

**History 387: Revolutionary America**  
Spring 2021  
Section 1: MW 9:30-10:45, Virtual Classroom

“The History of our Revolution will be one continued Lye from one End to the other.”  
—John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 1790

“Then I'll get on my knees and pray/We don't get fooled again”  
—Pete Townshend, “Won't Get Fooled Again,” 1971

Prof. Rob Harper, he/him/his  
rharper@uwsp.edu

Office Hours (on Zoom): [Mondays 11:00-1:00](#), [Tuesdays 12:30-1:30](#), and by appointment

### **Course Description and Learning Outcomes**

History 387 introduces students to the study of North America in the era of the American Revolution (roughly 1763-1800). After completing the course, you will be able to:

- Describe key aspects of the history of revolutionary America
- Identify and interpret primary sources useful for studying revolutionary America
- Explain major ideas in the historiography of revolutionary America

### **Required Texts**

- Fenn, *Pox Americana* (PA), text rental
- Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History* (ARCH), text rental
- Young et al, eds., *Revolutionary Founders* (RF), text rental
- Offutt, *Patriots, Loyalists, and Revolution in New York City, 1775-1776*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (PLR), required for purchase

All course handouts, supplementary readings, and other information will be posted on Canvas.

### **Contacting me**

*Helping you learn is the most important and most rewarding part of my job.* If you have questions about the course, or want to improve your performance, please either visit me during office hours or contact me by email at [rharper@uwsp.edu](mailto:rharper@uwsp.edu) to make an appointment. Please include “History 387” in the subject line.

### **Assignments and workload**

To succeed in this class, you must attend and participate regularly, complete all assigned reading, and take effective notes on readings, lectures, and class discussions. Absences from class, either physical or mental, will bring down your grade. As with any three-credit course, you should expect to spend *6-9 hours each week* on coursework outside of class. If you are worried about your progress, please contact me ASAP to discuss how to improve.

### **Critical reading and notetaking**

In a college-level history course, effective reading requires different approaches from those that may have worked for you in the past. For all materials in this course, ask yourself these questions:

- Who wrote this? When? For what audience? Why?
- How is this reading related to other things you've learned?
- What do you find most interesting, surprising, or challenging about this reading?
- What questions do you, as an individual, have about this topic? Is the reading answering them? What new questions does the reading make you think about?

Active reading and notetaking will enable you to remember much more, and for much longer, than rote memorization. For each assignment, take handwritten notes (during in-class work, you may refer to handwritten notes, not electronic ones). It usually works best to read one section, then quickly summarize it in a couple of sentences or a short list of key ideas, then move on to the next section. If possible, review your notes before class. For every hour of reading (or listening or viewing), spend no more than 5-10 minutes taking notes. Your notes are for your eyes only.

### **Reading journal**

Most weeks of the semester, you will write thoughtfully about the assigned readings for about 20 minutes. You should save each entry electronically and upload it (in .doc or .docx format) to Canvas before class on the assigned due date. It may be helpful to start by recapping the main ideas of the readings, but I am primarily interested in what you think of them. See Canvas for deadlines and specific instructions.

### **Zoom sessions**

The course will meet virtually, on Zoom, at our regularly scheduled time. Unless you make other arrangements with me, I expect you to be logged in and attentive throughout each session and to participate actively in both large- and small-group discussions. I expect you either to turn in your camera during the sessions, or to put a photo of yourself as the profile picture.

### **Reacting to the Past: *Patriots, Loyalists, and Revolution in New York, 1775-1776***

In the second unit of the course, you will take on the role of an actual participant in the beginning of the American Revolution. *Patriots, Loyalists, and Revolution* (PLR) is an immersive role-playing game in which each participant seeks to achieve individual and factional goals. You will read a variety of sources, complete short writing assignments, deliver speeches, and negotiate and strategize with other players (your classmates), who may or may not share your goals. To succeed, you will have to learn a great deal about the history of revolutionary New York, divisions within colonial society, and eighteenth-century political ideas. Your unit grade will include the following components. In each category, scoring will reflect how well you use the relevant source materials.

- Quizzes on the assigned readings
- Two short papers (for most roles, these will total about three double-spaced pages each)
- The quality and persuasiveness of public speeches, and/or private negotiating
- A participation score that reflects your engagement in the game
- A short reflection paper reviewing your experience in the game

In addition, bonus points may be awarded for achieving objectives specified in your role sheet.

### **Critical review essay**

At the end of unit 3, you will write a critical review essay (4-5 double-spaced pages) evaluating either: a chapter from *Pox Americana*; another article or chapter assigned in unit 3; or a different scholarly article or book chapter that you choose, with my approval (if you choose this option, you must get my approval in writing at least one week before the deadline). Your essay must:

- Clearly explain the author's main argument, including the author's use of primary sources
- Critically evaluate that argument (this is your essay's thesis)
- Provide ample specific examples (paraphrased, not quoted) to support your assessment
- Discuss whether, and how, the article/chapter adds to our understanding of eighteenth-century North America
- Cite page numbers from the article/chapter in parentheses, as appropriate (if you refer to additional sources, you should cite them in Turabian-style footnotes)
- Be clearly written and free of technical errors

### **Final essay**

In Sept. 2020, President Trump created a "1776 Commission" with a mission to "enable a rising generation to understand the history and principles of the founding of the United States." The Commission (which included no professional historians) released an initial report in January 2021, two days before the end of Trump's term. Professional historians immediately identified a host of problems with the report. Upon taking office, President Biden promptly dissolved the Commission and removed the report from the White House website.

For your final essay you will write your own response to the 1776 report, drawing on (and demonstrating) what you have learned this semester. You may agree with many of the Commission's ideas, or only a few, or none at all, but you must offer your own independent take on what young people should understand about revolutionary America. In other words, you may NOT argue simply, "the 1776 Commission is right because..." or "the 1776 Commission is wrong because..." What would you recommend if you were appointed to such a commission yourself?

In 4-5 double-spaced pages, you must:

- Summarize, in your own words, the Commission's claims about revolutionary America (disregard the report's discussion of later periods of U.S. history)
- Offer your own argument about what young people should understand about revolutionary America
- Support your claims with specific examples from a wide range of course material (if you use additional sources you must check with me at least a week before the deadline)
- Suggest ways in which young people might best learn about revolutionary America
- Cite all sources in Turabian-style footnotes
- Be clearly written and free of technical errors

### **Grading**

Participation and engagement:	10%
Short assignments:	10%
Reading journal:	20%
<i>Patriots, Loyalists, and Revolution</i> :	20%
Critical review essay:	20%

Final essay: 20%

### **Students with Disabilities**

I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Any student requesting such accommodation must first meet with UWSP Disability Services staff. That meeting should take place as early in the semester as possible. No accommodation will be granted until I receive and agree to a formal plan approved by Disability Services.

### **Academic Integrity**

Cases of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, will be formally reported following the policies laid out in UWSP's Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures. Plagiarism consists of submitting work created by someone else as your own. For more information on academic integrity, please ask me or consult [this brochure](#). Students found to have committed academic misconduct will receive an F for the course.

### **Course Outline**

*The following schedule is subject to revision. Changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.*

### **Introductions**

**Monday, Jan. 25:** the world will never be the same

- Log into Canvas, read the syllabus, and pick up books
- If possible, watch *Hamilton: An American Musical* (on Disney+; subscription required)
- Read PLR, brief overview, prologue, and “how to react”

**Wednesday, Jan. 27:** history has its eyes on you

- *Hamilton* videos
- Lepore, Noonan, Monteiro
- Reading journal due

**Monday, Feb. 1:** historiography

- Hattem timeline
- ARCH introduction
- RF introduction

### **Unit 1: Empires and Crises**

**Wednesday, Feb. 3:** Colonists, conflicts, constitutions

- ARCH 11-38, 47-53, 66-72, 86-89
- Reading journal due

**Monday, Feb. 8:** The law of nature? The right of property? Political society?

- Skim PLR 19-52
- Excerpts from John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1689), PLR 97-131
- Complete Locke reading guide

**Wednesday, Feb. 10:** Protesters

- Skim ARCH 91-112
- PLR 53-57 and 131-36
- RF ch. 1 (“Ebenezer Macintosh”)

- Reading journal due

**Monday, Feb. 15:**

- RF Bigelow chapter
- ARCH 112-28

**Wednesday, Feb. 17:** Associators

- Your role sheet
- Continental Congress, “Declaration and Resolves,” 14 Oct. 1774, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/resolves.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/resolves.asp)
- Continental Congress, “Articles of Association,” 20 Oct. 1774, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/contcong\\_10-20-74.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_10-20-74.asp)
- PLR 57-61, 136-59
- Reading Journal: It is December 1774. Record your reactions to the Articles of Association and the Seabury rebuttal, in the voice of your *Patriots and Loyalists* role.

**Unit 2: New York City, 1775-76**

**Monday, Feb. 22:** Setting the stage

- PLR 62-95

**Wednesday, Feb. 24:** Game session 1: April 1, 1775

- First PLR papers and speeches due from Robert Livingston, Alexander McDougall, Isaac Sears, Abraham Brasher, James Delancey, Frederick Philipse, James Jauncey

**Monday, March 1:** Game session 2

- First PLR papers and speeches due from John Morin Scott, Henry Wisner, Andrew Reber, Christopher Billop, John Rapalje, Robert Murray

**Wednesday, March 3:** Game session 3

- First PLR papers and speeches due from all remaining characters

**Monday, March 8:** Game session 4

**Wednesday, March 10:** Game session 5

**Monday, March 15:** Game session 6

**Wednesday, March 17:** Debrief

- Second PLR papers due

*March 19-28: Spring Break*

**Unit 3: Revolution and Variola**

**Monday, March 29:** What does Elizabeth Fenn want us to know about Variola Major?

- PLR reflection due
- PA, intro. and ch. 1
- Watch excerpt of HBO’s *John Adams*: [https://youtu.be/TWxDLG9\\_eOU](https://youtu.be/TWxDLG9_eOU)
- Watch “How we conquered the deadly smallpox virus”: <https://youtu.be/yqUFy-t4MIQ>

**Wednesday, March 31:** Resistance and revolution

- ARCH 131-62
- PA ch. 2
- Reading journal due

**Monday, April 5:** Things go south

- ARCH 211-49
- PA ch. 4

**Wednesday, April 7:** The north country

- PA ch. 6
- Murphy, "Creole Communities," from *A Gathering of Rivers* (2000)
- Reading journal due

**Monday, April 12:** The plains

- PA ch. 7
- Hamalainen, "New Order," from *Comanche Empire* (2008)

**Wednesday, April 14:** The northwest

- PA ch. 8 and epilogue
- View Webber sketches (on D2L)
- Reading journal due

**Unit 4: Transformations**

**Monday, April 19:** Establishments and dissidents

Critical review essay due

- RF ch. 10 (Virginia Baptists)
- Brekus, "Women in the Wilderness," in *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (2000)
- Lindman, "Acting the Manly Christian: White Evangelical Masculinity in Revolutionary Virginia" (2000)

**Wednesday, April 21:** Mothers and others

- Hartigan-O'Connor, "Urban Housefuls," in *The Ties that Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (2009)
- Godbeer, "'Martyrdom to Venus': Sexual Freedom in Post-Independence Philadelphia," in *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (2002)
- RF ch. 16 (Abigail Adams)
- Reading journal due

**Monday, April 26:** Leaders

- RF chs. 17 (Judith Sargent Murray) and 18 (Hall, Allen, Coker)
- Adams and Pleck, "Citizenship," from *Love of Freedom: Black Women in Colonial and Revolutionary New England* (2010)
- Judith Sargent Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes"  
<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/murray/equality/equality.html>

**Wednesday, April 28:** Refugees and settlements

- ARCH 313-27
- RF ch. 7 (Martin)
- RF ch. 9 (Perth, Washington, Wilkinson)
- Reading journal due

**Monday, May 3:** Critical period

- ARCH 334-74
- Shays's Rebellion documents (1786-87)

**Wednesday, May 5:** Framers

- ARCH 374-93
- The Constitution of the United States (1787)
- Excerpts from Philadelphia convention debates (1787)
- Reading journal due

**Monday, May 10:** Factions

- ARCH 395-414
- RF chs. 14, 20 (Bradford/Findlay and Coram)
- The Bill of Rights (ratified 1791)

**Wednesday, May 12:** Parties

- ARCH 415-34, 477-80
- RF ch. 21
- Reading journal due

**Final essay due before the final exam session: Monday, May 17, 12:30–2:30 p.m.**