

Master of American History and Government
Ashland University

AHG 501:
The American Revolution
Sunday, July 29 to Friday, August 3, 2007

Instructors: David Raney and Jeffrey Sikkenga

This seminar is designed to immerse you in the study of the American Revolution. It focuses on three major topics: political developments in North America and the British Empire and the arguments for and against independence, culminating in the Declaration of Independence; the Revolutionary War as a military, social, and cultural event in the development of the American nation and government; and the United States under the Articles of Confederation. The fundamental question guiding this course is: What were the political ideas of the American Revolution, and how did those ideas take shape and give shape to events and institutions before, during, and after the Revolution?

Learning Objectives

1. Students will understand the key ideas of the American Revolution and the philosophic and political logic connecting these ideas in the “American Mind” of the Revolutionary period.
2. Students will understand how these ideas were related in the minds of the American revolutionaries to the foundations, forms, and purposes of government – and American government, in particular.
3. Students will understand the various meanings of the term “revolution” and the criteria for judging whether the American Revolution was in fact a revolution.
4. Students will understand the processes by which the colonists came to think of themselves as Americans, as people connected to but somehow distinct from the English.
5. Students will understand the effect of the Revolutionary War on the self-understanding of the American people.
6. Students will understand the terms of the Revolutionary War settlement and its consequences for American politics, foreign and domestic.
7. Students will understand what “defects” or “vices” Madison, Washington, Hamilton, and others discerned in the foundations and forms of both the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions created in the course of the Revolution.

Required Texts

Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States of America. 2001.
Ashland, Ohio: Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs. ISBN: 1878802232

Franklin, Benjamin. 2003. *Autobiography*. New York: Penguin Classics (Reissue edition)
0142437603 (read before your arrive)

Greene, Jack P. *Colonies to Nation, 1763-1789: A Documentary History of the American
Revolution*. 1975. New York: W.W. Norton. ISBN: 0393092291

Kurland, Philip B. and Ralph Lerner, eds. 1987. *The Founders' Constitution*. Chicago:
The University of Chicago Press, ISBN: 0865973024. Also available on-line at:
<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/>

Locke, John. 1988. *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0521357306

Martin, Joseph Plumb, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, New York: Penguin
(Signet Classics). ISBN: 0451528115 (read before your arrive)

Paine, Thomas. 1776. *Common Sense*, Dover Edition, ISBN: 0486296024 (read before
you arrive)

Course Reading Packet (CP)

Recommended Readings Course Pack (RCP)

*Please read Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, Joseph Plumb Martin's *A Narrative of
a Revolutionary Soldier*, and Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* before you arrive.

**In addition to pre-reading those required texts, we recommend that you read or re-read
two additional books before you arrive: David McCullough's *1776*. (New York: Simon &
Schuster, 2006); and Gordon Wood's *The American Revolution* (New York: Modern
Library, 2003). Both are good introductions (in different ways) to the American
Revolution.

Grading:

In-class participation: 25%

Final exam: 75%

Students auditing the course as a part of a Teaching American History Grant program
must complete the readings and fully participate in the seminars during the week.

Course schedule

NB: Please read the works for each session in the order that they are listed.

Sunday, July 29, 2007

4:30-6:00 pm - Session 1: Introduction: A Revolution in America?

SEMINAR QUESTION: What is a revolution? (Professor Sikkenga)

Required reading:

Locke, *Second Treatise*, ch. 17 “Of Usurpation”; ch. 18, “Of Tyranny”;
ch. 19, “Of the Dissolution of Government”

SEMINAR QUESTION: How has the American Revolution been interpreted?
(Professor Raney)

Required reading:

Burke, “On Conciliation with the Colonies” (*The Founders’ Constitution*, Chapter
1 Document 2)

Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, chapters 2-3 (CP pg. 1)

Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, introduction (CP pg. 29)

Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, chapter 2 (CP pg.
33)

McDonald, “How Conservatism Guided America’s Founding” (*Imprimis*, July
1983) (CP pg. 51)

Session 2: 7:30pm – Institute Lecture

Monday, July 30

“A long train of abuses and usurpations”: Before the Revolution

9:00-10:30am – Session 3: British North America (Professor Raney)

SEMINAR QUESTION: What were the main features of the colonies that made
possible their movement toward independence?

Required reading:

Penn’s Plan of Union, 1697 (CP pg. 61)

Albany Plan of Union, 1754 (CP pg. 63)

Mayhew, “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission,” 1750 (CP pg. 67)

Monday, cont'd

Keith, "A Short Discourse," 1726 (CP pg. 71)
Message of the Pennsylvania Assembly, 1755 (CP pg. 73)
Benjamin Franklin to Governor William Shirley, December 22, 1754 (CP pg.75)
Ames, "A Thought Upon the Past, Present, and Future State of North America,"
1757 (CP pg. 77)
The Treaty of Paris, 1763 (CP pg. 79)
Horrocks, "Upon the Peace," 1763 (CP pg. 83)

10:45am-12:15pm – Session 4: British Empire after 1763 (Professor Raney)

SEMINAR QUESTION: Was the British Empire following the French and Indian War inherently unstable? Was there any way that the government in London could have kept the colonies part of the Empire?

Required reading:

Governor Francis Bernard, "Principles of Law and Polity, Applied to the Government of the British Colonies," 1764 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 8-12)
Otis, "The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved," 1764 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 28-33)
New York Petition to the House of Commons, 1764 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 33-39)
Whately, "The Regulations Lately Made," 1765 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 46-51)
Dulany, "Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies," 1765 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 51-59)
The Virginia Resolves, 1765 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 60-61)
Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress, 1765 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 63-65)
The Declaratory Act, 1766 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 84-85)
Dickinson, "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania," 1767-1768 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 122-133)
Massachusetts Circular Letter, 1768 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 134-136)
The Resolves of Parliament, 1769 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 144-145)

4:30-6:00 pm - Session 5: Franklin: The American character (Professor Sikkenga)

SEMINAR QUESTION: In what ways does Franklin's autobiography reveal him becoming American? In making that judgment, what criteria do you have in mind for saying that someone is an American? Are these the criteria that someone in 18th-century Philadelphia would have used?

Required reading:

Franklin, *Autobiography*

Recommended reading:

Forde, "Benjamin Franklin: A Model American and an American Model" (RCP pg. 1)

Tuesday, July 31

9:00-10:30 am – Session 6: The Revolution in Religious "Sentiments" (Professor Sikkenga)

SEMINAR QUESTION: What is the difference between the interpretations of Romans 13 given by Calvin and Locke? How are the Mayflower Compact and the Declaration of Independence alike and different? How would you characterize the similarities and differences between "A Model of Christian Charitie" and of the sermon by Cooper? Do the similarities and differences among these documents tell us anything about religion and politics at the time of the American Revolution and Founding?

Required reading:

Adams, "Letter to Niles" (CP pg.85)
Calvin, "Commentary on Romans 13" (CP pg. 89)
Mayflower Compact (CP pg. 93)
Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charitie" (CP pg. 95)
Locke, "Commentary on Romans 13" (CP pg. 103)
Cooper, "A Sermon on the Commencement of the Constitution" (CP pg. 107)

Recommended reading:

Rosano, "John Winthrop, John Cotton, and Nathaniel Niles: The Basic Principles of Puritan Political Thought" (RCP pg. 15)
Zuckert, "Natural Rights and Protestant Politics" (RCP pg. 35)

10:45am-12:15pm – Session 7: The Revolutionary Tide in the 1770s (Professor Raney)

SEMINAR QUESTION: What events and arguments from 1770-1776 made the colonists inclined to revolution?

Required reading:

Revere, "The Bloody Massacre," 1770 (*Colonies to Nation*, p. 165)
Exchange Between Governor Thomas Hutchinson and the House of Representatives, 1773 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 182-188)
Galloway's Plan of Union, 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 241-242)
Benjamin Franklin to Joseph Galloway, February 25, 1775 (CP pg. 115)
John Dickinson to Arthur Lee, April 29, 1775 (CP pg. 117)
"Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms," July 6, 1775 (CP pg. 121)

Tuesday, cont'd

“Olive Branch Petition,” July 8, 1775 (CP pg. 123)
Proclamation of George III, August 23, 1775 (CP pg. 125)
Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)
John Adams to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776 (CP pg. 127)
Benjamin Franklin to Lord Howe, July 20, 1776 (CP pg. 131)
John Adams, “Thoughts on Government,” January, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 306-311)

Recommended reading:

Koritansky, “Thomas Paine: The American Radical” (RCP pg. 65)

4:30-6:00 pm – Session 8: The Debate over Independence (Professor Sikkenga)

SEMINAR QUESTION: What were the main arguments for and against independence? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

Required reading:

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)
John Adams to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776 (CP pg. 127)
Benjamin Franklin to Lord Howe, July 20, 1776 (CP pg. 131)
Otis, Selections (CP pg. 133)
Jefferson, “A Summary View of the Rights of British North America” (CP pg. 139)
Hutchinson, selections (CP pg. 149)

Recommended reading:

Lubert, “Thomas Hutchinson and James Otis on Sovereignty, Obedience, and Rebellion” (RCP pg. 83)

Wednesday, August 1

“An Appeal to Heaven”: The Revolution

9:00-10:30am – Session 9: The American Mind: Part I (Professor Sikkenga)

SEMINAR QUESTION: What is the importance of the Declaration? What does it mean by “one people”, the “laws of Nature and of Nature’s God”, “self-evident” truths, and “all men are created equal”?

Required reading:

Jefferson, “Letter to Henry Lee” (Ashbrook Booklet)
Jefferson, “Letter to Roger Weightman” (Ashbrook Booklet)

Wednesday, cont'd

Locke, *Second Treatise*, ch. 2
Declaration of Independence (Ashbrook Booklet)

Recommended reading:

Locke, chs. 3-5; Tessitore, "Legitimate Government, Religion, and Education: The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson" (RCP pg. 103)

10:45am-12:15pm – Session 10: The American Mind: Part II (Professor Sikkenga)

SEMINAR QUESTION: What is the foundation and purpose of government, according to the Declaration? How do we see the Declaration's fundamental principles embodied in its charges against the king? What variations on the Declaration do we see in the state declarations of rights?

Required reading:

Declaration of Independence (Ashbrook Booklet)
Locke, *Second Treatise*, chs. 8-9
Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776) (*Founders' Constitution*)
Pennsylvania Constitution (1776) (CP pg. 171)

4:30-6:00pm - Session 11: The Revolutionary War: The American Diplomatic and Military Campaign (Professor Raney)

SEMINAR QUESTION: Why were the Americans successful in the war?

Required reading:

Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*
George Washington to John Augustine Washington, July 27, 1775 (CP pg. 183)
George Washington to General Charles Lee, November 30, 1776 (CP pg. 185)
George Washington to Lund Washington, December 17, 1776 (CP pg. 187)
Paine, "The American Crisis," 1776 (CP pg. 189)
Henry Knox to his wife, December 28, 1776 (CP pg. 191)
"The Annual Register," 1777 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 408-409)
Journal of Arthur Lee, 1777 (CP pg. 193)
The French Alliance: The Treaty of February 6, 1778 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 410-413)
Achievement of Independence (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 413-418)

Thursday, August 2

9:00-10:30am – Session 12: The Revolutionary War: Political Effects (Professor Raney)

SEMINAR QUESTION: Does the Revolutionary War reveal anything about the Revolution or about what it meant to be American? What does the affair at Newburgh reveal about republican government? What does Washington's conduct reveal about him and the requirements of successful self-governance?

Required reading:

George Washington to Congress, June 16, 1775 (CP pg. 195)
George Washington to Martha Washington, June 18, 1775 (CP pg. 197)
George Washington to Henry Laurens, November 14, 1778 (CP pg.199)
Alexander Hamilton to John Jay, March 1779 (CP pg. 201)
“A ‘Whig’: to the Public,” August 5, 1779 (CP pg. 203)
Samuel Seabury to Alexander Hamilton, December 24, 1774 (CP pg. 207)
Journal of Peter Van Schaack, January 1776 (CP pg. 209)
Diary of James Allen, October 15, 1777 (CP pg. 213)
Memoirs of Alexander Graydon, August 1775 (CP pg. 215)
Joseph Hawley to Elbridge Gerry, July 17, 1776 (CP pg. 217)
Samuel Adams to James Warren, February 16, 1777 (CP pg. 219)
Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, November 1781 (CP pg. 221)
Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, February 13, 1783 (CP pg.225)
The Affair at Newburgh, March 1783 (CP pg. 227)
Washington Addresses the Officers of the Army, March 15, 1783 (CP pg. 229)

Recommended reading:

Carrese, “Liberty, Constitutionalism, and Moderation: The Political Thought of George Washington” (RCP pg. 131)

10:45am-12:15pm – Session 13: Forms of Government (Professor Sikkenga)

SEMINAR QUESTION: What forms of government did the Americans establish to effect the safety and happiness of the newly independent American people? What do the state constitutions show us about revolutionary political thinking, especially American ideas of constitutionalism?

Required reading:

Virginia Constitution, June 29, 1776 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 1, Document 4)
Massachusetts Constitution, March 2, 1780 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 1, Document 6)

Thursday, cont'd

Recommended reading:

Samuelson, "John Adams and the Republic of Laws" (RCP pg. 149)

"Free and Independent States": After the Revolution

4:30-6:00 pm – Session 14: The Revolutionary Settlement (Professor Raney)

SEMINAR QUESTION: What were the most important issues facing the new country? Which resulted from the principles of the revolution and which from the circumstances (demographic, geographic, etc.) in which the new nation found itself? How did the principles and circumstances influence each other? For example, was equality viewed as a possibility, a necessity, or an aspiration?

Required reading:

The Treaty of Paris, 1783 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 418-422)

Price, "Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution," 1784 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 422-425)

Jefferson to Madison, October 28, 1785 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 15, Document 32)

Madison to Jefferson, June 19, 1786 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 15, Document 33)

Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty, January 16, 1786 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 390-392)

The Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 1, Document 8)

Shays's Rebellion, 1786 (CP pg. 233)

Shays's Rebellion (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 506-508)

Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Queries 14, 17, 18, 19 (CP pg. 235)

Friday, August 3

9:00-10:30 am – Session 15: The Problems of the Articles (Professor Sikkenga)

SEMINAR QUESTION: What defects or vices did Americans discover between 1776 and 1787 in the new governments they had instituted and in the principles on which the foundations of those governments had been laid? How did these defects threaten the "safety and happiness" of the American people? What remedies were suggested that seemed more likely to effect Americans' safety and happiness?

Friday, cont'd

Required reading:

Alexander Hamilton to James Duane, September 3, 1780 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 5, Document 2)

James Madison, Notes on Debates in Congress, January 28, 1783 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 5, Document 5)

James Madison, Notes on Debates in Congress, February 21, 1783 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 5, Document 6)

George Washington to James Warren, October 7, 1785 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 5, Document 9)

James Madison, Vices of the Political System of the United States, April, 1787 (*The Founders' Constitution*, Chapter 5, Document 16)

10:45am-12:15 pm – Session 16: Final thoughts: Review and questions

1:30-3:00 pm – Session 17: Comprehensive final exam