

Georgia Institute of Technology
Spring 2019
HTS 2002A: The American Revolution

Professor Carla Gerona

12:00-1:15, T R

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Office hours: G, 19: T 10:00-10:55 and R 11:00-11:45, or by appointment

Historian Edmund S. Morgan once wrote that the Revolution made Americans “think as they never had before, made them see things that they never saw before, made possible what had seemed impossible before.” Taking a cue from Morgan, this course asks students to consider how and why a seemingly minor squabble over governance in the British Empire led, improbably, to the birth of the United States. In 1763, most white colonial Americans did not feel oppressed by the British. To the contrary, they often remarked that they were perhaps the freest and least-burdened people in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Just how, then, did thirteen bickering and bustling colonies at the edge of empire come to fight a bloody war of independence, embark on bold and uncertain forms of self-government, and develop a new science of American politics?

This class explores the origins, outcomes, and ironies of the American Revolution, and encourages students to develop a sophisticated understanding of why the Revolution happened when it did, and what difference it made. We will consider the American Revolution as an intellectual event, a social drama, and not least as a creation myth that challenged age-old assumptions about authority and dared Americans to think in new ways about their lives, liberties, and pursuits of happiness. Those standing in the swirl of events faced uncertain futures in which nothing was inevitable – death and taxes, perhaps, as Benjamin Franklin famously quipped, but certainly not independence, not freedom, and not nationhood. About the only thing revolutionary Americans knew for certain was that they lived in a remarkable moment of challenge and change. Like them, we will tackle some big questions: What sorts of ideas about freedom, liberty, power, and authority guided Americans down the path toward independence? How did ideological frameworks and political abstractions translate into popular mobilization for rebellion and revolution? In short, what was the American Revolution, and what was revolutionary about it?



Goal E:

In this class you will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior through course tests, and you will apply this knowledge during various in-class activities, including quizzes, discussions, and group work.

Text: We will work with one text that has various different essays and sources (available at Barnes and Nobles on Tech Square):

- Richard D. Brown and Benjamin L. Carp, eds., *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution, 1760-1791* (third edition, Wadsworth Cengage, 2014).
- To rent this text is approximately \$30, and a new print copy is over \$100. I highly recommend a paper copy if you can afford it! Used prices will vary, but make sure that if you choose that option you have the right edition. The hard copy looks like this:

**Course Work and Evaluation Criteria:**

- Attendance and Class Participation (20%): Attendance is required, as is active participation in class discussions. Excessive absence will adversely affect your final grade; outstanding contributions to class meetings will enhance it. Your class participation grade will also include all group work done in class.
- Reading quizzes and brief assignments (20%): Quizzes and assignments might take different forms such as multiple choice, work sheets, or short essays. The main point of these assignments is to help you with your reading comprehension, to think about history, and to prepare you for class and tests. You might do some of these assignments at home; I will administer others in class. You can expect about one brief assignment per class/reading.
- Think pieces (10%): This is a more formal one to two page written piece that you will also present to the class.
- Presentations (10%): There will be one group presentation on the Revolutionary War and one individual presentation on the Constitutional Convention for 5% each.
- Test 1, 2 and 3 (40%): A combination of multiple choice and essays. Test 3 will take place during the final exam time -- in class on Thursday, May 2, 11:20-2:10.

Course Notes and Policies:

Civility and Technology: Exercise good judgment; we will set up class rules on the first week of class. However, I reserve the right to change this policy if I deem that it is necessary!

Academic Integrity: Students must adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, including but not limited to plagiarism. Issues of academic honesty will be governed by the Georgia Tech Honor Code: <http://osi.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=46>.

Special Needs: I follow Georgia Tech guidelines to provide accommodations for students with documented special needs.

Suggestions and advice for how to succeed in this class:

- Come to class – be present *physically and mentally*.
- Ask questions of the history you are learning! About readings and presentations. Being curious will you to better understand history.
- Print the syllabus and keep it in a safe place. It is your roadmap to the course and you will need to refer to it throughout the semester.
- If you do not understand a course requirement or any of the course material, please do not hesitate to talk with us. Our job is to help you learn. And don't wait till the last minute to ask!
- In order to get the most out of class time, it is vital that you keep up with the reading assignments. Make sure to do readings before class.
- Finally, please note that dates and deadlines are subject to change. Be alert to in-class announcements.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Date	Topic	Readings	
T Jan 8	Introductions		
R Jan 10	The Consequences of Revolution (or Interpretations of the American Revolution)		
T Jan 15	The British Empire and War for North America	Chapter 1, Essays (Gordon S. Wood, "The Revolution Launched a Bold Republican Experiment" and Alfred F. Young, "The Revolution Was Radical in Some	

		Ways, Not in Others”)	
R Jan 17		Chapter 2, Documents, Ben Franklin, “Touts the Importance of Imperial Ties between Britain and America.” 37-45.	
T Jan 22	Imperial Reform and Colonial Resistance	Chapter 3, Essays (Carp and Lee)	
R Jan 24		Chapter 3, Documents	
T Jan 29	The Imperial Crisis and the Declaration of Independence	Chapter 4, Essays (McConville and Armitage)	
R Jan 31		Chapter 4, Documents	
T Feb 5	Struggles for Independence	Chapter 5, Essays (McDonnell and Jasanoff)	
R Feb 7	The British Empire and War for North America	Chapter 5, Documents	Revolution presentations
T Feb 12			Test 1
R Feb 14	The American Revolution and the West	Chapter 6 (Grenier and Dowd)	
T Feb 19		Chapter 6, Documents	
R Feb 21	Equality and the African-American Challenge	Chapter 7 (Brown and Sinha)	
T Feb 26		Chapter 7, Documents	
R Feb 28	Gender and Citizenship in a Revolutionary Republic	Chapter 8, Essays (Zagarri and Crane)	
T March 5		Chapter 8, Documents	
R March 7	Religion and the American Revolution	Chapter 9, Essays (Butler and Noll)	
T March 12		Chapter 9, Documents	
R March 14			Test 2
T March 19	No Class		Spring Break
R March 21	No Class		Spring Break
T March 26	Government under the Articles of	Chapter 10 (Onuf and Gross)	

	Confederation		
R March 28		Chapter 10, Documents	
T April 2	The Constitution of 1787	Chapter 11, Essays (Beeman and Cornell)	
R April 4		Chapter 11, Documents	
T April 9			Constitution presentations
R April 11	Government under the Constitution	Chapter 12, Essays (Schmeller and Bouton)	
T April 16		Chapter 12, Documents	
R April 18	Legacies		
T April 23	Make-up day and review		
R May 2 Final Exam	11:20-2:10 PM		Test 3