

HISTORY 201

THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT: AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

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Office Hours: 11:00-1:00 on Wednesdays (or by appointment)



Some of the themes of this course play out in John Singleton Copley's *The Death of Major Peirson*. You'll see this semester that liberty and slavery entwined in complicated ways during the Revolution, with many seeking freedom by turning *toward* the British rather than *away* from them; the black man depicted at center, avenging the death of the English Major Peirson, is likely Isaac Burton, who had escaped slavery in Georgia during the war by aiding a British officer. And enslaved people were not the only Americans to support the British side; many white people remained loyal to Britain in the Revolution, making the conflict a civil war. Copley himself, born in Boston, at first supported the American cause, but he ultimately sided with the British and moved his family to London. Copley's canvas, finally, is a visual reminder that fighting in the Revolution was not confined to American soil, nor were the British and the Americans the sole combatants; the battle pictured here, between the British and the American rebels' French allies, took place on the island of Jersey in the English Channel.

Course Description

The title of this course on the American Revolution is intentionally plural: American Revolutions. Most people think of the American Revolution as a single event: a well-ordered, high-minded struggle in which a united American people sought liberation from the British. This, though, does not align with

what historians know of the past. The Revolution was instead a multi-sided conflict: Patriots and Loyalists squared off in civil war; Euro-Americans fought against Indians; people of low status stood up to the elite; and African Americans strove for independence. We will consider together the many participants in the American Revolution and the different objectives those participants had, taking into account both the formative actions of those remembered as “founders” and the ways in which ordinary people shaped the course of events. We will also step back and assess the Revolution’s ripples around the globe. Here, too, it makes sense to think of American Revolutions in the plural, as the American Revolution sparked a series of revolutions that transformed the Americas from a region largely ruled by Europe to one filled with nation states imbued to varying degrees with notions of popular sovereignty and universal rights.

This is not merely a seminar about the American Revolution and its wide-ranging meanings and consequences—it is also, as a Historian’s Craft course, a primer on what historians do and how they do it. You will therefore spend a great deal of time working with firsthand evidence of the past, what historians call primary sources: searching for them, analyzing them, and organizing them to make logical arguments. You will also engage closely with books and articles that historians have written about the American Revolution (secondary sources), turning to them both as guides to the past and as exemplars of how to write effectively about history or most anything else—how to substantiate a thesis, for instance, or compose a paragraph, or organize an essay. Because this course focuses so intensively on research, writing, and speaking, it fulfills Part B of the General Education Communication Requirement (Comm B).

Objectives:

In this course, you will:

1. Encounter the rich scholarly literature on the American Revolution, becoming familiar with the aims and actions of the Revolution’s wide-ranging participants and grasping the divergent ways the Revolution influenced different peoples in North America.
2. Improve in your ability to read critically, think logically, and use evidence effectively; to communicate persuasively in both writing and speaking; and to utilize the rich library resources available at UW-Madison.
3. Understand how historians *make* history—and how you can, too. You will learn how to ask informed questions about the past and how to answer them using primary and secondary sources. After all, this course is not only an introduction to the American Revolution and a primer on communication, but it is also window into to a window into the practices of historical inquiry.
4. Become captivated by the past—this is my hope, at least! I’ll do my best this semester to help you envision times and places so unfamiliar to you that you cultivate a deep fascination with worlds beyond your own. History should never be boring!

Format:

This course will meet on Wednesdays from 8:50 to 10:45 AM in Humanities 5255. Attendance is required. Since we have only one meeting each week, missing a seminar session is equivalent to missing an entire week of the class. Students who miss more than one seminar meeting over the course of the semester will see a reduction in their participation grade.

Credit:

This is a 3-credit course. The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), reading, research, writing, individual consultations with the professor, and other student work as described in the rest of this syllabus.

Reading:

Your reading assignments will usually consist both of primary sources (documents—such as letters, petitions, and memoirs—that were written during the years we are studying) and secondary sources (documents that were written by historians in later years and usually rely on primary sources). The assigned primary sources will always be shorter than the secondary sources, but you should expect to spend more time, page-for-page, on the primary sources; it is much more difficult to read and interpret material produced by eighteenth-century Americans sources than by modern writers!

The below texts are required for this course:

- Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (1999)
- David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (2007)

The below text is recommended for this course:

- Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 8th edition (2015)

All other readings will be available in our course reader, which can be purchased at the Letters & Science Copy Center, 6120 Sewall Hall. Both the required texts and the course reader will be on reserve in College Library.

Computer Policy:

I ask that you refrain from using computers during our seminar. The temptation to get distracted by things that are not related to class is simply too great. I promise that you'll get far more out of this course if you use just a pen and a pad of paper. Cell phones should be silenced and put away. (If you are a McBurney student who needs accommodation, please come talk to me.)

Disability Statement:

UW-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Developing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. If you need accommodations, please let me know by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with you or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Academic Integrity:

UW-Madison takes academic integrity very seriously, and no academic misconduct will be tolerated in this course. Academic misconduct can assume many forms, so make sure you know what it is and how to avoid it. (See <https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>)

Grading Scale:

A (92.50+); AB (87.50-92.49); B (82.50-87.49); BC (77.50-82.49); C (69.50-77.49); D (60-69.49); F (Below 60)

Illness Policy:

I get it—we all come down with something from time to time. But if you would like accommodations due to illness, you must have a note from a medical professional. So please remember to ask whomever treats you (nurse, doctor, etc.) for one.

Requirements:

Course Attendance and Participation: 25%

Please come to class ready to engage with the material, your peers, and me. I expect you to read carefully, think through the assigned material prior to coming to class, and participate actively. Each seminar presents you with the opportunity to better understand course material and improve your communication skills.

Primary Source Analysis: 6%

You will choose one source from the Wisconsin Historical Society to analyze in depth, thinking about who created the source and for what purpose, what the source can tell us about the past, and how the source relates to the other material you have encountered so far in the course.

Your analysis should be approximately three pages in length.

Optional Research Assignments: 20% (2 assignments at 10% each)

You will complete two optional research assignments this semester. I have designed these assignments to give you maximum flexibility; you get to choose two out of eight prompts given throughout the semester (hence the descriptor “optional”). These three-page papers will be graded according to the depth of your archival research, the strength of your thesis, and the clarity of your writing, as well as the effectiveness of the brief in-class research report you give on the day your assignment is due. Please note that the **first** of these two research assignments will be returned to you with feedback so you can re-write, revise, and edit. You must hand in your first draft of the first assignment by October 24.

Reading Response Assignments: 24% (8 assignments at 3% each)

For eleven of our course meetings, I have created a reading response assignment to help you engage with the week’s assigned readings, sharpen your analysis of written sources, and improve your writing. These assignments, which average a page in length, will be due in hard copy at the start of the seminar for which they are assigned. You must complete eight of the eleven assignments. (You do not need to complete a reading response assignment either of the weeks you complete optional research assignments—though you must still do the reading! And you are allowed one additional week off, which may come in handy at a difficult point in the semester.)

Final Presentation: 5%

Your five-minute formal presentation on the argument and evidence of your final paper should be succinct, rehearsed, and include visuals.

Final Paper: 20%

This paper (five pages long) will be graded on its coherence (does it have a clear argument?), use of sources (does it utilize effectively both primary and secondary sources?), relevance (does it engage with the history of the American Revolution?), and polish (is it well-written and carefully edited?). You will hand in a rough draft, which will be returned to you with feedback, prior to submitting your final paper.

Course Schedule:

September 5: Introduction to the Course

Readings	None
Response Assignment	None
Optional Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	Primary and Secondary Sources Accessing Primary Sources Online

PART I: THE ROAD TO WAR

September 12: Crisis in the British Empire: The Seven Years' War and its Aftermath

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fred Anderson, "Britain's Victory Exposed the Need for Greater Control" in Richard D. Brown and Benjamin L. Carp, eds., <i>Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution</i> (2014), 54-65 • Colin Calloway, <i>The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America</i>, 19-46. • Primary sources related to the Albany Plan and colonial disunion: "JOIN, or DIE," "Plan of a Proposed Union," and "not merely improbable, it is impossible"
Response Assignment	Summarize in approximately 250 words (one double-spaced page) <i>either</i> the Anderson reading <i>or</i> the Calloway reading. What is (are) the main point(s)? What kind of evidence does the author provide to support his point(s)?
Optional Research Assignment	Choose an event that occurred in North America during the Seven Years' War, the conflict leading up to it, or the year of its resolution (1754 to 1763). Track carefully the ways in which awareness of that event spread. How long did it take for news of the event to travel? By what means did news make it from point A to point B (or C or D)? In what ways did accounts of the event change when it was described in new locations? Can you figure out how readers in distant places reacted to the descriptions they read?
Seminar Workshop	Identifying Arguments in Secondary Sources Analyzing Primary Sources Accessing Primary Sources Online, Part II

September 19: Victory's Troubles

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colin Calloway, <i>The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America</i>, 47-111 • Thomas Slaughter, <i>Independence: The Tangled Roots of the American Revolution</i>, 209-79. • Alfred F. Young, "Ebenezer Mackintosh: Boston's Captain General of the Liberty Tree," in Alfred F. Young, Ray Raphael, and Gary B. Nash, eds., <i>Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation</i> (2011), 15-34 • Primary sources related to the colonies' resistance to Britain's reforms: "New York Reacts Violently to the Stamp Act, 1765," "John Dickinson Rallies the Colonists to Opposition, 1767-1768," and "Charleston Merchants Propose a Plan of Nonimportation, 1769"
Response Assignment	Read all three primary sources assigned, and then choose one to analyze. First, summarize the chosen source. Then share what you know about the context of the source's creation and hypothesize how that context might have shaped the source's

	content. Your summary and analysis should together come to approximately 250 words.
Optional Research Assignment	Find two descriptions of the same event that differ substantively. In what ways do they differ? And how are they similar? Who wrote the descriptions, in what contexts, and for what purposes? Based on careful reading and contextual analysis, hypothesize why the writers of these descriptions produced such different accounts.
Seminar Workshop	Asking Historical Questions Accessing Primary Sources Online, Part III

PART II: THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

September 26: Declaring Independence, Dividing an Empire

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, <i>An Empire Divided: The American Revolution in the British Caribbean</i> (2000), xi-xvi, 3-108 Primary Source collection
Response Assignment	Read the assigned primary sources and write a historical question, taking into account the entire collection. Using the criteria we developed in class on September 19, explain why you think your question is a useful one.
Optional Research Assignment	Select a particular British Atlantic region. If you’ve chosen a mainland North American region, collect examples of ways in which that region was connected to the Caribbean during the years leading up to the Revolution—whether through news, trade, migration, or other means. What historical realities bound the people in your region to the Caribbean? How did they view the Caribbean? In what ways did they discuss Caribbean events, people, and politics? If you’ve chosen a Caribbean region, complete this assignment in reverse, probing connections to the mainland.
Seminar Workshop	Crafting Thesis Statements

October 3: Wisconsin Historical Society

Assignment to be completed during & after the visit: Primary Source Analysis

Readings	None
Response Assignment	None
Optional Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	None

October 10: Civil War in North America

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maya Jasanoff, <i>Liberty's Exiles</i> (2011), 19-109
Response Assignment	For seminar this week, you read the three chapters that together make up Part I of Maya Jasanoff's book. Choose one and distill, as succinctly as possible, Jasanoff's argument for the chapter. Does Jasanoff have a traditional thesis statement? Where does she state her central claim most clearly? (It can be hard extracting arguments from narrative prose, but they are there!) Taking into account the other two chapters in Part I, try to write a thesis statement for the entire section of the book. What is Jasanoff's main point in Part I? Does she state it in one place, or does she rely on her reader to piece it together? What kinds of evidence does Jasanoff use to support her thesis?
Optional Research Assignment	Find examples of loyalists defending themselves. How do loyalists speak back to supporters of the Revolution? In what ways do they assert themselves and the rightness of their position? Do your sources show the consequences for loyalists of self-defense? Why do you think these loyalists spoke up? Were there benefits for loyalists to standing one's ground?
Seminar Workshop	Paragraphing

October 17: Revolution from Above, Revolution from Below—Thinking about Class, Rank, and Status

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfred F. Young, <i>The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution</i> (1999)
Response Assignment	Before you write a paper, you organize argument and evidence into an outline. Now, working backwards, I want you to create an outline of Young's <i>Shoemaker and the Tea Party</i> . Be sure in your outline to flag Young's arguments, the ways in which he builds them, and the kinds of evidence he uses to support them. But Young's book tells stories as well as makes arguments, so take care to indicate how Young develops the narrative as well. Your outline should include enough detail to show what Young is accomplishing throughout the scope of the book both argumentatively and narratively.
Optional Research Assignment	Your job this week is to track down a little-known person who lived in the British Atlantic during the era of the Revolution. You must find at least three separate sources that mention this person, but more would be even better. What can you make out of this person's life? How did he or she engage with the Revolution? In addition to direct evidence of this person's actions, you should gather contextual evidence to better understand the place where this person lived; the work at which this person would have toiled; the limits or possibilities presented by this person's race, gender, political ideas, or religious commitments; or any number of other aspects of the person's life. When researching relatively invisible people who trod lightly on the historical record, historians have to do a lot of work to flesh out the worlds in which they lived.
Seminar Workshop	Research Proposals

October 24: Revolutionary Women

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosemary Zagarrri, “The Rights of Women” in <i>Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic</i> (2007), 11-45 • Carol Berkin, “‘You can form no idea of the horrors’: The Challenges of a Home-Front War” in <i>Revolutionary Mothers: The Struggle for America’s Independence</i> (2005), 26-49 • Mary Beth Norton, “We Commenced Perfect Statesmen” in <i>Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800</i> (1980), 155-188 • Woody Holton, “The Battle Against Patriarchy That Abigail Adams Won” in Alfred F. Young, Ray Raphael, and Gary B. Nash, eds., <i>Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation</i> (2011), 273-288 • Primary Sources: “Remember the Ladies’: Abigail Adams vs. John Adams” in Alice S. Rossi, ed., <i>The Feminist Papers: From Adams to Beauvoir</i> (1973), 7-15
Response Assignment	<p>As you read the Holton chapter and the assigned primary sources, pay attention to how the chapter uses primary sources. Where do any of the primary sources you read for today’s seminar show up in Holton’s piece? Turn to the sources in your reader to gain context for the brief quotations Holton uses. How does having the entire primary source available—versus Holton’s snippet—influence your understanding of what the author is communicating? Is there material in the primary sources you read for today which Holton neglected but you think could have helped him make his point? Did Holton have compelling evidence from other sources, which you didn’t have access to in full? What kind of evidence?</p>
Optional Research Assignment	<p>Find evidence of women’s participation in the Revolutionary war. What were these women doing? Why were they doing it? And what were the consequences of their actions?</p>
Seminar Workshop	<p>Proper Academic Conduct</p>

October 31: Revolution in Indian Country

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “New worlds for all: Indian America by 1775” and “Corn wars and civil wars” in Colin Calloway, <i>The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities</i> (1995) 1-64 • James Kirby Martin, “Forgotten Heroes of the Revolution: Han Yerry and Tyona Doxtader of the Oneida Indian Nation,” in Alfred F. Young, Ray Raphael, and Gary B. Nash, eds., <i>Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation</i> (2011), 199-214
Response Assignment	<p>Contrast Calloway’s and Martin’s pieces. How do their arguments, evidence, structure, and prose differ? How are they similar? What does Calloway provide you as a reader that Martin does not—and vice versa?</p>

Optional Research Assignment	Select an event that took place during the Revolution and involved Native Americans. Track carefully the ways in which awareness of that event spread. How did the news travel, and how long did the process take? Did accounts of the event change when it was described in new locations? How were Indians and their involvement portrayed by the writer(s) whose reports you uncovered? Can you figure out how readers in distant places reacted to the descriptions they read?
Seminar Workshop	Citing Sources

November 7: The Problem of Slavery in an Age of Revolution

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christopher Leslie Brown, “The Problems of Slavery” in Jane Kamensky and Edward G. Gray, eds., <i>The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution</i> (2012) • Gary Nash, <i>The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution</i> (2006), 1-122
Response Assignment	Compare the Brown and Nash pieces assigned for this week. There are some obvious differences—length, amount of detail—that make sense due to the reality that Brown was writing an encyclopedia article and Nash a book. But focus on the less obvious ones. What historical problems interest the two scholars? What arguments do they make? What evidence do they use to make them? What geographies do they emphasize? If you see striking interpretive similarities between the works, feel free to comment on those as well.
Optional Research Assignment	Find evidence of people of African descent in a North American region making revolutionary claims during the years of the American Revolution. For the purposes of this assignment, “revolutionary claims” should be interpreted broadly, as demands African Americans made through speech, writing, and/or action. What did the African Americans you located seem to want? What strategies did they use to achieve their goals? Are you able to make out the extent to which they were successful? How did the white community around them respond?
Seminar Workshop	Accessing Primary Sources Online, Part IV

November 14: Making a Nation—Confederation to Constitution

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack N. Rakove, “The Articles of Confederation, 1775-1783” in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds., <i>A Companion to the American Revolution</i> (2000), 281-86 • Pauline Maier, “The View from Mount Vernon,” “The Morning After,” “The Massachusetts Ratifying Convention I,” “The Massachusetts Ratifying Convention II,” and “Playing the After Game,” in <i>Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution</i> (2011), 1-49, 155-213, 435-468 • “The U.S. Constitution,” Maier, 473-85
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Response Assignment	Imagine that your mom tells her dad during Thanksgiving dinner that you've been taking a class on the American Revolution, and Grandpa asks you to bring him up to speed on the Constitution. You start by explaining the Articles of Confederation, hoping you remember Rakove correctly, but then other relatives overhear—and all of a sudden you have the floor. This week is your opportunity to prepare for what may well take place next week! In one page, summarize succinctly how the nation moved from the Articles of Confederation to ratification of the Constitution, using Massachusetts as a case study. I want you to write as you would speak, so informal language and non-standard sentence structure are fine here. Then practice what you've written, so you'll be ready for Grandpa—and to present to us in seminar.
Optional Research Assignment	Choose any group of revolutionary-era Americans, with the exception of wealthy white men. You could define this group by class, gender, race, or occupation. (So, for instance, you could choose poor whites or women or African Americans or farmers.) Probe how this non-elite group viewed the constitution circa 1788, prior to the passage of the Bill of Rights in 1789. Why did this group have the perspective it did? How did this group make its opinion known? If you're having trouble locating documentary evidence to demonstrate conclusively your chosen group's perspective on the constitution, you may hypothesize <i>how</i> you think your group would have viewed the constitution based on what you know of its social status and what you've learned of the constitution and its supporters and detractors.
Seminar Workshop	Research Workshop

PART III: THE GLOBAL AMERICAN REVOLUTION

November 21: No Class—Meet Individually With Prof. Whiting by November 28

November 28: The Revolution in France and its Empire

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The effects of the American Revolution on France and its empire” in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds., <i>A Companion to the American Revolution</i> (2000), 523-30 • “Haitian Revolution” in Junius P. Rodriguez, ed., <i>Encyclopedia of Slave Resistance and Rebellion</i> (2007) • Robin Blackburn, “Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution,” <i>William and Mary Quarterly</i> (2006), 643-74 • John Thornton, “I am the subject of the King of Congo: African political ideology and the Haitian Revolution,” <i>Journal of World History</i> (1993), 181-214
Response Assignment	In approximately 250 words (two well-developed paragraphs), answer the following questions: 1) How did the American Revolution influence the Haitian Revolution? and 2) In what ways did the Haitian Revolution fulfill the promises of the American Revolution? Your answers should draw on at least three of the four assigned readings.

Optional Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	From Ideas to Outline

December 5: Revolutionary Ripples beyond the Atlantic **Drafts Due December 10**

Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Armitage, <i>The Declaration of Independence: A Global History</i> (2007)
Response Assignment	In 250 words, summarize and assess Armitage's book. What does he argue? With what evidence? How do his contentions change historians' understanding of the American Revolution? Can you detect any shortcomings to his book?
Optional Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	Oral Presentations

December 12: Final presentations **Drafts Returned December 14**

Readings	None
Response Assignment	None
Optional Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	None

December 20: Final Papers Due