

**History 499-002 (Fall 2023)**  
*Senior Research Seminar on "The Founders: Past and Present"*

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Office hours: Wednesday 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. or by appointment.

**Class meets on Wednesday 7:20 p.m-10:00 p.m. in East Building 121**

### Course Description

This course is the capstone of the History major. Students are required to produce a substantial research paper based on their reading of primary and secondary sources focused on the ongoing legacy of our university's namesake, George Mason, to the region and our nation. 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. After completing some readings about George Mason and the generation of the "Founders," students, with the assistance of the instructor, will focus their attention on the various stages of researching and writing the research paper.

In other words, this seminar offers you the opportunity to pull together the results of your educational experience by demonstrating mastery of research, analytical, and communication skills by applying those skills to a particular historical project. This course also counts toward the writing intensive requirement for the History major.

#### **History 499 is:**

**\*RS-Designated course:** This class is designated as a Research and Scholarship Intensive Course, which means that students are given the opportunity to actively participate in the process of scholarship. Students will make a significant contribution by creating an original research paper that synthesizes the student's reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources into a coherent historical essay.

**\*\*Writing Intensive course.** This class is designated as a Writing Intensive course and fulfills the Writing Intensive requirement in the History major. It does so through the completion of a 20-25 page original historical research paper. The paper will be completed through a draft/feedback/revision process.

**\*\*\*Synthesis course.** This course is designated a Synthesis course. The purpose of a Synthesis course is to provide students with the opportunity to synthesize the knowledge, skills, and values gained from the general education curriculum. Synthesis courses strive to expand students' ability to master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills across the disciplines.

I love to see your work develop and to read/discuss your work as it develops. Please do not hesitate to contact me to make an appointment. By the end of the course students will demonstrate their competence in the following skills:

1. Plan and execute a major project.
2. Articulate and refine a research question.
3. Justify that their project intends to be engaging and novel to a particular audience.

4. Gather evidence appropriate to the question.
5. Analyze sources to assess the validity of key assumptions and evidence.
6. Present their findings in writing using the conventions of historical scholarship.
7. Demonstrate awareness of broader implications.
8. Follow ethical principles.

**Course Requirements:** Students are expected to adhere to the course schedule, below. As the schedule indicates, sometimes the class will meet as a group, while other days are set aside for self- directed research or individual meetings with the instructor.

*Written work:* Each student will write a major research paper (20-25 pages, double-spaced, plus endnotes and bibliography), which will be the end product of a multi-stage process that includes several graded written assignments, all of which are detailed in the course schedule below. Research papers will be graded according to the following criteria:

9. Clarity and originality of the paper's research question and thesis
10. Use of primary sources in support of thesis statement
11. The degree to which the work is situated appropriately in the existing literature of secondary sources (i.e., historiography)
12. Use of diverse sources
13. Sophistication of historical analysis
14. Organization and quality of writing

**IT IS EXPECTED THAT STUDENTS WILL SPEND A *MINIMUM* OF 10 HOURS/WEEK DOING RESEARCH FOR THIS COURSE OUTSIDE OF CLASSTIME.**

*Oral work:* Students will do one formal oral report, besides participating regularly in class workshops and discussions. Because discussion and in-class work are integral to this course, attendance will be taken.

At the last class meeting, students will do oral presentations (5-7 minutes) on their research projects, using the poster format that is sometimes featured at scholarly conferences.

Templates for making posters are posted in the Course Content section of this course's Blackboard site.

Students will be graded on their oral presentations according to the following criteria:

15. Clarity and organization
16. Ability to respond to questions from the audience
17. Completion of presentation's essential elements within the allotted time
18. Ability to engage and maintain the audience's attention
19. Quality and completeness of the poster

**Grading:** Course grades will be determined as follows:

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| • Topic proposal and Bibliography                   | 15% |
| • Outline   | 15% |
| • Complete draft of final paper                     | 25% |
| • Oral poster presentation                          | 10% |
| • Final research paper                              | 25% |
| • Participation (peer-review and class discussions) | 10% |

A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D	60%-69%
F	59% and lower

Late Work: Late submissions will be penalized, typically by a deduction of one letter-grade per week.

Finally, please note that all students are subject to the [George Mason University Honor Code](#)

- George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited.
- All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

### **Required Books/Required Readings:**

Readings are generally available in the library catalog or databases but I have also made them available in the BlackBoard course under the course content section.

Zachary Schrag, *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021)

Lori Glover, *Founders as Fathers: the Private Lives and Politics of the American Revolutionaries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). [https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC\\_GML/1o1q715/alma9947112483504105](https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/1o1q715/alma9947112483504105)

Chicago Manual of Style <http://mutex.gmu.edu/login?URL=http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>

### **Disability Statement/Accommodations**

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

### **University Policies**

#### **Honor Code, Plagiarism, Collaboration**

It is expected that students adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code as it relates to integrity regarding coursework and grades. When you enrolled in this course you agreed to abide by the university's

Honor Code and it reads as follows:

*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 for 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.*

The Honor Code does not preclude collaborative work, such as informal discussions and studying in communities. Nor does it preclude assigned group work. The Honor Code does require that the work that a student, as an individual, turns in is ultimately the product of his/her own individual synthesis or integration of ideas, and that the work a group turns in is ultimately the product of the group's collective ideas. If you are uncertain of the line between collaboration and cheating, you should see me before turning in an assignment.

You must always cite your sources - if you do not, it is plagiarism. Plagiarism means taking someone else's ideas or words and presenting them as your own without proper attribution of the source. You must correctly and consistently use Chicago, citation style. This includes copying materials directly from the Internet. If you feel uncertain about any aspect of the Honor Code, you should discuss your concerns with me proactively (i.e., before turning in a piece of work).

More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at <https://oai.gmu.edu>

Please remember that no grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Should you experience extreme academic anxiety there are resources on campus to assist you during stressful moments. Please reach out to me or one of the University offices offering writing assistance, study skills, or counseling.

Wednesday, August 23, 2023

- Syllabus and discussion of the course.
- Research and Methods
- Discussion of course and grading
- Designing a research project
- Sign up for Chapter in Glover for next week.

Wednesday, August 30, 2023

- Using secondary sources
- Understanding their research questions,
- Identifying and analyzing their sources
- Reading scholarly sources
- Finding secondary sources
  - Library Catalogs
  - America: History and Life
  - JSTOR
  - Project Muse
  - Etc.
- Read Karen Wulf, “Efficient Reading” <https://karinwulf.com/efficient-reading/> and using the strategies suggested “efficiently read” Introduction, Epilogue, and your assigned chapter in *Founders as Fathers*.

- 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)?
- Do this for each chapter you are reading. The Introduction answers to these questions will be for the book. The chapters will have a similar structure but be focused on the content in the chapter,
  - o 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.)
  - o 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?
  - o Email a word document with your answers to me by 5:00 p.m.
  - o Bring this document to class for our discussion.
- Also Read Schrag *Princeton Guide to Historical Research* Chapter 1
- In class exercise: Using your general topic find at least 3 relevant scholarly books and 3 scholarly articles.

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

Identifying questions and set of primary sources which you can use to help answer those questions.

- What is your tentative research question?
- Good questions? Bad questions for this type of project?
- What do you need to know to answer that question effectively? Developing a research outline based on questions.
- Finding primary sources
- George Mason University Writing Center, "How to Write a Research Question" <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/how-to-write-a-research-question>
- Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically?" (Blackboard) <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2007/what-does-it-mean-to-think-historically> Read Schrag *Princeton Guide to Historical Research* Chapter 3,4,5. In class exercise: Develop topic proposal and bibliography.
- Sign up for an appointment with me for next week.

Wednesday, September 13, 2023

Instead of class we will have **Individual Meetings**

- Bring in an idea for topic(s) and list of preliminary sources. You should have at least 3 books and 3 articles (or some combination (e.g. 2 books 4 articles) for your secondary sources. Also, identify potential primary sources which will be useful for your project. I am interested in sets of records and why you think they will be useful. If you have already identified your topic, and I have approved the topic, do not bring two topics in.
- Your written draft statement should be one paragraph and include the following
  - o A title.
  - o A specific question you will address in your research phrased in the form of a question.
  - o Why you are interested in this question and what have other scholars already addressed? (Secondary Sources)
  - o Why does this topic matter?
  - o What primary sources will you use to answer your research question and how will you use those primary sources?

Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Outlining a Project and engaging with historiography

- Read Schrag, *Princeton Guide to Historical Research* Chapter 11,12, Bring your bibliography of core secondary sources to class. Make sure your sources are annotated and they cover the following:
  - What is the main point, or argument, made by each of your authors? Think particularly about whether or not an author is trying to reinforce an earlier perception of history or argue in favor of a re-interpretation of it.
  - What kinds of sources does the author use as evidence in support of the argument? How does the author deal with counter-evidence, or information that seems to weaken or contradict the thesis?
  - What are the strengths and weaknesses of the book/article in terms of the argument, analysis, and conclusions? Do you find it persuasive?
  - How does this work relate to arguments advanced by scholars who previously wrote about this topic?

Wednesday, September 27, 2023

Working with sources and developing a working outline-In class assignment

Read Schrag *Princeton Guide to Historical Research* Chapter 13,6,8,9

**Topic Proposal and Bibliography Due:**

Turn in a short description (a single paragraph of your proposed paper topic. Discuss what you hope to discover in the course of your research. State your research question. Discuss what kind of primary sources will be the basis for your research.)

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

Discussion of ethics and academic integrity in research

- Read Schrag, *Princeton Guide to Historical Research* Chapter 2

Read “Falsification: The Case of Michael Bellesiles.” In Course Content Area.

And the AHA Standards of Professional Conduct: <https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct>

Read “Revisiting Mills Kelly’s ‘Lying About the Past’ 10 years Later.”

<https://dancohen.org/2018/03/22/revisiting-mills-kellys-lying-about-the-past-10-years-later/>

**DUE: Submit Outline**

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

- Ways of communicating history
  - Listen to Podcast Consolation Prize: Episode 1 “Burroughing into Mexico.”  
<https://consolationprize.rchnm.org/episode-1/>

- Poster Creating a Poster Workshop Guest Speaker
- Read Schrag, *Princeton Guide to Historical Research* Chapter 16

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Guest Speaker from Career Services

- Read Schrag, *Princeton Guide to Historical Research* Chapter 14, 15
- Discussion on what you do with a history major.

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Independent Research NO CLASS

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

Peer Review Workshop

Make sure you bring a complete draft of your paper. You will be put into review groups and conduct a peer review of the work of your colleagues. You will have until 4/15/23 to submit your draft so that you can take advantage of that feedback.

Wednesday, November 8, 2023

**NO CLASS**

**DUE: Complete draft of final paper 11/15/23** Papers should be 20-25 pages in length, plus Bibliography and footnotes, typed, double-spaced. In the Bibliography sources need to be divided in the following three headings: *Primary Sources*; *Secondary Source Books* (suggested amount 3); *Secondary Source Articles* (suggested amount four). Online resources must be listed in appropriate category listed above. Papers **MUST** use the *Chicago Manual of Style* citation format or points will be deducted from the grade.

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH PROFESSOR

Wednesday, November 22, 2023

Independent Research NO CLASS

Wednesday, November 29, 2023

**Oral Presentations and Posters Due**

**Final Papers Due December 6, 2023**

If you would like the title of your Undergraduate Senior Essay to appear on your transcript, go to the link at [masonimpact.gmu.edu](http://masonimpact.gmu.edu) and follow the prompts to submit your paper.

**Academic Accommodations:** If you are a student who needs academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office

**Suggested Topics-Please talk to me early.**