

Spring 2024  
MW 9:00-10:15 AM  
Planetary Hall, 120  
Office Hours: M 10:30-11:30, W 4-5:30 and by appointment

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## **HISTORY 403: ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1763-1800**

What was the American Revolution? How revolutionary was it? For whom? This course considers these questions by considering the many transformations of politics, society, and culture that collectively made up the American Revolution. We will trace the course of the Revolutionary Era from the imperial crisis of the 1760s through the election of Thomas Jefferson in 1800 and the “settling” of the Revolution in the early nineteenth century. In the process, we will consider the actions and ideas of political leaders along with the experiences of other Americans—poor farmers and urban artisans, women of different classes, slaves and free African Americans, Native Americans, and more—and the ways in which they both shaped and were affected by the changes of the Revolutionary Era.

### **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.

The baseline expectation is that students will listen attentively to both the professor and their classmates and participate multiple times in most class sessions, by offering responses to discussion questions, building on or engaging with the ideas expressed by classmates, and asking relevant questions that demonstrate substantive engagement with the ideas and content of classroom activities (lecture, discussion, other exercises).

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

Short Exercises: Most 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 Exercises 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.

Note that because short exercises are closely linked to what we do in particular class sessions and are often meant to be a significant topic of discussion on those days, they **cannot be turned in late**. I will drop the lowest grade on the short exercises, so if you miss a single assignment, it will not affect the overall grade.

Essays: You will write two five- to six-page essays based on course materials. These assignments ask you to use the information, ideas, and approaches you have learned in one section of the class to develop a sophisticated, informed answer to important thematic or conceptual questions about the topic or topics covered. Details of these assignments will be made available on Blackboard at least two weeks before the essay is due.

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	20%
Short Exercises	25%
Papers (together)	40%
Final Reflection	15%

## 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, wearing headphones/earbuds, 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!

Laptop or other device use should be restricted to things directly relevant to class—primarily note-taking and consulting course readings or other online course resources. I reserve the right to request that people close laptops and/or shut down/put away other devices if they become a distraction or if in-class activity would benefit from it.

## 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 maintaining a high level of informed, substantive discussion, for in-class activities based on assignments, and for the way in which assignments are designed to build upon one another.

If you anticipate not being able to complete an assignment by its due date, I am happy to grant reasonable extensions if asked in advance. (Note, however, that short exercises cannot be turned in late, as most of their value is tied to their role in class discussion on the day they are due.)

Eligible work that is turned in late without a pre-approved extension will be accepted with a 5% grade penalty up to two days after its due date and a 10% grade penalty from three to seven days after its due date. If you need more time than that, please contact me in order to make a plan.

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, April 30) 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](#).

## AI USAGE POLICY (DON'T)

The use of ChatGPT or other “AI” language modeling programs to complete assignments for this class is forbidden and constitutes an honor code violation. There are several reasons for this.

First, for humans, writing is a central part of thinking and analysis. The writing you are asked to do in this course is not simply a product but a process--you are meant to learn something by conceptualizing, describing, and organizing information, ideas, and arguments. Historical analysis is a skill that is developed and sharpened by putting thoughts into words. Developing an analytical, evidence-based writing practice is perhaps the single most important, transferrable thing you can take away from history courses. These skills and practices are crucial to the purpose of the assignments and to your overall learning.

Second, in contrast, “AI” text production is *not* thinking or analysis, even by proxy. While language modeling can often (but definitely not always) produce a plausible-looking piece of text in a variety of genres, these programs do not actually “know” anything. They are not using information and facts in the way that we understand them but are simply (or not so simply, really) putting together words in combinations that they have algorithmically determined reflect the genre, topic, and style that the prompt calls for. That means that they will make stuff up if it sounds good. It also means that what they present as conclusions or arguments are not based on actual analysis of evidence or engagement with ideas but on patterns of words (and as a result, they tend to be bland, generic, and slightly off-topic). So, in a fundamental way, text produced by these programs fails to fulfill the most important aspect of the assignments.

Third, and more traditionally, this is a form of plagiarism—turning in work that you did not produce and presenting it as your own.

Crafting an effective prompt and learning how to use language models are certainly skills that involve analytical thinking and are worth developing in certain contexts... but given the goals and nature of the work you are asked to do in this course, this is not an appropriate place to do so.

## OTHER POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Important Administrative Dates (make sure to double check the Registrar’s website)

Last day to add: Tues., Jan. 23

Last day to drop without tuition penalty: Tues., Jan. 30

Final drop deadline (50% tuition refund): Tues., Feb. 6

Unrestricted Withdrawal period (no tuition refund): Wed., Feb. 7 to Tues. Feb. 20

Selective Withdrawal period: Wed., Feb. 21 to Mon., Mar. 25

### 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](https://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](https://writingcenter.gmu.edu)): (703) 993-1200.

Counseling and Psychological Services ([caps.gmu.edu](https://caps.gmu.edu)): SUB I, Room 3129, (703) 993-2380.

University Catalog: [catalog.gmu.edu](https://catalog.gmu.edu).

Other university policies: [universitypolicy.gmu.edu](https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu).

## REQUIRED TEXTS

The following books are required reading for this class, and are available for purchase at the GMU Barnes and Noble in the Johnson Center:

- Parkinson, Robert G. *Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.
- Young, Alfred F., Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael, eds. *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. (Vintage Books paperback edition, 2012.)

Additional required readings are listed on the syllabus and are available via Blackboard or through GMU's subscriptions to various online databases, which can be accessed via the Mason University Libraries homepage ([library.gmu.edu](http://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 bring a hard copy or other way of accessing the reading to class so that you can consult it for discussions and other exercises.**

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

### WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION

W, Jan. 17: Course Introduction: What Was the American Revolution?

Explore (in class... and afterwards, if you are interested)

- [Michael Hatttem's Timeline of the Historiography of the American Revolution](#)

### WEEK TWO: NORTH AMERICA IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE

M, Jan. 22: British America c. 1755

Reading

- Selected colonial newspapers from March 1755 (see Blackboard).

W, Jan. 24: The Seven Years' War and Its Aftermath

### WEEK THREE: THE IMPERIAL CRISIS AND THE TECHNIQUES OF RESISTANCE

M, Jan. 29: The Beginnings of Resistance: Protesting the Stamp Act

Reading

- Alfred F. Young, "Ebenezer Mackintosh: Boston's Captain General of the Liberty Tree," in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 15-33.
- Resolutions of Norfolk Sons of Liberty
- Resolutions of Annapolis Sons of Liberty

W, Jan. 31: Violence and Intimidation

Reading

- Benjamin Irvin, "Tar, Feathers, and the Enemies of American Liberties, 1768-1776," *New England Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (June 2003): 197-238.

### WEEK FOUR: THE PROBLEM OF COLONIAL UNITY IN THE 1770s

M, Feb. 5: Print and Communication

Reading

- Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks*, Introduction and ch. 1.

W, Feb. 7: Inter- and Intra-Colonial Tensions

Reading

- Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks*, ch. 2.

### WEEK FIVE: POLITICAL AND MILITARY MOBILIZATION BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

M, Feb. 12: Controlling the Countryside

Reading

- Ray Raphael, “Blacksmith Timothy Bigelow and the Massachusetts Revolution of 1774,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 35-52.

**W, Feb. 14:** Lexington and Concord and More

**Reading**

- Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks*, chs. 3-4
- [Declaration of the Cause & Necessity of Taking Up Arms, July 6, 1775](#)
- King George III, “A Proclamation for suppressing Rebellion & Sedition” (August 23, 1775)

**WEEK SIX: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENEMIES**

**M, Feb. 19:** Dunmore, Slaves, and Indians

**Reading**

- Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks*, ch. 5.
- Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation

**W, Feb. 21:** Common Sense

**Reading**

- Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776), in *Common Sense and Related Writings*, ed. Thomas P. Slaughter (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins, 2001): 72-79, 86-90, 98-100, 104-108 (available on Blackboard)

**WEEK SEVEN: DECLARING INDEPENDENCE**

**M, Feb. 26:** Independence

**Reading**

- Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks*, ch. 6.
- Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)

**W, Feb. 28:** Inclusion, Exclusion, and Nationhood

**Reading**

- Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks*, Conclusion.

**WEEK EIGHT: SPRING BREAK (Mar. 4-Mar. 8)**

**WEEK NINE: THE WIDE STAGE OF WAR**

**M, Mar. 11:** The Loyalist Diaspora

**Reading**

- Cassandra Pybus, “Mary Perth, Harry Washington, and Moses Wilkinson: Black Methodists Who Escaped from Slavery and Founded a Nation,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 155-168.

**W, Mar. 13:** Native Experiences and Concerns

**Reading**

- Colin G. Calloway, “Declaring Independence and Rebuilding a Nation: Dragging Canoe and the Chickamauga Revolution,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 185-198.
- James Kirby Martin, “Forgotten Heroes of the Revolution: Han Yerry and Tyona Duxtader of the Oneida Indian Nation,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 199-211.

## WEEK TEN: DEMOCRATIC TENSIONS WITHIN THE REVOLUTION

**M, Mar. 18:** State Constitutions

### Reading

- Gary B. Nash, “Philadelphia’s Radical Caucus That Propelled Pennsylvania to Independence and Democracy,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 67-85.

**W, Mar. 20:** Challenges of Fighting the War

### Reading

- Philip Mead, “‘Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings’: The Betrayals of Private Joseph Plumb Martin, Continental Soldier,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 117-134.
- Michael A. McDonnell, “‘The Spirit of Levelling’: James Cleveland, Edward Wright, and the Militiamen’s Struggle for Equality in Revolutionary Virginia,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 135-154.

## WEEK ELEVEN: THE TENSIONS OF VICTORY

**M, Mar. 25:** Funding the Revolution and Financing a Nation

### Reading

- Stephen Mihm, “Funding the Revolution: Monetary and Fiscal Policy in Eighteenth-Century America,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*, edited by Jane Kamensky and Edward G. Gray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 327-352.

**W, Mar. 27:** An Excess of Democracy?

### Reading

- Gregory Nobles, “‘Satan, Smith, Shattuck, and Shays’: The People’s Leaders in the Massachusetts Regulation of 1786,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 215-231.

## WEEK TWELVE: THE CONSTITUTION AND THE WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATION

**M, Apr. 1:** Debating and Ratifying the Constitution

### Reading

- [Constitution of the United States of America \(1787\)](#)
- *The Federalist*, nos. 10 [James Madison], 23 [Alexander Hamilton], 33 [Hamilton], 51 [Madison], and 84 [Hamilton], in *The Federalist: The Essential Essays*, edited by Jack N. Rakove (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003), pp. 51-59, 72-76, 80-85, 136-141, 213-222.



- George Mason, “Objections to this Constitution of Government” (1787)

**W, Apr. 3:** Radicalism and Reaction in the 1790s

**Reading**

- Terry Bouton, “William Findley, David Bradford, and the Pennsylvania Regulation of 1794,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 233-251.

**WEEK THIRTEEN: ADAMS TO JEFFERSON**

**M, Apr. 8:** Party Politics, Print Culture, and the Alien and Sedition Acts

**Reading**

- Jeffrey L. Pasley, “Thomas Greenleaf: Printers and the Struggle for Democratic Politics and Freedom of the Press,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 355-373.

**W, Apr. 10:** The Election of 1800 and the Transformation of Local & National Politics

**Reading**

- Alan Taylor, “The Plough-Jogger: Jedediah Peck and the Democratic Revolution,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 375-387.

**WEEK FOURTEEN: WOMEN, WAR, POLITICS, AND RIGHTS**

**M, Apr. 15:** Women and War

**Reading**

- Sarah M.S. Pearsall, “Women in the American Revolutionary War,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*, edited by Jane Kamensky and Edward G. Gray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 273-290.

**W, Apr. 17:** Women’s Rights?

**Reading**

- Rosemarie Zagarri, “The Rights of Woman,” chapter one of *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 11-45.
- Sheila Skemp, “America’s Mary Wollstonecraft: Judith Sargent Murray’s Case for the Equal Rights of Women,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 289-303.
- Abigail and John Adams’s “Remember the Ladies” exchange (1776).

**WEEK FIFTEEN: TRANSFORMATIONS OF SLAVERY**

**M, Apr. 22:** Abolition and Black Freedom in the North

**Reading**

- Richard S. Newman, “Prince Hall, Richard Allen, and Daniel Coker: Revolutionary Black Founders, Revolutionary Black Communities,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, pp. 305-321.

**W, Apr. 25:** The Expansion of Slavery in the South

**Reading**

- Steven Deyle, “The Irony of Liberty: Origins of the Domestic Slave Trade,”  
*Journal of the Early Republic* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 37-62.

**WEEK SIXTEEN: ASSESSING THE REVOLUTION**

**M, Apr. 29:** Make-up and Review

**GMU READING DAY: TUESDAY APRIL 30**

All work for the course besides the final reflection must be turned in by the end of the day.

**MONDAY, MAY 6: FINAL REFLECTION DUE**