

The American Revolution, 1763-1795

Fall 2010

Hist 290

Monday-Wednesday 11:45-12:55

Moravian College

Comenius 305

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Office Hours: Mon. 1-4 pm, Wed. 9-10 am, and by appointment

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Course Introduction:

Historians have been attempting to chronicle, explain, exploit, and understand the American Revolution for more than two hundred years. In History 290 we will join this centuries-old conversation as we examine some of the central questions surrounding the revolutionary era: “What caused the American Revolution?” “Did conflict or consensus drive the colonists to rebel against Britain?” “How did the Americans win the Revolution?” “Was the American Revolution very revolutionary?” “What did the Revolution mean for people on the margins of society?” Our goal will be to look at these questions from a variety of perspectives in an effort to understand the motivations, opinions, and values of many different people in late-eighteenth-century North America.

Historiography:

Because historians have been writing about the American Revolution since the 1780s, this topic lends itself extremely well to learning about historiography, essentially the history of “how historians have interpreted the past.” As you will see throughout the semester, historians have been asking many of the same questions throughout the centuries, but their conclusions are dramatically different. One generation of historians responds to past interpretations only to see their own ideas challenged by another set of ideas. Occasionally, eighty-year-old interpretations resurface with slight variations after being unpopular for decades.

In class we will deal with historiography every day. As you complete your reading assignments and as we discuss issues in class, you should always be thinking about how a given book or article challenges, supports, or responds to other readings you have studied. Ask yourself why this author arrives at different or similar conclusions. For example, does he or she use different sources, study a different region, ask slightly different questions, etc...?

To further underscore the centrality of historiography to this course, your primary writing assignment will be a **12-15 page essay** that analyzes at least five books (or appropriate articles) on a given subject. We will work on this essay in stages. You will submit the topic by the third week of the semester, and after approval, you will submit a bibliography and later a first draft of the essay. You will also share your work with another class member, who will write a peer review of your paper.

Other Writing Assignments:

Throughout the semester you will also write **three 2-3 page reaction papers**, sometimes in response to a particular book but other times in response to a specific question. Despite their length, they should be written formally with a careful eye toward analysis.

Participation:

Nothing is more important for your success in this class than carefully reading all of the assignments, and the best way to demonstrate that you have done the reading is to participate in class discussions. Most of our time will be spent dissecting the books, articles, and ideas that you will encounter, and if you haven't prepared for class, you will be hard-pressed to participate. Some of you are likely more hesitant to share your thoughts with the group, but one of the best ways to counteract that tendency is to consider what you can contribute in advance. I expect each of you to contribute something to our conversation almost every day.

To guide you in reading and discussing, we will take the first few minutes of most class periods for each of you to write down the main argument and its primary supporting evidence for the day's reading assignment. You will hand these in, and collectively they will be worth 10% of your course grade. If you prefer to write these brief abstracts before class, that's fine, but I will not accept them after class.

Grades:

Participation	20%
Bibliography	5%
Draft/peer review	10%
Historiographic essay	20%
Reaction papers	15% (5% each)
Reading abstracts	10%
Final Exam	20%

Policies:

1. **Attendance:** Attendance will also factor into my evaluation of your class participation. **Missing more than two classes without written permission from the health center or the dean will automatically result in a lowering of your participation grade.** Should you be absent for health or personal reasons, your written excuse should be delivered to me on your first day back. Any absence (even those without good excuse) should be reported or explained to me.
2. Your historiographic essay and your reaction papers will be accepted late but will be reduced by a third of a grade for every day that the assignment is late (including weekends and breaks). **Note again that reading abstracts will not be accepted late.**

3. **Plagiarism** will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs whenever you use someone else's words or ideas without putting them in quotation marks and citing their work in a footnote. The most egregious forms of plagiarism occur when students copy entire paragraphs or sentences from another source and try to pass them off as their own, but copying short phrases is just as illegal. Simply changing a few words from another author's paragraph or sentence does not get you off the hook for plagiarism—you have still pilfered words and ideas. Moravian's plagiarism policy is that you will either fail the entire course or fail the assignment. I have found that most students who have resorted to plagiarism in the past did so out of desperation, fearing that their paper would be poor or late. Please remember, however, that both of these conditions would be preferable to academic dishonesty, which affects not only your grade but your overall academic record as well.
4. I reserve the right to alter this syllabus should the need arise during the semester.
5. You are responsible for keeping hard copies of all of your work. Electronic submissions that fail to reach me in a compatible form will still be counted late. In general I discourage electronic submissions, but if for some reason you do send me an assignment via e-mail, I will always acknowledge the message. If you don't get a response from me, it means I haven't received your work.
6. All electronic devices should be turned off and remain invisible for the duration of the class period unless permission is granted by the professor.

Course Outline

Aug. 30: Course Introduction

Sept. 1: Colonial Context

Reading: **Gordon Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution, pp. 3-24**
Carol Berkin, Revolutionary Mothers, ix-11

Sept. 6: **No Class (Labor Day)**

Sept. 8: Tea, Taxes, and Troops

Reading: **Edmund Morgan, Birth of the Republic, pp. 1-76**
Berkin, Rev. Mothers, ch. 2

Sept. 13: Economic Interpretations

Reading: **Marc Egnal and Joseph Ernst, "An Economic Interpretation of the**

American Revolution,” William and Mary Quarterly (Jan. 1972). JSTOR
James Henretta, “Families and Farms: Mentalite´ in Pre-Industrial
America,” WMQ (Jan. 1978). JSTOR

Sept. 15: Political Motivations in New England

Reading: **Robert Gross, Minutemen and Their World, pp. 3-67.**
Paper topic due

Sept. 20: Political Motivations in Virginia, part one

Reading: **Woody Holton, Forced Founders, introduction and chs. 1-4**

Sept. 22: Political Motivations in VA, part two

Reading: **Holton, chs. 5-7, epilogue**

Sept. 27: The People and Revolution

Reading: **Gary Nash, The Urban Crucible, pp. 184-247.**
First reaction paper due

Sept. 29: The People and Revolution

Reading: **Jesse Lemisch, “Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the**
Politics of the American Revolution,” WMQ (July, 1968). JSTOR.
Paper Bibliography due

Oct. 4: Religion and the Revolution

Reading: **Rhys Isaac, “Evangelical Revolt: the Nature of the Baptists’ Challenge**
To Traditional Order in Virginia, 1765-1775,” WMQ (July 1974). JSTOR.

Oct. 6: Religion and the Revolution

Reading: **Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, 194-224.**

Oct. 11: **No Class (Fall Break)**

Oct. 13: War on the Home front

Reading: **Berkin, ch. 3**

Oct. 18: Military strategy

Reading: **John Shy, A People Numerous and Armed, 215-244**

Oct. 20: Life in the army

Reading: **Berkin, chs. 4-5**

Oct. 25: **First draft of paper due; in-class workshop**

Oct. 27: Loyalism

Reading: **Berkin, ch. 6**

Peer Review due

Nov. 1: Responses to the Revolution

Reading: **Ronald Hoffman, “The ‘Disaffected’ in the Revolutionary South,” in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution*, pp. 273-316.**

Nov. 3: Responses to the Revolution

Reading: **Daniel Vickers, “Ashley Bowen of Marblehead: A Revolutionary Neutral,” in Nancy Rhoden and Ian Steele, eds., *The Human Tradition in the American Revolution*, pp. 99-115.**

Second Reaction Paper due

Nov. 8: The Indians’ Revolution

Reading: **Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, pp. 1-64.**

Nov. 10: War in the West

Reading: **Stephen Aron, “Daniel Boone and the Struggle for Independence on the Revolutionary Frontier,” in Rhoden and Steele, *Human Tradition in the American Revolution*, pp. 139-157.**

Nov. 15: The Indians fight on

Reading: **Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, ch. 10**
Berkin, ch. 7

Nov. 17: Constitution-Making

Reading: **Gordon Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, pp. 471-499**

Nov. 22: Constitution

Historiographic essay due

Nov. 29: African American Experiences

Reading: **Ira Berlin, “The Revolution in Black Life,” in Young, ed., *American Revolution*, pp. 349-382.**

Dec. 1: African American Experiences, part two

Reading: **Berkin, ch. 8**
Gary Nash, “Absalom Jones and the African Church of Philadelphia,” in Rhoden and Steele, *The Human Tradition in the American Revolution*, 241-265.

Third reaction paper due

Dec. 6: Women’s Experience

Reading: **Berkin, ch. 10**

Dec. 8: Conclusion and Review

Final Exam: Monday, Dec. 13, 1:30-4:30 pm