

FALL 2023 SYLLABUS for HISTORY 201

THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT: AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:15-3:15 (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 colonists 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 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 Native people; folks of low social 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 some of 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. Because this course focuses so intensively on research, writing, and speaking, it fulfills Part B of the General Education Communication Requirement (Comm B).

Student Learning Outcomes:

I have a variety of goals for this course. By taking *American Revolutions*, students will:

1. ...learn to **ask questions**. Students will gain experience formulating effective historical questions, which are crucial to directing independent research and stimulating group discussions.
2. ...learn to **find sources**. Students will practice using footnotes, bibliographies, libraries, archives, and electronic databases of historical sources in order to obtain source material.
3. ...learn to **evaluate sources**. Students will be trained in distinguishing between primary and secondary sources, determining the credibility of source materials, identifying the perspectives of those who authored sources, summarizing the arguments they find in sources, and evaluating the utility of sources.
4. ...learn to **develop and present arguments**. Students will practice writing strong thesis statements, revising those theses based on additional research, identifying the parts of an argument necessary to support a thesis persuasively, and citing, paraphrasing, and quoting evidence appropriately to support each part of an argument.
5. ...learn to **plan further research**. Students will draw upon preliminary research to develop a plan for further investigation. They will write research proposals that include a tentative argument, a plan for research, an annotated bibliography, and an abstract of the proposed project. And they will work to identify the contribution of an argument to existing scholarship.
6. ...learn to **communicate findings effectively**. Students will write formal academic papers using appropriate style and bibliographic apparatuses. They will also deliver concise and

effective verbal presentations with appropriate supporting visuals. And they will contribute constructively to seminar discussions.

7. ...gain a **nuanced understanding of the American Revolution**. Students will 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 in which the Revolution influenced different peoples in North America and beyond.

(Note that items 1-6 are adapted from the History Department's goals for History 201 seminars.)

Format:

This course will meet on Tuesdays from 11:00 to 12:55 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. Seminar will provide me with my main opportunity to engage in regular and substantive interaction with you: In seminar I will give you direct instruction, provide information about course content, and facilitate discussion of the material under consideration.

Email Communication and Office Hours:

If you need to reach me with questions or concerns, please email me. I will do my best to respond to you within 24 hours during the work week. If you do not hear back from me, please double-check the syllabus; likely the answer to your question can be found there.

My office hours are Tuesdays from 1:15–3:15 in Humanities 5108. Of course, if you have a conflict with my scheduled office hours, I can arrange to meet with you at another time.

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 and secondary sources. (Primary sources are documents—such as letters, petitions, and memoirs—that were written during the years we are studying, and secondary sources are 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:

- David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (2007), which can be purchased online or at your bookstore of choice.
- The History 201 Course Reader, Parts 1 and 2, which can be purchased at the Letters & Science Copy Center, 6120 Sewall Hall.

Both the Armitage book and the course reader will be on reserve in College Library.

Electronics Policy:

I ask that you refrain from using computers or any kind of electronics 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:

By virtue of enrolling in this course, you are agreeing to uphold the high academic standards of UW–Madison, which boil down to this: You must submit your own work. Probably all of us, at one time or another, have found ourselves stuck on an assignment. I know I have. If this happens to you, *please ask me for help*. Do not try to pass off someone else's work as your own. And do not turn to online content generators. Thinking for yourself, analyzing evidence, and writing effectively about the problems at hand are important skills that this course will encourage you to develop. These skills will help you regardless of your chosen field of study or profession. And, down the road, they will even enable you to evaluate the utility and accuracy of artificial intelligence software; a clear-minded researcher can determine whether bots are producing coherent content or generating junk. Since my job is to teach you to *think* rather than to copy material from elsewhere, submitting any written work created by ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence software will constitute plagiarism for the purposes of this

course. Plagiarism will result in an “F” for the assignment in question and an academic misconduct report.

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)

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.

Research Assignment: 15%

This three-page paper will be graded according to the depth of your archival research, the strength of your argument, the completeness with which you respond to the prompt, and the clarity of your writing. I have designed this assignment to give you maximum flexibility; you get to choose from five prompts given throughout roughly the first half of the semester. I will be making a schedule for the semester’s research assignments the day after our first class meeting in order to ensure an even spread of presenters. Please be prepared to provide me with your preferences by noon on September 13. (Note that this research assignment will be returned to you with feedback so you can re-write, revise, and edit.)

Research Assignment Presentation: 5%

You will formally present your research assignment on the day the paper is due. Your presentation should last between two-and-a-half and five minutes. It should explain your archival process, lay out the argument(s) you make in your paper, and provide your audience with supporting evidence. Each presentation should be polished and include visuals.

Reading Response Assignments: 15% (3 assignments at 5% each)

For nine 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. You must complete any three. These assignments, which average a page in length, must be submitted on Canvas before the start of the seminar for which they are assigned.

Final Paper: 30%

This paper (eight 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.

Final Presentation: 10%

This presentation, five to seven-and-a-half minutes 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-rehearsed and presented in a compelling manner?).

Course Schedule:

September 12: Introduction to the Course

Readings	None
Response Assignment	None
Optional Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	Primary and Secondary Sources (Goal 3) Accessing Primary Sources Online (Goal 2)

PART I: THE ROAD TO WAR

September 19: Crisis in the British Empire: The Seven Years' War and its Aftermath

Readings	• 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)? (Goals 3 and 7)
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? (Goals 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7)
Seminar Workshop	Identifying Arguments in Secondary Sources (Goal 3) Analyzing Primary Sources (Goal 3) Accessing Primary Sources Online, Part II (Goal 2)

September 26: Victory's Troubles

Readings	- Colin Calloway, <i>The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America</i>, 47-111 - 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. (Goals 3 and 7)
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. (Goals 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7)
Seminar Workshop	Asking Historical Questions (Goal 1) Accessing Primary Sources Online, Part III (Goal 2)

October 3: Individual Student Conferences

PART II: THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

October 10: Declaring Independence, Dividing an Empire

Readings	- Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, <i>An Empire Divided: The American Revolution in the British Caribbean</i> (2000), xi-xvi, 3-108 - Primary Source collection: "The Articles of Association," "The Humble Petition and Memorial of the Assembly of Jamaica," "The Humble Petition of the Planters," "The Continental Congress Writes to the Jamaican Assembly," and excerpts from North American newspapers.
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 26, explain why you think your question is a useful one. (Goals 1 and 7)
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. (Goals 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7)
Seminar Workshop	Crafting Thesis Statements (Goal 4)

October 17: Visit to the Wisconsin Historical Society Library and Archive (Goals 2 and 3)

October 24: Civil War in North America

Readings	• 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? (Goals 3 and 7)
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? (Goals 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7)
Seminar Workshop	Paragraphing (Goals 4 and 6) Research Proposals (Goal 5)

October 31: Revolutionary Women

Readings	• Rosemary Zagari, “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
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	• 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	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? (Goals 3, 4, and 7)
Research Assignment	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? (Goals 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7)
Seminar Workshop	Proper Academic Conduct (Goals 4 and 6)

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

Research Proposals due

Readings	• 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) • Gloria Whiting, “Emancipation without the Courts or Constitution: The Case of Revolutionary Massachusetts,” <i>Slavery & Abolition</i> (September 2020): 458–78. • Gary Nash, <i>The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution</i> (2006), 1-122
Response Assignment	Skim the three readings. Choose two to compare. There are some obvious differences—length, amount of detail—that make sense due to the reality that Brown was writing an encyclopedia entry, Whiting a journal article, and Nash a book. But focus on the less obvious ones. What historical problems interest the scholars in question? What arguments do they make? What evidence do they use to make them? What geographies do they emphasize? If you see interpretive similarities between the works, feel free to comment on those as well. (Goals 3 and 7)
Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	Accessing Primary Sources Online, Part IV (Goal 2)

November 14: Revolution in Indian Country

Readings	• “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	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 with as a reader that Martin does not—and vice versa? (Goals 3 and 7)
Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	Citing Sources (Goal 4)

November 21: No Class—Enjoy Thanksgiving!

November 28: Making a Nation—Confederation to Constitution

Readings	• 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
Response Assignment	Imagine that your mom calls and asks you what you’re learning about in class. When you mention the constitution, she requests that you bring her up to speed on how it came into being. 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 your mom—and to present to us in seminar. (Goals 3 and 7)
Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	In-Class Research Workshop

PART III: THE GLOBAL AMERICAN REVOLUTION

December 5: Revolutionary Ripples around the Globe

Draft of Final Paper due

Readings	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? (Goals 3 and 7)
Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	Oral Presentations (Goal 6)

December 12: Final Presentations

Readings	None
Response Assignment	None
Research Assignment	None
Seminar Workshop	None