

History 200: Liberty and the American Revolution

University of Wisconsin – Madison History Department

9/12/2022-10/23/2022

Instructor Information

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Office hours: Thursdays, 11:00-2:00 via Zoom

Course Description

The language of liberty and rights suffuses American history. Yet this language has been employed to diverse and even contradictory ends. South Carolina justified its secession in 1860 as fidelity to the original principles of the Declaration of Independence; just five years later, a group of former slaves argued for the right to vote through the same document, which they labeled “the broadest, the deepest, the most comprehensive and truthful definition of human freedom that was ever given to the world.” In the early twentieth century, Woodrow Wilson would invoke the principles of the American Revolution to justify greater American involvement in foreign affairs, even as his opponents turned to the Founding Documents in their push for isolationism. Today, politicians and activists of all political persuasions continue to use the Revolutionary Generation’s language to articulate their visions of what the United States is and should be.

This complicated legacy of the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and other Revolutionary-era documents raises important questions: what, exactly, did the Founding Generation mean when they talked of life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness? Who articulated the dominant understanding of these concepts, and who dissented? What was their vision for the young United States? And can an investigation of their original understandings and intentions inform the debates about American values that continue in the modern world? Part intellectual history and part civics course, this class challenges us to engage with these long-running discussions.

Liberty and the American Revolution also aims to promote good practices of digital citizenship, defined as “the responsible use of technology by anyone who uses computers, the Internet, and digital devices to engage with society on any level.” Public engagement in the virtual world both poses unique challenges to our understanding of our relationship to other people and complicates our perception of contemporary conversations surrounding the meaning and applicability of the Founding Generations’ ideas. At its best, the internet can serve as humanity’s most widely-encompassing public sphere, challenging us to reconsider our own beliefs and offering us a chance to practice empathy. At its worst, it can trap us in echo chambers and lead us to demonize those with whom we may disagree. While this course does not pretend to have a magic solution to these issues, it does hope to spark discussion and self-reflection surrounding our roles as digital citizens.

This is a six-week, one-credit course, consisting of a total of 45 credit hours. Weekly workload will be approximately 7.5 hours, as outlined below.

Credit Hour Policy

The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 45 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities, which include regularly scheduled lecture videos, reading, writing, virtual field trips, and other student work as described in the syllabus. The weekly breakdown is approximately as follows:

Lectures	Readings	Written Assignments	Virtual Assignments
1.5 Hours	2.5 Hours	2 Hours	1.5 Hours

Course Objectives

In completing this course, students will be able to:

- Practice responsible digital citizenship
- Analyze influences that shape historical narratives and debates
- Recognize multiple ways of being in the world and in the United States, both across time and among people
- Place the decisions the decisions of the Revolutionary generation in the contest of major strains of early American thought to contextualize, and assess the long-term impact of those decisions
- Expand written communication skills through source analyses and position write-ups

Online Format

This class features entirely virtual instruction. Once the Canvas page is open, all announcements will be made on the course page. I may from time to time offer in-person office hours. These will be supplemental to, rather than replacing, virtual hours.

Course Materials

All course materials are freely available on campus or linked through other sites. Do not purchase anything for this course.

Conduct and Comportment

The historical discipline is built upon arguments that rely on well-sourced information that can be openly and civilly debated. Disagreements are a natural part of that process, but keep in mind that you are debating ideas, not people. This may be easier to forget in an all-online course, but it is imperative that we extend the same respect to our peers through a computer screen as we would in person.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism (taking the work of another without proper attribution) will not be tolerated. While it may be more tempting in a world of online education to take shortcuts in giving credit to other

authors, it is still both a matter of fairness to others and a crucial element in your own academic development to turn in only your own original work. What constitutes plagiarism may not always feel clear. We will cover the basics of plagiarism before the rough draft assignment. If you are ever in doubt, check with me, and be sure to cite!

McBurney Accommodations

The University of Wisconsin-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. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [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 FERPA.

Grading Scale

92.5%-100% A
87.5%-92.49% AB
82.5%-87.49% B
78.5%-82.49% BC
70%-78.49% C
60%-69.99% D
0%-59.99% F

How Grading Works

This course uses Specifications Grading, which both simplifies course expectations and gives you greater control over your grade. In this system, every assignment is graded on a complete/incomplete basis: either you get all of the points for an assignment, or you don't. *However, you have the right to resubmit any assignment for which you do not initially receive credit.* You will receive feedback on each submission. Any assignment that does not receive full credit will include specific feedback indicating what needs to be changed in order to be awarded full marks.

Resubmissions will be accepted at any time, but it would be a bad idea to leave them to the end of the course. There is no guarantee that a resubmitted assignment will be accepted upon resubmission, and depending on the volume of grading responsibilities at any given point there may be a delay between your resubmission and its grading. *No resubmissions from the first five weeks will be accepted after 11:59pm on the Friday of Week 6 (10/20). Week 6 resubmissions must be submitted by noon of the following Sunday (10/23).*

Course Structure and Assignments

Although this is a one-credit course, its compressed timeline means that it is fast-paced and demands consistent engagement. This chart below should help you to visualize the weekly flow. Note that assignments will be due by 11:59pm on days in bold.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
Lecture and Context	Reading	Analysis	Virtual Field Trip	Reflection – Initial Post	Reflection Responses

- Monday will feature the bulk of the traditional “lecture” materials, which will consist of a blend of lecture videos, multimedia, and text. The purpose of Monday lessons will be to set the stage for the week’s topic, and to help you place the readings and “field trip” materials into context.
- Tuesday is a “reading day.” It will typically feature two or three materials that build upon the material presented on Monday.
- Wednesday at 11:59pm is the due date for the weekly “analysis” assignment, a short written assignment that will ask you to put the week’s readings in conversation with each other and with the Monday lesson materials.
- Thursday will feature a short assignment (also due at 11:59pm) that is tied into a virtual field trip to one of the museums that has made its collections available online. The assignments will consist of a short set of questions about specific exhibits, both to confirm factual details about the Revolution and to ask students to ponder the narrative of the Revolution that the field trip site advances.
- By 11:59pm on Friday, you will submit a longer reflection piece that will tie the week’s major theme to ongoing conversations in American society. These reflections will be posted in an online discussion forum, where you will also be required to respond to two other students’ posts by 11:59pm on Sunday. Note: The first student to post in a discussion thread will only be required to respond to one other post.

Important: The schedule as currently laid out exists to help you go through the materials in the most sensible order, and to help you maintain a steady pace over the course of the term. *Due dates are firm.* However, materials and submission portals will always be available as soon as possible to offer you flexibility with your schedule.

The grade breakdown will be as follows:

- Six Analyses @ 7 points each = 42 points
- Six Field Trip Responses @ 8 points each = 48 points
- Six Reflections @ 10 points each = 60 points
- Course Total: 150 possible points

Reflection Rubric

Full Credit	No Credit/Resubmit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post answers each portion of the prompt fully and completely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post does not follow the instructions of the assignment fully

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts demonstrates thoughtful engagement with the material • Quotations and substantial paraphrases are cited with enough information to allow others to easily locate the original source • Tone of the original post and responses are consistent with respectful academic discourse • Post is substantially free of any typos or errors • Both the original post and the two responses (or one response if the student was the first to post in their thread) are submitted on time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post demonstrates little or superficial engagement with the material • Uses no quotations, or uses quotations and substantial paraphrases without offering sufficient citation information • Post is written in an unprofessional, inappropriate, or offensive manner • Post has several errors, or errors that interfere with readability • Posts are not submitted on time
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Week 1 (9/12-9/18): “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death”

- Lecture and Context: The Enlightenment Roots of the American Revolution
- Readings:
 - Foner, Eric. *The Story of American Freedom* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1994), 1-22.
 - Excerpts of responses to the Coercive Acts (1774)
- Analysis: What rights? What infringements?
- Virtual Field Trip: [The Museum of the American Revolution](#)
- Reflection: Introducing yourself, and what, to you is liberty?

Week 2 (9/19-9/25): “Common Sense?”

- Lecture and Context: The Revolution as a Civil War and the Limits of Consensus
- Readings:
 - Excerpts from *Taxation No Tyranny* (1775)
 - Excerpts from Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)
- Analysis: Paine vs. Loyalists
- Virtual Field Trip: [American Revolution Museum at Yorktown](#)
- Reflection: See Canvas

Week 3 (9/26-10/2): “Who Talks Most About Freedom and Equality?”

- Lecture and Context: Slavery and Abolition in the Revolutionary Era
- Readings:
 - Furstenberg, François. “Beyond Freedom and Slavery: Autonomy, Virtue, and Resistance in Early American Political Discourse,” *Journal of American History* 89 no. 4 (Mar. 2003): 1295-1330.

- Excerpts from *The Life of Boston King* (1798)
- Analysis: King in light of Furstenberg
- Virtual Field Trip: [Monticello](#)
- Reflection: See Canvas

Week 4 (10/3-10/9): “Remember the Ladies”

- Lecture and Context: Women and the Revolution
- Readings:
 - Kerber, Linda K. “‘I Have Don... much to Carry on the Warr’: Women and the Shaping of Republican Ideology After the American Revolution.” *Journal of Women’s History* 1 no. 1 (Winter 1990): 231-243.
 - Phillis Wheatley on Tyranny and Slavery (1772)
 - Excerpts from the letters of Lucy Knox (1776-1777)
- Analysis: Did women have a revolution?
- Virtual Field Trip: [When Women Lost the Vote](#)
- Reflection: See Canvas

Week 5 (10/10-10/16): “The Happy Union of these States is a Wonder”

- Lecture and Context: Conflict and Consensus in the Young Republic
- Readings:
 - Matthew Pauley, *Athens, Rome, and England: America’s Constitutional Heritage*. (Wilmington, DE: Griffin House, 2014), 183-200.
 - Federalist 10
- Analysis: The utility of the Bill of Rights
- Virtual Field Trip: [National Constitution Center's Interactive Constitution](#)
- Analysis: See Canvas

Week 6 (10/17-10/23): “We Have It in Our Power to Begin the World Over Again”

- Lecture and Context: The American Revolution and Us
- Readings:
 - Brown, Richard. “The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in the Early Republic,” in Konig, David Thomas, ed. *Devising Liberty: Preserving and Creating Freedom in the New American Republic*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).
 - TBD
- Analysis: Revolutionary Legacies
- Virtual Field Trip: [Mount Vernon](#)
- Reflection: See Canvas