**REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA, 1750-1800: POLITICS, WAR, AND SOCIETY**

*\*PROVISIONAL AND ABBREVIATED SYLLABUS\**

*(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)*

Fall 2017Instructor**:** James Hrdlicka, Ph.D.

Wednesday 3:30 – 6:30pm jhrdl@sas.upenn.edu College Hall 308F

 Office Hours: By appointment

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

In this course, we will study the American Revolution with the goal of appreciating how its many dimensions—political, military, social, cultural, economic—contributed to how people of all types experienced the era. We will begin by exploring colonial America and the British Empire at mid-century. Increasing tensions between Britain and the colonies ultimately resulted in the outbreak of armed conflict in 1775. As we consider the many consequences of Americans’ decision to declare Independence, we will pay significant attention to the course of the war that ultimately secured the status of the United States “among the powers of the earth.” Yet Americans continued to face numerous challenges. By 1787, an influential group of Americans favored the creation of a new constitutional regime, one that the populace at large debated with passion and intelligence. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the United States possessed a federal system of government grounded on republican principles, and stood to exercise a profound influence on the future of North America. In the course of this half century, though, what had changed and what had stayed the same? Class meetings will consist of discussions based on a wide variety of revealing primary texts and insightful secondary scholarship. Students will also research and write a significant paper on any topic related to Revolutionary America.

**POSSIBLE READINGS**

*This list is incomplete and subject to change.*

Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

Colin Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Lord Adam Gordon, “Journal of an Officer Who Traveled in America and the West Indies in 1764 and 1765”

Joseph Plumb Martin, *Memoir of a Revolutionary War Soldier*

Selections from: *The Federalist*, Records of the Constitutional Convention, Ratification Debates

Letters/Writings by: Jefferson, Adams, Washington, Franklin, Madison

**TOPICS WE WILL DISCUSS**

The British Empire

Legacy of the Seven Years’ War

Imperial Crisis

War of Independence

Slavery

Declaration of Independence

Native Americans

How the Revolution affected different regions of North America

French Alliance/Geopolitics

Constitutionalism

Ratification

Gender

Federalism

Loyalists

**QUESTIONS WE WILL ADDRESS**

* Why did the Revolution occur?
* How did Americans defeat the British and secure Independence?
* What was the relationship between the “American Revolution” and the “War of Independence”?
* How did the Revolution affect Native Americans, African Americans, women, and loyalists?
* Did the period witness the creation of a new American identity? If so, what characterized that identity?
* Why did Americans decide to create a federal republic in 1787? What were the implications?
* From a global perspective, what was the situation of the United States at the turn of the nineteenth century?
* How do we remember the Revolution?

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN**

Participation = 30 percent

Short Paper (5 pages) = 20 percent

Research Paper (15-20 pages) = 50 percent

Participation: Students are required to attend weekly meetings and actively contribute to discussions. In addition to completing assigned readings and speaking regularly in class, they are also required to submit two brief discussion questions to the course Canvas site by **3pm** on class days. A good strategy is to identify a specific passage or quotation from one of the readings that might offer a springboard to further discussion. Ask about things that surprised you, complicated your previous understandings of a given topic, or whose meaning is just unclear to you at the moment.

Short Paper (**DUE IN OCTOBER**): During one week of their choice, students will write a 5- page essay using that week’s assigned readings. These essays should analyze the primary sources and make an argument that answers the question: how do these documents help us understand a particular aspect of American history in this period?

Research Paper (**DUE IN DECEMBER**): Students can select any topic related to the era of the American Revolution. Throughout the semester, students will report on the progress of their research and collectively the class will offer constructive suggestions. Dates to note include:

**September**: Turn in a one-paragraph discussion of a possible topic and share that topic with the class

**October**: Deadline to select a topic and have it approved

**November**: Turn in a prospective bibliography of at least five primary sources and five secondary sources

**November**: Share with the class a brief primary source you plan to analyze in your paper