

Fall 2017

**HIST 2503:
RADICALLY CONSERVATIVE?: UNRAVELING THE
POLITICS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

John Trumbull,
*Declaration of
Independence*,
1819



Instructor: Strother Roberts

Meeting Time: M/W 2:30-3:55pm
Room: Adams #202

Email: seroberts@bowdoin.edu
Office Hours: Tu 8-11 & by appt

Course Description: Different scholars in different eras have presented the American Revolution as either a radically egalitarian movement in favor of universal human rights or as a fundamentally conservative rebellion led by elite men striving to protect their wealth and political power from both the British Parliament and those occupying the lower rungs of American society. Unraveling the often varied (and sometimes competing) motives of Americans during the Revolution requires understanding the words and actions of Revolutionaries in light of their contemporary cultures and societies. Often this means putting aside modern claims about what “the Revolution means” in order to better understand the political ideologies and goals that underlay this foundational era of American history.

Assignments:

Primary Source Analysis Paper – TWO-page essay (double-spaced, 1 in. margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman font) analyzing a theme or themes contained in the readings.

Two Discussion Leader Analyses Papers – Each student will be responsible for leading two class discussions. On each occasion the student will submit a ≈5-page analysis paper on the day's readings. This paper should identify the thesis of the assigned readings, outline the arguments and evidence used to prove that thesis, and explain how the readings relate analytically to one another and to previous readings.

Discussion Participation – Regular participation in class discussions is central to a seminar of this nature. While not every student will necessarily be required to speak during every class period, students will be graded on whether they make regular and substantive contributions to discussion over the course of the semester.

Research Proposal - ≈2-page proposal for an independent research paper. Should identify the historical question to be pursued, as well as some potential sources. These final papers should focus on some aspect of the Revolution in historical memory.

Final Research Paper – ≈10-page research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with professor

Grading:

Primary Source Paper worth 15%; Two Discussion Leader Papers together worth 30%; Research Proposal worth 5%; One Final Research Paper worth 30% ; Discussion Participation worth 20%

Attendance:

You will not receive any credit directly for attendance, but unexcused absences will likely impact your final participation grade. Moreover, for every three unexcused absences your final course grade will be penalized by one full letter grade.

Required Texts:

1. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (London: Penguin Classics, 1986)
2. Peter Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961)
3. Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000)
4. Jill Lepore, *Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea-Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010)
5. All other readings will be available online through Blackboard or E-Reserve

INTRODUCTION – UNDERSTANDING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

WEEK 1: Introduction

Aug 31: Welcome to Class

WEEK 2: Understanding the Revolution

Sept 5: What Everybody Knows About the Revolution

- David M. Kennedy, Elizabeth Cohen, and Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic (Advanced Placement Edition)*, 13th ed. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 43-49, 52-55, 122-165 [≈50 pages]

Sept 7: Interpreting the Revolution

- Nathaniel Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” short story, 1830 [≈12 pages]
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1864 – Originally Published in 1860), 18-30 [≈12 pages]
- Andrew M. Schocket, “The American Revolution: New Directions for a New Century,” *Reviews in American History* 38, no. 3 (Sept 2010), 576-586 [≈10 pages]
- IN-CLASS: Jefferson and Adams on Reverencing the Founding Generation

PART I – HISTORY IN THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA

WEEK 3: The Political Uses of History

Sept 12: Using History During the Revolution

- Thomas Jefferson, “The Rights of British America,” [≈10 pages]
- Peter Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, Intro & Ch1 [≈40 pages]
- IN-CLASS: Benjamin Franklin Before the House of Commons

Sept 14: Thomas Paine’s History of Imperial Abuse

- Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* [≈60 pages]

WEEK 4: The Revolution’s Earliest History

Sept 19: The Hydra of Rebellion: The Revolution’s First Historian

- Peter Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, Chs 2-3, 6-7 [≈70 pages]

Sept 21: The Revolution and National Progress

- Mercy Warren, *Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*, ed. Lester H. Cohen, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1988), 1: xli-xliv, excerpts from chs. 1, 4 & 6; 2: excerpts from chapter 30 [≈55 pages]

PART II – HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE REVOLUTION

Week 5: Fast Forward

Sept 25: PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS PAPER DUE MONDAY BY 5:00pm

Sept 26: A Liberal Revolution (The Consensus School)

- Louis Hartz, “The Perspectives of 1776,” from *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Mariner Books, 1991 – Originally published in 1955), 35-66 [≈30 pages]
- Edmund Morgan, “Lexington,” and “Equal Rights and Equal Men, 1774-1776,” from *The Birth of the American Republic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), 1-3, 61-76 [≈20 pages]
- IN-CLASS READING: Lexington & Concord and “The Army of Wild Irish Asses”

Sept 28: A Republican Revolution (The Neo-Whig School)

- Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 22-93 [≈70 pages]
- IN-CLASS: John Dickinson, “Letters from a Farmer, X and XII”

WEEK 6: Radically Conservative

Oct 3: A Republican/Radical Revolution (Neo-Whigs: The Next Generation)

- Jack P. Greene, “The Preconditions of the American Revolution,” in *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution, 1760-1791*, ed. Richard D. Brown (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992; Originally published 1973), 58-79 [≈20 pages]
- Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), Chs 10, 13 [≈35 pages]
- IN-CLASS: Thomas Young and James Cannon

Oct 5: The Conservative (or Illiberal) Revolution

- Howard Zinn, “Tyranny is Tyranny,” and “A Kind of Revolution,” in *A People’s History of the United States, 1492-Present*, Revised and Updated Edition (New York: Harper Collins, 1995 – Originally Published in 1980), 59-101, [≈40 pages]
- Francis Jennings, “Introduction,” and “In Sum,” in *The Creation of America: Through Revolution to Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), [≈10 pages]
- IN-CLASS: Mutiny in the Continental Army

WEEK 7: It’s the Economy, Stupid

Oct 10: **No Class: Fall Break**

Oct 12: Economics and Class (Neo-Progressives)

- T.H. Breen, “Baubles of Britain: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century,” *Past & Present*, no. 119 (May 1988) 73-104 [≈30 pages]
- Staughton Lynd and David Waldstreicher, “Free Trade, Sovereignty, and Slavery: Toward an Economic Interpretation of American Independence,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (Oct. 2011), 597-630. [≈35 pages]
- IN-CLASS: Stamp Act Teapot and “Address to the Ladies”/“Young Ladies in Town”
- **Submit Proposal for Individual Research Topic**

WEEK 8: Social History and the American Revolution

Oct 17: Forgotten Revolutionaries

- Gary Nash, “The Forgotten Experience: Indians, Blacks, and the American Revolution,” in William Fowler and Wallace Coyle, eds., *The American Revolution: Changing Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1979), 27-46. [≈20 pages]
- Gerald Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the origins of the United States of America* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 209-212, 234-252 [≈20 pages]
- IN-CLASS: Salem Poor, Slave Petition, and Runaway Slave Ad

Oct 19: Women and War

- Linda K. Kerber, “Women Invited to War,” in *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 33-68 [≈35 pages]
- Alison Duncan Hirsch, “Philadelphia Quaker Elizabeth Drinker and Her Servant Jane Boon: ‘Times Are Much Changed, and Maids Are Become Mistresses,’” in *The Human Tradition in the American Revolution*, eds. Nancy L. Rhoden and Ian K. Steele (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), 159-182 [≈20 pages]
- IN-CLASS: Lord Rawdon, Abigail Adams, and “The Alternative of Williams Burg”

PART III – TOPICS IN THE HISTORY OF THE REVOLUTION

WEEK 9: Accommodating the Mob

Oct 24: Urban Mobs

- Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William & Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1968), 371-407 [≈35 p.]
- Paul A. Gilje, "Rioting in the Revolution," in *Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 44-68 [≈25 pages]
- IN-CLASS: Gouverneur Morris

Oct 26: An Angry Countryside

- Ronald Hoffman, "The "Disaffected" in the Revolutionary South," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 37-70 [≈35 pages]
- T.H. Breen, "Revenge of the Countryside," in *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2011), 76-98 [≈20 pages]
- IN-CLASS: Janet Schaw

WEEK 10: The Boston Tea Party

Oct 31: No Class: Arrange Individual Meetings

- Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), Part I [≈85 pages]

Nov 2: The Destruction of the Tea

- Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), Part II [≈100 pages]

WEEK 11: The Constitution: Culmination or Counter-Revolution?

Nov 7: An Elite Document

- Max Farrand, "The Federal Constitution and the Defects of the Confederation," *The American Political Science Review* 2, no. 4 (Nov. 1908), 532-544 [≈10 pages]
- Charles Beard, "The Constitution as an Economic Document," in *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (New York: Dover, 2004 – Originally published in 1913) 1-18, 152-188 [≈35 pages]
- Catherine Drinker Bowen, "Origins of the Convention," *Miracle at Philadelphia: The Story of the Constitution* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), 1-15 [≈15 pages]

Nov 9: "We the People" and the National State

- Woody Holton, "Did Democracy Cause the Recession That Led to the Constitution?" *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 2 (Sep. 2005), 442-469 [≈25 pages]
- Max Edling, "Introduction: Beyond Madisonian Federalism," in *A Revolution in Favor of Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3-12 [≈10 pages]
- Pauline Maier, "Narrative, Interpretation, and the Ratification of the Constitution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no.2 (April 2012), 382-390 [≈10 pages]
- Jack N. Rakove, "The Perils of Originalism," in *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 3-22 [≈20 pages]

PART IV: THE REVOLUTION TODAY

WEEK 12: The Revolution on Film

Nov 14: An Inglorious Revolution (**No Class**)

- Watch *REVOLUTION!*
- Andrew M. Schocket, “Little Founders on the Small Screen: Interpreting a Multicultural American Revolution for Children’s Television,” *Journal of American Studies* 45, no. 1 (2011), 145-163 [≈20 pages]

Nov 16: Inglorious... And Yet Dashing

- Watch *The Patriot*

WEEK 13:

Nov 21: **No Class: Work on Individual Project**

Nov 23: **No Class: Thanksgiving Break**

WEEK 14: Project Discussions

Nov 28: In-Class Discussion of Projects

Nov 30: In-Class Discussion of Projects

WEEK 15: The Revolution Today

Dec 5: The Revolutionary Era in Popular Culture

- Jill Lepore, *Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea-Party’s Revolution and the Battle over American History* (Princeton,.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 1-97 [≈100 pages]

Dec 7: The Political Legacy of the Founding Era

- Lepore, *Whites of Their Eyes*, 98-End [≈60 pages]

WEEK 16: Reading Period

WEEK 17: FINALS WEEK

Dec18: Final Papers due at 5:00pm

WARNINGS AND DISCLAIMERS

BLACKBOARD: Blackboard will be an integral part of this course. The syllabus, descriptions of assignments, useful guides, and any changes hereafter will be posted there. You are required to check Blackboard regularly and will be responsible for all material on the course site.

CITATION OF SOURCES: When referring to sources (primary and secondary) in your papers, you should provide a complete citation including author, title, publisher, place and date of publication, and page numbers. Citations should follow the “Chicago-style” format commonly used by historians. I ask that you use footnotes with all of your paper assignments. The library website has citation information under “Get Started,” and I have included several links on Blackboard. Please see me if you have any questions.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All students must read and abide by the Academic Honor and Social Code (<http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/college-policies/index.shtml>). Suspected cases of plagiarism will result in a conference me, and, if unresolved at that point, will be referred to the Judicial Board. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please consult a reference librarian or ask me.