THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

This course explores the revolutionary developments in British North America between 1760 and 1800. The American Revolution involved more than just a colonial rebellion against Britain or a war for independence. It was a "revolution." Exactly what that revolution meant, however, has elicited differing views from its participants and contemporary observers, as well as from each subsequent generation of historians. Today historians note that the nation's noblest ideals and promises, as well as its most invidious contradictions and hypocrisies, emerged from the American Revolution. One of the quests of this course will be to discover just how "revolutionary" was the American Revolution, and what were the various meanings that diverse Americans during that era attached to this epochal event of nation-building and social and cultural transformation.

A supplementary objective of this course will be to analyze the various meanings that contemporary American society and culture attributes to the American Revolution.

REQUIRED READINGS:
The following books are required readings and are available at the College Bookstore:

- Alfred F. Young, The Shoemaker and the Tea Party.
- Woody Holton, Forced Founders.
- Saul Cornell, The Other Founders.
- Sylvia Frey, Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age.
- Michael Bellesiles, Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture.

Additional readings and documents (listed in the class schedule below) are available on electronic reserve. Reserve readings are required readings (not optional readings). You will be expected to know those readings as well as the books you purchase from the bookstore. Other reading assignments may be distributed by class handouts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Reading and class participation:
Students are expected to attend all class meetings, complete the readings, and be prepared for discussion of the assigned reading each week. Classroom discussions are an integral part of the course, and all students are expected to participate. The following is the History Dept. policy on attendance: "Students are required to attend all classes for the successful completion of the course. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade."

Assignments: (Handouts will be given to explain the expectations of the papers.)
Document Analysis:
Students will be responsible for finding and interpreting an original primary source document from the collections in the Tri-college Libraries, including the Friends Historical Library. The paper will be a 2-3 page interpretation of a passage from the document. A transcription or copy of the document (not to exceed one page) will be appended to the paper. Due: Feb. 12.
Historiographical Debate
One paper (4-5 pages) will be written on an on-going point of controversy and debate among historians of the American Revolution. Students will be given a list of readings on that topic, and then asked to summarize the debate while developing their own positions on the controversy. Students should be prepared to contribute their opinions on this controversy during class discussions. Due throughout the semester (see class schedule).

The American Revolution in Contemporary Popular Culture:
Students will write a short paper (4-5 pages) analyzing the meaning of the American Revolution in its various manifestations within contemporary American culture. Several films will be shown throughout the semester (and perhaps one or two field trips to public history or museum sites). Students will then write a critique of the presentation of the American Revolution in American popular culture. Due: Apr. 9.

The History of the Second Amendment and America’s Gun Culture
Another paper (4-5 pages) will be written on how historians have interpreted the second amendment to the Constitution, including the recent controversies surrounding Michael Bellesiles’ book, Arming America. Due: Apr. 30.

Mid-term examination:
A mid-term examination, covering the readings for weeks 1-7 will be given on Mar. 7.

Final examination:
A final examination will be given on the scheduled final exam date.
Date and Time: __________________________

All assignments are due as stated in the syllabus. No extensions will be granted. Late papers will receive grade reductions.

CLASS SCHEDULE: ♦ = Electronic Reserves

(WEEK 1)
Jan. 22 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Readings:

Jan. 24 COLONIAL SOCIAL ORDER

Readings:
Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution, pp. 11-168.
(WEEK 2)

Jan. 29  A FRAGILE EMPIRE REACHES A CRISIS

Readings:

Documents:
◊ James Otis, *Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* (1764)
◊ Virginia Stamp Act Resolves (1765)
◊ Declarations of the Stamp Act Congress (1765)
◊ Benjamin Franklin’s Examination Before the House of Commons (1766)

Jan. 31  DISCUSSION -- A RADICAL REVOLUTION?

Readings:

(WEEK 3)

Feb.  5  A REVOLUTION FOR ORDINARY INDIVIDUALS

Readings:
*• Barbara Clark Smith, “Food Rioters and the American Revolution,” William and Mary Quarterly 51 (Jan. 1994), pp. 3-34*

Documents:
*• William Manning, *Key of Libberty*, pp. 122-70.*

Feb.  7  SOCIAL CHANGE & THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION - DISCUSSION

Readings:

Debate: Capitalism and the American Revolution
(WEEK 4)
Feb. 12 COLONIAL RESISTANCE, RIOTS, & MOBS

Readings:
Holton, Forced Founders, pp. 77-129.
• Paul Gilje, The Road to Mobocracy (1987), pp. 16-68

Documents:
◊ Gov. Bernard Describes the Boston Stamp Act Riot (1765)
◊ Josiah Quincy Describes the Boston Stamp Act Riot (1765)
◊ John Dickinson, Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania (1767-68)
◊ Association and Resolves of the New York Sons of Liberty (1773)
◊ The Continental Association (1774)

Feb. 14 IDEOLOGIES OF THE REVOLUTION -- WHIGS & REPUBLICANISM

Readings:
• Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, pp. 94-143 [also skim pp. 144-59.]

(WEEK 5)
Feb. 19 IDEOLOGIES OF THE REVOLUTION -- PAINE & THE RADICALS

Readings:
• Thomas Paine, Common Sense (see documents below)
• Eric Foner, Tom Paine and Revolutionary America, pp. 77-144.

Documents:
◊ Thomas Paine, Common Sense (1776) in P. Foner, ed., Complete Writings of Thomas Paine, vol 1, pp. 1-46 [read first 2/3, skim the rest.]
◊ Declaration of Independence (1776)
◊ John Dickinson Opposes Independence (1776)
◊ Thomas Jefferson, A Summary View of the Rights of British-America (1774)

Debate: Sources and Writing of the Declaration of Independence

Feb. 21 REVOLUTION & WAR -- POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

Readings:
Holton, Forced Founders, pp. 131-220.
(WEEK 6)  
Feb. 26  CIVIL WAR? -- THE LOYALISTS

Readings:

Documents:
◊ Tom Paine Attacks the Loyalists (1776)
◊ Newspaper Attack on the Loyalists (1779)
◊ Loyalists Plead Their Cause (1782)
◊ Jonathan Boucher, *A View of the Causes . . .* (1775)

Feb. 28  A REVOLUTION FOR AMERICAN INDIANS

Readings:
• Mary Young, "Let's Hear it for the Losers," *Reviews in American History* 24 (1996), 579-84.

Debate: The Iroquois Influence Thesis

(WEEK 7)  
Mar. 5  RELIGION & THE REVOLUTION -- EVANGELICAL AWAKENING

Readings:

Debate: Was the Great Awakening Necessary for the American Revolution?

Mar. 7  MID-TERM EXAM

SPRING BREAK - MARCH 11-15
**WEEK 8**

**Mar. 19 RELIGION & THE REVOLUTION -- CHURCH & STATE**

**Readings:**

**Documents:**
- Issac Backus, *An Appeal for Religious Liberty* (1773)
- Ezra Stiles, *The Place of Religion in the United States* (1783)
- Philadelphia Jews Seek Equality Before the Law (1783)
- Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom (1786)

**Mar. 21 WOMEN, GENDER, & THE REVOLUTION**

**Readings:**
- Mary Beth Norton, "Revolutionary Advances for Women,” (from *Liberty’s Daughters*) and

**Documents:**
- Hannah Griffits, *The Female Patriots* (1768),
- *To the Female Patriot, No. 1* (1770).
- Judith Sargent Murray, “On the Equality of the Sexes” (1790)
- Priscilla Mason’s Salutatory Oration, Philadelphia Female Academy (1794)

**Debate: Was the Revolution Revolutionary for Women?**

**WEEK 9**

**Mar. 26 THE PROBLEM OF SLAVERY & THE FOUNDING OF THE NATION**

**Readings:**

**Documents:**
- Caesar Sarter, Essay on Slavery (1774)
- Tom Paine, Essay on Slavery (1775)
- John Cooper, "To the Public" (1780)

**Debate: Slavery and the American Revolution**

**Mar. 28 AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE REVOLUTION**

**Readings:**
Debate: Jefferson and Hemings

(WEEK 10)
Apr. 2 REVOLUTIONARY STATE GOVERNMENTS

Readings:
Wood, Creation of the American Republic, pp. 127-389 (esp. ch. 4-6, 9).

Documents:
◊ Virginia Bill of Rights (1776)
◊ Virginia Constitution (1776)
◊ Pennsylvania Constitution (1776)

Apr. 4 CONFEDERATION AND STATE REPUBLICS - A CRITICAL PERIOD?

Readings:
Wood, Creation of the American Republic, pp. 393-467.
• Merrill Jensen, "The Achievements of the Confederation," (from The New Nation (1950)) &

Documents:
◊ Benjamin Rush Criticizes the Pennsylvania Constitution (1777)
◊ Thomas Jefferson Notes Weaknesses in the Virginia Constitution
◊ James Madison, "Vices of the Political System" (1786)

(WEEK 11)
Apr. 9 THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION -- A COUNTER REVOLUTION?

Readings:

Apr. 11 NO CLASS

FEDERALISTS AND THE RATIFICATION DEBATES

Readings:
Wood, Creation of the American Republic, pp. 519-64.
The Federalist Papers (see documents below)

Documents:
◊ The Federalist Papers, -- Federalist No. 10, 39, 51, 84.
(WEEK 12)
Apr. 16  THE ANTIFEDERALIST PERSUASION

Readings:
Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders*, pp. 1-143.

Documents:
◊ Richard Henry Lee, Letters from the Federal Farmer (1788)
◊ James Winthrop, Letters from Agrippa (1787).
◊ Letters of Philadelphiensis (1788).
◊ "John De Witt," "To the Free Citizens of . . . Massachusetts (1787).
◊ Patrick Henry Opposes the Constitution (1788)

Debate: Who were the Antifederalists?

Apr. 18  THE BILL OF RIGHTS

Readings:
Michael Bellesiles, *Arming America*, Intro- ch. 5.
• Handouts on Bellesiles’ book.

(WEEK 13)
Apr. 23  THE SECOND AMENDMENT - RIGHTS TO BEAR ARMS DEBATES

Readings:
Bellesiles, *Arming America*, ch. 6-10.
Saul Cornell, ed., *Whose Rights to Arms Did the Second Amendment Protect?*, selected essays.

Apr. 25  POLITICS AND LIFE IN THE NEW REPUBLIC

Readings:
To be announced

(WEEK 14)
Apr. 30  DEBATES OVER POLITICAL ECONOMY

Readings:
To be announced

May. 2  OVERVIEW AND REVIEW -- IRONY & LEGACY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Final Examination: Date___________________ Time________________________