

Early National America HIS 572 CID 7079

Dr. Katherine. Pierce
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In Class Periods
T, Thur, 1230-1400
T, THUR, 1530-1650

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(other times by appointment)

COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is an on-line course focused on American history from the end of the Revolutionary era through the Age of Jackson. By close reading of texts, an on-line discussion forum for each book and a final cooperative wiki on the historiography of the “Founding” of the nation, students will both learn the overall historical narrative of the period and draft a study of the era’s historiography that will be an excellent study guide in preparation for their graduate examinations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To develop a sense of the changes and options facing the new nation after victory against the British. To appreciate the seismic nature of the social, political, and economic changes ordinary Americans faced between the world of wigs and knee-britches to that of canals, steamboats, and struggles to determine who was an American. Through extensive writing – book reviews, a class wiki, and participation in discussion on-line, your analytical and written skills will improve. You will learn of the options for on-line sources and collections for this period and learn how to challenge historical arguments and appreciate how historians struggle to “see” the past and explain it.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Everyone will complete book reviews on all works except Gibson’s. That equates to six required 4-5 page book reviews on the below texts. In addition, everyone will contribute to creating a class wiki – a cooperative assignment based on, but not limited to, Gibson’s historiography of the Founding. Each student will be responsible for an in-depth reaction to their assigned section of Gibson that will require some analysis of secondary articles. The final product will serve as a thorough review of the major questions historians grapple with when interpreting the early republic’s origins. The quality of each student’s submission will be graded; however, as a group effort this project will have longer term value than a narrow research paper in giving you a foundation of knowledge for this period at the graduate level.

I will provide detailed guidance for how to do book reviews. Same for how we will produce the wiki.

I will occasionally assign journal articles to get you familiar with key historical debates of the period. The *Journal of the Early Republic* should become a good friend. It has the benefit of being available on-line via Project Muse database in our library and is not pompous and is actually at times entertaining as well as enlightening.

READING MATERIALS

Books for Purchase:

Alan Gibson. *Interpreting the Founding: Guide to the Enduring Debates over the Origins and Foundations of the American Republic*. Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2006

John Lauritz Larson. *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2001.

Joyce Appleby. *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Alan Taylor. *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Joanne B. Freeman. *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001.

Gordon S. Wood. *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.

**** NOTE A NEW ADDITION TO ORIG. BOOKLIST ****

Patricia Cline Cohen. *The Murder of Helen Jewett*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.

Movie: For those who have limited background in the ratification of the Constitution, you cannot do better than episode six of the historical series *Liberty: The American Revolution*. PBS home video. It also serves as a fine intro – the entire series – to the complexities of the Revolution, the Confederation and struggles to turn a colonial revolt into a new nation.

It costs nearly 50 bucks for the whole thing, so try to rent it via NetFlix or Blockbuster. Your local library is also an option. The copyright restrictions bar me from uploading it on the web or using the university streaming server even for one episode.

I recommend this for its emphasis on using primary sources for all the speeches the actors give, for giving a sense of the tension and uncertainty of the Revolution's outcome, and commentary given by the major historians of this period – Pauline Maier and Gordon Wood among others.

CLASS FORMAT

This is an on-line, graduate level course that differs in many ways from traditional seminar classes. Although our course will allow flexible scheduling, everyone will need to exercise initiative and at times perseverance to ensure we tame the technology to our desires to master the history of the early republic.

Everyone will do six book reviews and participate in creating the historiographical wiki. I want your book reviews to be useful as study aids when you take your comprehensive exams. Learning to review a book – extracting the author's arguments, evidence, conclusion, and an evaluation of her/his effectiveness is not simple. I will permit a re-write of your first review so any misunderstanding about how to do a book review can be corrected.

We will also engage in discussion of articles on-line to shift gears and take an occasional break from review writing. For these assignments, one of you will act as discussion leader and one as commentator. This will be explained in greater detail when it happens.

Once I have a sense of the class composition and student schedules, I will select at least two hours per week that I will lock in when I will be on line. Expect these to be odd hours of the week when most of us will be available. I promise not to schedule these periods during NFL game times – even pros have bad habits.

Given the vagaries of on-line courses, I reserve the right to change the syllabus as needed to best achieve the course objectives.

TECHNOLOGY

For some this area may be the most daunting – at least at first. The following contacts are to help you wrestle with technical issues with the experts. If you are having problems, let them know and let me know. I have created a discussion forum for all things admin and technical to better allow you to access the creative solutions and similar issues classmates may experience.

1. Computer services: 936 436 1950 - Help desk. This is a 24/7 number

for issues that you as Sam students have with distant connections, accessing blackboard, etc. Use them, as they know tech far better than I.

2. Library reserve desk: Lisa, hours 9-6pm M-F [central time] 936-294-1628. Help with accessing e-reserves. Also a point of contact for other library issues like databases. If you need help with finding info, there are research librarians that Lisa can identify for you.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Six book reviews, performance as discussion leader, and your part of the class historiographical wiki are graded. You will write six book reviews and I will drop the lowest grade so only five of six count. You may not opt out of a review, but I recognize that we all have off weeks, so one will be dropped.

Assignment values

Book Reviews [six & I drop lowest]	50%
Class Wiki	20%
Discussion	
Leader	10%
Comment	05%
Overall Discussion Participation	15%

Assignment Schedule:

Each week will be listed by Monday's date. For example, week one is the week of August 20th. Note that the forum for week of Aug 27 is a collection book reviews on a single book by Gordon Wood. The authors are historians of the period and each approaches Wood's book differently. The purpose is to give you a sense of what reviews look like and to get a sense of how an author does a good or bad job of describing and evaluating a work to readers who have not read it.

Aug 20: Learning the On-Line Ropes. Document Exercise with Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation

Aug 27 "Forum: How Revolutionary Was the Revolution? A Discussion of Gordon S. Wood's *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 51, No. 4, Oct., 1994 – JSTOR in our library

<http://www.jstor.org/browse/00435597/di976420?frame=noframe&userID=9e87015c@shsu.edu/01cce4405b30c711480c1d707&dpi=3&config=jstor>

- Sep 03 Gordon Wood. *Revolutionary Characters*
- Sep 10 “To Begin the World Anew” Implications of the Constitution. Each student will locate a scholarly article on the “meaning” of the Constitution, one per customer, which will we discuss. Re-writes as needed. Mastering the review process.
- Sep 17 Alan Taylor. *William Cooper’s Town, Part One*
- Sep 24 Alan Taylor. *William Cooper’s Town, Part Two*
- Oct 01 Article: Jan Lewis, “The Problem of Slavery in Southern Political Discourse” **[e-reserve]**
- Oct 08 Joanne Freeman. *Affairs of Honor*
- Oct 15 Alan Taylor. *William Cooper’s Town, Part Three*
- Oct 22 Joyce Appleby. *Inheriting the Revolution*
- Oct 29 Article: Andrew Cayton. “Continental Politics: Liberalism, Nationalism, and the Appeal of Texas in the 1820s” **[e-reserve]** Set-up for Wiki Project
- Nov 05 John Larson. *Internal Improvements*
- Nov 12 Alan Gibson. *Interpreting the Founding* – Wiki Project
- Nov 19 **Thanksgiving Break - There will be much rejoicing**
- Nov 26 Research and Reading for Wiki Project
- Dec 03 Alan Gibson. *Interpreting the Founding* – Wiki Project
- Dec 10 Patricia Cohen. *Murder of Helen Jewett*

This page explains the university’s policies (in italics) associated with your enrollment in this course. I expect each student to abide by these rules. I Have also appended a few rules that are my policies intended to encourage a classroom environment that best promotes learning.

University Policy Regarding Academic Dishonesty

According to the administration’s guidelines: “All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out

of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.”

Policy Regarding Students with Disabilities

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

Additional Notes: The best way to handle potential problems is to communicate with me via email or phone beforehand. The best rule to follow is courtesy and treating others with respect. Challenge the opinion not the individual. The beauty of the on-line format is that it allows for that critical pause before hitting the send button on all “discussions.”