowledge and context to inform students' research and writing of the annotations.)

In-class: Discussion of readings; each student will choose the specific map feature that they will research and write about as their semester project.

Monday 19 September: Readings TBD. (See explanation above.)

Monday 26 September: Library and Research Skills with Dr. Alyssa Fahringer in Fenwick 1014A. Read "History Citation Guide."

In-class: During the library instruction session, each student will use the library

catalog to find a book that is relevant to their research topic. They will go to the stacks, find the book, and check it out of the library. Students will read the relevant parts of their books and report on them in our 11 October class meeting when related written work is also due.

Monday 3 October: Visit to the Fred W. Smith Library (Mount Vernon). Special off-campus session on research libraries, public history, the ARGO project, and the library's map collection. Please arrive at the library by 1:30.

Complimentary Mount Vernon house tour to follow (optional). The library is located on Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, on the left (if you are driving east from Route 1) before you reach the post office. You will have to stop at the gate and identify yourself as a Mason student to be admitted to the library's free parking. The house is walkable from the library.

Tuesday 11 October: Secondary sources: books, articles, and historiography.

Read Lindsay M. Chervinsky, "Why Bad History Isn't Just Bad, It's Dangerous," *Reviews in American History*, 47 (2019): 559-63.

In-class: Discussion of assigned reading; (informal) book reports; finding articles using America: History and Life.

****Secondary source analysis (book) due.**

Monday 17 October: Primary sources: Correspondence and Personal Papers.

Read David S. Ferriero, "The American Founders Online," *History News*, 66 (Spring 2011): 7-11 and three Jefferson family documents on Blackboard. (A Jefferson family genealogy is also posted for reference.) **Guest: Dr. Lisa A. Francavilla, Senior Managing Editor, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*.**

In-class: Analysis of assigned documents; each student will find one (or more) relevant documents in Founders Online.

****Secondary source analysis (article) due.**

Monday 24 October: Primary sources: Periodicals (newspapers and magazines).

Read Bernard Bailyn, "The Index and Commentaries of Harbottle Dorr," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3rd ser., 85 (1973): 21-35; Richard R. John and Thomas C. Leonard, "The Illusion of the Ordinary: John Lewis Krimmel's Village Tavern and the Democratization of Public Life in the Early Republic," *Pennsylvania History*, 65 (1998): 87-96.

In-class: Discussion of assigned readings; scavenger hunt and research in early American newspapers and magazines; choose module for next week's Papers of the War Department discussion.

Monday 31 October: Primary sources: Government documents. Guest: Prof.

Christopher Hamner, Editor-in-Chief, *Papers of the War Department, 1784-1800*. Read [Liese Dart and Emma Schroeder, "Learn to Do Historical Research: Sources—Government Documents."](#)

In-class: Explore PWD, Proquest Congressional, and Hein Online.

****Primary source analysis (personal correspondence or periodical) due.**

Monday 7 November: Open office hours in Horizon 3165 for help/advice on essay drafts.

Monday 14 November: Primary Sources: *America's Historical Imprints* (non-periodical print culture) Read Helena M. Wall, "All Things Considered," *American Quarterly*, 57 (June 2005): 475- 483.

In-class: Discussion of reading; scavenger hunt and research.

****Friday 18 November: Draft essays (long version only) due. I expect to return these drafts with my comments by the time we meet on Monday.**

Monday 21 November: Maps in George Washington's World. Guest: Cassandra B. Farrell, Senior Map Archivist, Library of Virginia. Read "[Abel Buell](#)" *Wikipedia* entry; "[Rare Abel Buell Map of the United States from 1784 Is Now on Display at Library of Congress](#)" and "[New Jersey Historical Society is criticized for selling collection in effort to raise funds.](#)"

This class will meet remotely via Zoom. You can access the link via Blackboard.

Monday 28 November: Student Presentations.

Monday 5 December: **Final essays (long and short versions) and annotated bibliography due 5:00 p.m.