

**Revolutionary America**  
HIST 4083  
Spring 2020  
MWF 10:00 to 10:50am – PY 202

Dr. Mary Draper  
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Office: O'Donohue 233  
Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays: 9 - 10 am  
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11 – 12 pm

**Course Description:**

How did American colonists go from being proud British subjects to revolutionaries in a mere decade? How did their experience as subjects shape their visions as citizens? This course considers the causes, course, character, and consequences of the American Revolution—an event that ushered in vast political, social, and economic transformations for some members of American society while entrenching inequality for others. It will trace developments within the American colonies and, later, the new United States from the 1760s through the early 1800s. In doing so, we will try to make sense of what the American Revolution meant to people in the past as well as people today.

**Readings:**

The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore or on Amazon.

- Eric Hinderaker, *Boston's Massacre* (Harvard, 2017)
- Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught: The Washington's Relentless Pursuit of their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* (Atria, 2017)
- Carol Berkin, *A Sovereign People: Crises of the 1790s and the Birth of American Nationalism* (Basic, 2017)

Other readings including primary sources, chapters, and articles are posted on D2L. You should also get your hands on the *Hamilton* soundtrack.

**Grading and Assignments:**

Your grade for this course is based on the following percentages:

Response Papers (4): 30%	Discussion & Participation: 15%
Book Review (1): 10%	Midterm Exam (3/6): 20%
Book Responses (2): 5%	Final Exam (5/8): 20%

**Grading Scale:** A = 100-90; B = 89-80; C = 79-70; D = 69-60, F = 59 and below

**A note on discussion grades:**

To succeed in this class, you need to participate. Come prepared to talk about the readings. If you have perfect attendance but never speak, your discussion grade cannot be higher than a C. Likewise, if you do not attend class, your discussion grade will suffer. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. If you miss six or more times, in addition to earning a zero for your discussion grade, your final grade will be penalized two percentage points for each additional class missed.

**Exams:**

You will have two take-home exams in this class: a midterm and a final. Each will consist of two essay questions. **In 1000-1200 words per essay, answer two of the following questions for each exam:**

Midterm (Due in class on Friday, March 6)

1. What changed between 1763 and 1774 to incite widespread rebellion among British colonists? The strongest answers chart how and why the beliefs of American colonists changed in the wake of imperial reforms.
2. Was the American Revolution inevitable? If so, at what point did it become inevitable? The strongest answers will delve into the realities and repercussions of a particular event between 1760 and 1774.
3. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the British and the Americans during the American Revolutionary War. What advantages did each side have? What weaknesses did they have? Why did the Americans prevail?

Final (Due in class on Friday, May 8)

1. In the United States, we tend to idolize the Founding Fathers and debate their “original intent.” Explore this idea of original intent. What were their greatest concerns when drafting the Constitution and creating the new United States? How did the founders’ attempt to address these concerns? Were they in agreement with one another?
2. We often talk about the Founding Fathers when we talk about the American Revolution. But what would happen if we highlighted peoples and places often excluded from the traditional narrative? What would a history of lesser-studied peoples reveal about this era of freedom and liberty?
3. In the 1790s, the new United States faced a variety of domestic and international challenges. Analyze one of those challenges. Why did it occur? How did politicians and everyday people react to it? How was it resolved? What does this episode tell us about the new United States?

Your answers to these questions should include an argument, evidence, and conclusion. In your answers, use lecture notes and assigned readings. **DO NOT USE OUTSIDE SOURCES.** Cite your sources using footnotes or parenthetical citations (though my lectures do not need to be cited).

**Response Papers (4):**

You will have six opportunities to write four response papers. These papers are 2-3 pages in length and analyze assigned primary sources materials. Please respond to two of the prompts prior to your midterm and two of the prompts after you midterm. In other words, please turn in your first two response papers on either 1/31, 2/7, or 2/24. Please turn in your last two response papers on either 3/13, 4/3, or 4/17.

**Book Review (1):**

You will read three monographs in this class. You will write book reviews for one of the three books assigned this semester. They are 3-4 pages in length. These are due in hard copy on the day we discuss the book. An instruction sheet on how to approach these assignments is on D2L.

**Book Responses (2):**

You will write 2-page responses to the two books that you choose not to write a book review on. These responses can assess the book’s argument, explore what readers can learn from the work, or explain how the reading changed your view of Revolutionary America

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**Schedule:**

**WEEK 1: Revolutionary America**

1/22 Introduction to Revolutionary America

1/24 Who Lives, Who Dies Who Tells Your Story: The Historiography of the American Revolution

**Explore:** Michael Hatter, [The Historiography of the American Revolution: A Timeline](#)

**Read:** Eric Hinderarker, *Boston's Massacre*, Introduction (pp. 1-27)

Guiding question: How did accounts of the Boston Massacre vary? What did these accounts agree on? What did they disagree on?

**WEEK 2: The Road to Revolution**

1/27 British America, Royal America

**Read:** Musings on Independence in the mid-1700s (PDF on D2L)

1/29 The Seven Years' War and 1763

**Read:** Reactions to British Victories during the Seven Years' War (PDF on D2L)

1/31 The British Perspective

**Due: Response #1**

Prompt: How did colonists feel about being British during and immediately after the Seven Years' War?

\*\*Continue reading Hinderarker, *Boston's Massacre*, 29-104\*\*

**WEEK 3: Taxing the Colonists**

2/3 April 1764: Taxing Sugar, Controlling Currency

**Read:** Colonists Respond to the Sugar Act & Currency Act (PDF on D2L)

2/5 1765: The Stamp Act

**Read:** Parliamentary Debate over Stamp Act (PDF on D2L)

Reactions to the Stamp Act (PDF on D2L)

2/7 Protests and Boycotts: An American Tradition

**Due: Response #2**

Prompt: Compare and contrast the alleged rights of Englishmen from the vantage point of colonists and the vantage point of Parliament.

\*\*Continue reading Hinderarker, *Boston's Massacre*, 105-186\*\*

#### **WEEK 4: Organizing Resistance**

2/10 The Crisis Deepens

**Read:** Resistance to the Townshend Acts (PDF on D2L)

2/12 Troops Arrive, Violence Ensues

2/14 So what happened in Boston in 1770?

**Due:** Hinderaker, *Boston's Massacre*, due (in-class discussion)  
Book Review (if you so choose)  
Book Response (if you do not write a book review)

#### **WEEK 5: Declaring Independence**

2/17 From the Boston Tea Party to the Continental Congress

**Read:** Boston Tea Party Newspaper Debate (PDF on D2L)

2/19 Declaring Independence

**Read:** The Declaration of Independence (PDF on D2L)  
"Mr. Jefferson and His Editors" from Pauline Maier, *American Scripture*, 97-153

2/21 NO CLASS

#### **WEEK 6: "How does a ragtag volunteer army... somehow defeat a global superpower?"**

2/24 Choosing Sides: Loyalists vs. Patriots

**Due: Response #3**  
Prompt: Analyze the stance of either a Patriot or Loyalist. What evidence do they use to support their arguments?

2/26 Raising an Army

**Read:** The Difficulties of Raising an Army (PDF on D2L)

2/28 Military Campaigns

#### **WEEK 7: The Politics of War**

3/2 Articles of Confederation and State Constitutions

3/4 The War in the West

3/6 The Treaty of Paris

**Due:** Take-home midterm

\*\* Begin reading Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught*\*\*

*Remember to complete two response papers before 3/6.*

## **WEEK 8: The Limits of Liberty**

3/9 Loyalists

**Read:** Loyalists during and after the Revolutionary War (PDF on D2L)

3/11 Women and Gender (“*I’m a girl in a world in which my only job is to marry rich*”)

**Read:** Women in Revolutionary America (PDF on D2L)

3/13 Religion and the American Revolution

**Due: Response #4**

Prompt: Choose one of these week’s document packets and analyze what the sources reveal about that particular group. How did members of that group experience the American Revolution?

\*\* Continue reading Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught*\*\*

## **WEEK 9: Spring Break**

\*\* Continue reading Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught*\*\*

## **WEEK 10: The Limits of Liberty (Part II)**

3/ 23 Demobilizing the Army and Veterans Politics

**Read:** Providing for Veterans in the new United States (PDF on D2L)

3/25 Shays’s Rebellion and other crises...

**Read:** The Limitations of the Articles of Confederation (PDF on D2L)

3/27 Black Americans

**Due:** Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught*

Book Review (if you so choose)

Book Response (if you do not write a book review)

## **WEEK 11: Creating the Constitution**

3/30 The Constitutional Convention

4/1 Debating Slavery

**Read:** Debates over Slavery at the Constitutional Convention (PDF on D2L)

4/3 Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists

**Due: Response # 5**

Prompt: Analyze the founding fathers’ relationship with slavery. How did they view the institution? What did they do about it?

## **WEEK 12: Washington’s Presidency**

4/6 The First Mr. President

4/8 Whiskey Rebellion

**Read:** Berkin, *A Sovereign People*, 1-80

4/10 – NO CLASS

### **WEEK 13: Politics in the Early Republic**

4/13 Dueling (or why did Alexander Hamilton die?)

**Read:** Alexander Hamilton on Dueling (PDF on D2L)  
Joanne B. Freeman, "Dueling as Politics: Reinterpreting the Burr-Hamilton Duel," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (Apr. 1996): 289-318 (PDF on D2L)

4/15 Parades and Parties

4/17 The Genet Affair

**Read:** Berkin, *A Sovereign People*, 81-150

#### **Response #6**

Prompt: How would you describe the political atmosphere of the late 1780s and 1790s? Messy? Organized? Peaceful? Volatile? Heated?

### **WEEK 14: International Affairs in the Early Republic**

4/20 "Among the Powers of the Earth": Or how to get other nations to recognize independence?

**Read:**

4/22 The Haitian Revolution as Contagion

4/24 The XYZ Affair

**Read:** Berkin, *A Sovereign People*, 151-200

### **WEEK 15: Federalism in Crisis**

4/27 The Alien and Sedition Acts

**Due:** Berkin, *A Sovereign People*, 151-251  
Book Review (if you so choose)  
Book Response (if you do not write a book review)

4/29 Enter President Jefferson

**Read:** Thomas Jefferson on Race and Slavery

5/1 1800 and beyond...

### **WEEK 16: Legacy of the American Revolution?**

5/4 Debating the Founding Fathers

5/6 Debating the Declaration

5/8 Debating the Revolution

**Due:** Take-home Final