

HIS300C: The American Revolution

Dr. Joshua Beatty

Fall 2019

Email: jbeat003@plattsburgh.edu **Class meets:** T, Th 11-12:15
Office hours: Tue 1-2 or by appt. **Classroom:** Feinberg 105
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Course Goals

1. Students will analyze and synthesize the history of the American Revolution in the context of multiple overlapping conflicts, at the global, national, and local levels.
2. Students will analyze and summarize key readings on the American Revolution in order to understand how authors have written about the Revolution, including their interpretations and sources.
3. Students will build a digital project of archival materials from the era of the American Revolution, including digitization, transcription, and annotation of the sources.

Introductory Narrative

The central thing I want you to understand by the time this course ends is that conflict, violent conflict, was central to the American Revolution. This applies not just to the Revolutionary War itself, but to the entire era. So we will examine not just the war from 1775-1783, nor the political revolution of 1763-1789, but the longer era between 1750 and 1820. This allows us to see the Revolutionary War in light of the Seven Years' War that preceded it, and the War of 1812 that followed it — as well as the internal violence that continued steadily even between the formal wars. We will also look at other, more subtle, forms of conflict: struggles with the environment, and the struggle throughout history to define the historical memory of the Revolution.

Thus, the first two-thirds of the course will be a chronological survey of the era. We'll look at the British colonies circa 1750 and their place in the larger world (Week 1), before transitioning to the Seven Years' War, considered by historians the first world war (Week 2). From there we'll examine the fallout of the Seven Years' War

and the transition of the British colonists from happy subjects of the empire to prospective citizens of a new nation — and we'll look at who was excluded from that shift (Weeks 3-4).

Next we'll study the Revolutionary War itself (Weeks 5-7), the post-Revolutionary settlement from the 1780s to 1800 (Weeks 8-9), and the 1800s ending with the War of 1812 (Weeks 10-11). We'll then look at the legacy of Revolution in the South and in the North (Weeks 12-13). Finally, we'll end by examining the conflict over the meaning of the Revolution that continues today (Weeks 14-15).

Required Texts and Materials

There is one textbook to purchase. It should be available in the college bookstore, and used copies can be purchased through amazon.com or other secondhand booksellers.

- Young, Alfred F., Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael, eds. *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*. New York: Vintage Books, 2012.

All other readings will be available online, including *The American Yawp*, our openly available American history textbook.

Course requirements

- Short writing assignments: 45%
- Week 2 quiz: 5%
- Midterm exam: 10%
- Final exam: 15%
- Annotation project: 25%
- Attendance and participation: 2% *extra credit*

1. **Short writing assignments**

- You will complete 10 short writing assignments during the semester. For each assignment you will write a précis (a specific form of summary) of the readings and/or site visit for the week. These will be posted to the course forum.
- Guidelines on writing précis for readings and for site visits will be provided in a separate handout.
- Short writing assignments will be graded on a four-point scale: check-plus, check, check-minus, not completed. These correspond roughly to A, B+/B, C/C-, E.

2. **Week 2 Quiz**

- In class on **Thursday, 5 September** you will take a short quiz on names, dates, and events associated with the American Revolution. This is intended to give you a basic background knowledge on which you can build an understanding over the course of the semester. A full study guide will be provided.
- The quiz will be graded on the standard Plattsburgh letter-grade scale.

3. Midterm and final exams

- The midterm and final exams will be given in class on **Thursday, 17 October** and during **finals week**. They will ask you to write summative essays on predetermined topics. You will be expected to incorporate materials from lectures and discussions, readings, and site visits.
- The quiz will be graded on the standard Plattsburgh letter-grade scale.

4. Annotation project

- You, as a class, will be digitizing, transcribing, and annotating for public use a set of letters between Benjamin Mooers and Elizabeth Mooers, a husband and wife who lived in the North Country in the early 19th century. These letters are held in Feinberg Library's Special Collections, conveniently located across the corridor from our classroom. On **Tuesday, 10 September** we will visit Special Collections to begin our research on these letters.
- More information will be provided in a separate handout.

5. Attendance and participation

- In class we will regularly discuss assigned readings, lectures, and site visits. We will learn best if we work together, and part of working together is to come prepared to class by having completed the readings beforehand. Student participation in formal and informal discussions in class, as judged by the professor, will be the basis for the attendance and participation portion of the grade. Since you cannot participate if you do not attend, I will take attendance regularly and factor that into your attendance and participation grade.
- The attendance and participation grade is *extra credit*. This means that, at the end of the course, if you are on a borderline between final grades your attendance and participation will determine whether you receive the higher or lower grade.

Policies

Office Hours: I encourage you to speak to me outside of class. I am available during office hours on a first-come, first-served basis. I am also at the research help desk at Feinberg between 1-4 PM Thursdays and 2-4 PM Fridays. Otherwise, don't hesitate to contact me via email or phone to schedule an appointment.

Deadlines: Short writing assignments are due 36 hours before the class in which we will discuss them. This is so I can have time to read them over and address the most significant issues in class. Since your short writing assignments are essential to the content of the class, I will not accept any not turned in by the beginning of the next class after they are due. Assignments less than 36 hours late will be graded, but the highest grade they can receive is a check (rather than check-plus). That said, I am sympathetic to real-life issues that arise. If you anticipate problems, please contact me before the assignment is due, not after!

Withdrawal Deadline: The deadline for withdrawal from the course is Friday, 1 November.

Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course, not a contract. It is intended to state my expectations for the course and to serve you as a reference and weekly schedule. I reserve the right to change the syllabus as the semester progresses. I will alert you to those changes.

College Honor Code Statement for Syllabi: It is expected that all students enrolled in this class support the letter and the spirit of the Academic Honesty Policy as stated in the college catalog.

College Policy on Student Accommodations: If you are a student that requires academic or other accommodations, please contact the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office — 011 Macomb Hall, call 518-564-3844 or email sas@plattsburgh.edu. You must certify with this office before using accommodations.

Course Schedule

Week 1: *The Colonial Roots of the American Revolution*

To do

- Background reading: *The American Yawp*, Chapter 4: “Colonial Society,” sections 1-4

Tue, 27 Aug: Introduction to the course

Thu, 29 Aug: Colonial society

Week 2: *The Seven Years’ War and its Aftermath*

To do

- Précis 1 due **Sun, 1 Sep, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 1-2.
- Background reading: *The American Yawp*, Chapter 4: “Colonial Society,” sections 5-7
- Names and Dates quiz in class **Thu, 5 Sep**

Tue, 3 Sep: The Seven Years’ War

Thu, 5 Sep: Britain and Its Colonies After the War

Week 3: *The Coming of the Revolution (1)*

To do

- Précis 2 due **Sun, 8 Sep, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 3-4
- Background reading: *The American Yawp*, Chapter 5: “The American Revolution,” sections 1-3
- Battle of Plattsburgh background reading: Everest, Allan S. *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1981. (pp. 161-203). Chapters are titled “The British Occupation of Plattsburgh,” “The Battle of Plattsburgh,” and “Aftermath.”

Tue, 10 Sep: Visit to Special Collections

Thu, 12 Sep: The Northern Colonies

Fri, 13 Sep - Sun, 15 Sep: Field trip: Battle of Plattsburgh weekend

Week 4: *The Coming of the Revolution (2)*

To do

- Précis due **Sun, 15 Sep, 11:59 PM** on your experience at the Battle of Plattsburgh weekend

Tue, 17 Sep: Discussion: Battle of Plattsburgh weekend

Thu, 19 Sep: The Southern Colonies

Week 5: The Revolutionary War (1)

To do

- Précis due **Sun, 22 Sep, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 5-6
- Background reading: *The American Yawp*, Chapter 5: "The American Revolution," sections 4-7

Tue, 24 Sep: Military overview

Thu, 26 Sep: The Continental Army and the Militias

Week 6: The Revolutionary War (2)

To do

- Précis due **Sun, 29 Sep, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 7-8

Tue, 1 Oct: The War in the West

Thu, 3 Oct: Governing During and After the War

Week 7: The Revolutionary War (3)

To do

- Précis due **Sun, 6 Oct, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 9-10
- Précis due **Tue, 8 Oct, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 11-12

Tue, 8 Oct: Visit to Special Collections

Thu, 10 Oct: Social Conflict During and After the War

Week 8: Interlude: Ticonderoga

To do

- Study for midterm exam on **Thu, 17 Oct**
- Background reading on Ticonderoga:
 - Starbuck, "British Military Sites from Albany to Crown Point"
 - Starbuck, "The 'Massacre' at Fort William Henry: History, Archaeology, and Re-Enactment"

Tue, 15 Oct: Indigenous Persons' Day: college closed

Thu, 17 Oct: MIDTERM EXAM

Sat, 19 Oct: Field trip: Fort Ticonderoga

*Week 9: The Revolutionary Settlement***To do**

- Précis due **Sun, 20 Oct, 11:59 PM**, on visit to Fort Ticonderoga
- Background reading: *The American Yawp*, Chapter 6: "A New Nation," sections 1-5

Tue, 22 Oct: Discussion: Ticonderoga / The Constitution and the Bill of Rights (1)

Thu, 24 Oct: The Constitution and the Bill of Rights (2)

*Week 10: Politics and Society in the Early Republic***To do**

- Précis due **Sun, 27 Oct, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 13-15
- Background reading: *The American Yawp*, Chapter 6: "A New Nation," sections 6-11

Tue, 29 Oct: Politics and Society in the Early Republic

Thu, 31 Oct: The Maple Sugar Bubble

*Week 11: The Revolution and the World***To do**

- Précis due **Sun, 3 Nov, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 16-17.
- Background reading: *The American Yawp*, Chapter 7: "The Early Republic," sections 1-7

Tue, 5 Nov: Class meets in Special Collections

Thu, 7 Nov: The Revolution and the World

*Week 12: After the Revolution: The South***To do**

- Précis due **Sun, 10 Nov, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 18-19.
- Background reading: *The American Yawp*, Chapter 7: "The Early Republic," sections 6-7

Tue, 12 Nov: Southern Expansion

Thu, 14 Nov: Political Economy of the South

*Week 13: After the Revolution: The North***To do**

- Précis due **Sun, 17 Nov, 11:59 PM**, on Young, Nash, and Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders*, chapters 20-22.
- Background reading for the Alice T. Miner Museum:
 - Bushman, Richard L. "The Genteel Republic." *Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, 13–23.
 - Selected posts from the Alice T. Miner Museum blog

Tue, 19 Nov: The North: Rural and Urban

Thu, 21 Nov: The North: Changes in Society

Sat, 23 Nov: FIELD TRIP: Alice T. Miner Museum, Chazy, NY

*Week 14: Remembering the Revolution***To do**

- Précis due **Sun, 24 Nov, 11:59 PM**, on your Alice T. Miner Museum visit
- Tue, 26 Nov:** Discussion: Alice T. Miner Museum
Thu, 28 Nov: Thanksgiving: college closed

*Week 15***To do**

- Annotation project due
- Tue, 3 Dec**
Thu, 5 Dec

Finals week

Final Exam: **Date TBD**



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