

History 642: Pro-Seminar - The American Revolution
Longmore – Spring Semester 2004

Spring Semester 2004. Tuesdays, 4:10-6:55 pm
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The great historian Carl L. Becker argued three generations ago that the American Revolution was a struggle for “home rule” that became a struggle over “who should rule at home.” Many historians nowadays would still agree that the Revolution was not only a war of national independence. It was the moment when the new nation began to define itself, but this involved more than the framing of the national and state governments. Various kinds of “Americans” sought to appropriate the ideas and opportunities presented by that transforming era to enhance their individual and group prospects and their claims to citizenship. The Revolution raised issues of class, culture, economics, gender, politics, race, region, religion, and the relationship of individuals to society. The Revolution meant different things to different people. Thus, when we examine the Revolutionary experience, we must keep in mind whose various Revolutions we are recounting.

This seminar will consider not only some of the themes of the history of the American Revolution, but also the ways in which historians think and write about those themes. Thus, we will both study the Revolution and study how to study the Revolution, how to think historically. The format will be discussion, supplemented by some lectures. We will read and discuss both documents from and studies of the American Revolution.

No later than February 11th, each student will select a topic for a research paper, chosen with the approval of the instructor.

Each student will submit a draft twenty-five-page (25) paper based upon research and reading in the primary and secondary sources. The due dates for these draft papers will be staggered on a volunteer basis. The final draft of each paper will be due on May 20th. Each paper will be assigned three student commenters. These commenters will give a brief oral summary/critique of their assigned papers in class the week they are due for discussion. The week before their papers are scheduled for discussion, authors will be responsible to make five (5) copies of their papers available: one to the instructor, one to the teaching assistant, one to the commenter, and two (2) to be placed on reserve in the library for other class members.

Grading: The course grade will be based on: research paper 50%; oral report 25%; participation in class discussions 25%.

The research papers will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Argument/Organization. Does the paper identify a significant topic or issue? Does it propound a thesis? Does the writer state the purpose and thesis clearly? Is the scope of the paper appropriate? Is the opening effective in establishing the context, purpose and point of view? Is the thesis developed and supported with an adequate argument? Is the argument coherent? Convincing? Is the conclusion effective in summing up the argument?

2. Evidence/Analysis. Does the writer make accurate use of a wide range of primary and secondary sources to support the argument? Is sufficient evidence provided to develop his or her claims persuasively? Does the writer demonstrate analytical and critical skills in using these sources? Does the paper take proper note of the sources' biases? Does it demonstrate command of the topic and its historical context?

3. Historiography. Does the writer demonstrate a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods central to the subject and to the discipline of history, including controversies and disagreements? Is the work of other historians used appropriately to frame the argument? Are interpretations considered that diverge from the writer's own viewpoint? Does the writer demonstrate critical skills in the use of secondary sources?

4. Expression. Does the writer use language skillfully and appropriately? In other words, does the writer use: a variety of sentence structures and appropriate vocabulary for a formal research paper? Is the writing coherent? Do ideas flow clearly? Are they connected logically?

5. Form. Does the writer follow standard conventions of usage, spelling, and punctuation? Does the writer adhere to the usual rules of citation in footnotes or endnotes and in the bibliography? Are the citations adequate to allow the reader to form a critical opinion of the range and use of sources?

6. Overall Rating. A summary judgment of the paper's quality, rather than a mere averaging of the categories above. Such factors as creativity and originality will be considered here.

Guidelines. Students may submit both the draft and the final research papers via e-mail. They must be readable in Word or WordPerfect. They should be sent to Prof. Longmore's e-mail address above. Whether submitted electronically or in hard copy, all papers will be prepared according to the following guidelines: Papers will be typewritten in a 10- or 12-point easily readable font. Handwritten papers will not be accepted. Double-space all lines, including lines between paragraphs. Do not triple-space! Establish one-inch margins at the top, bottom and sides. Number pages in the bottom center. Staple pages sideways (vertically) in the upper left corner. Do not enclose the paper in a folder, binder or plastic cover. Cite sources of quotations or important information or ideas in footnotes (at the bottom of the page) or endnotes (a separate section before the bibliography). Give full citations to these sources in a separate bibliographic section at the end of the essay.

Readings:

Calloway, Colin G. ed. **The World Turned Upside Down, Indian Voices from Early America** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

Countryman, Edward. **The American Revolution** (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985).

Countryman, Edward, ed. **What Did the Constitution Mean to Early Americans?** (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998).

Ellis, Joseph J., ed. **What Did the Declaration Declare?** (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999).

Kaminski, John P., and Richard Leffler, eds. **Federalists and Antifederalists: The Debate over the Ratification of the Constitution** (Madison: Madison House, 1998).

Morison, Samuel Eliot, ed. **Source and Documents Illustrating the American Revolution** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

Skemp, Sheila L. **Judith Sargent Murray, A Biography with Documents** (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998).

Readers. Three collections of photocopied historical documents on African-Americans, Religion, and Women. Reserve Reading Room, J. Paul Leonard Library.

Schedule

February 3. **Introduction.**

February 10. **Library and Online Research.**
J. Paul Leonard Library, Room 426a.

February 17. **Discussion:** Morison, **Source and Documents**, xi-xxxvii, 1-148.

Examining the Evidence: Interpreting Primary Historical Sources

Final due date for paper topics.

February 24. **Discussion:** Countryman, **American Revolution**, 1-137; Ellis, **What Did the Declaration Declare?**

Critical Historical Reading

March 2. **Discussion:** Morison, **Source and Documents**, 149-156, 162-205, 208-304.

March 9. **Discussion:** Kaminski and Leffler, **Federalists and Antifederalists**; Morison, **Source and Documents**, 305-370.

March 16. **Discussion:** Countryman, **What Did the Constitution Mean to Early Americans?**

- March 23. **Spring Break.**
- March 30. **Discussion:** Skemp, **Judith Sargent Murray.** Documents regarding Women.
- April 6. **Discussion:** Documents regarding African-Americans
- April 13. **Discussion:** Calloway, **World Turned Upside Down.**
- Oral reports.**
- April 20. **Discussion:** Morison, **Source and Documents,** 206-208; Documents regarding Religion.
- Oral reports.**
- April 27. **Oral reports.**
- May 4. **Oral reports.**
- May 11. **Oral reports.**
- May 18. **Oral reports.**
- May 25. **Final draft of paper due** and History Department by 4 p.m.