

Remembering the American Revolution

HIST 199 Fall 2025

Instructor: Mr. Seabrook

Section 10 (12-1:15): Humanities Building 111

Section 11 (3-4:15): Humanities Building 245

Office Hours: Jepson Hall 104, MW 1:30-2:30 or virtual by appointment

(Note: I answer most non-emergency emails during normal business hours (9-5) in the order in which they are received)

About the Course:

In this course, you will be introduced to the elements of historical thinking through an examination of how the American Revolution has been remembered and memorialized throughout American history. We will discuss what the field of history is, how to do it (and do it ethically), and why it matters. We will delve into the history of how Americans have remembered and used the events, characters, and principles of the country's founding. Topics will include monuments, museum exhibits, films, textbooks, historic preservation, and more. We will explore the legacies of the famous and forgotten people of the founding generation, from political leaders like Washington and Jefferson to the women, African Americans, and Native Americans who both shaped and challenged American independence. Methodologically, you will learn how to engage with historical evidence, especially primary sources and scholarly secondary sources.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Analyze questions about past events, ideas, and human worlds.
2. Demonstrate historical thinking by contextualizing and analyzing primary sources and evaluating the nature and limits of historical evidence.
3. Apply interpretations and methods employed in the study of the memory and memorialization of the American Revolution and the founding generation in U.S. history.
4. Formulate, advance, and properly document historical arguments, drawing on a combination of primary sources, secondary sources, and other appropriate research materials.
5. Construct knowledge about self-awareness and conscientious thinking through collaborative teamwork.

Content Warning:

Some of what you read, listen to, or watch for this course may make you uncomfortable. Engagement with a diversity of viewpoints is an essential part of the historian's craft. In this class, we welcome open, honest debate and we won't shy away from "the hard stuff." I look forward to hearing your valuable and unique perspectives.

Required Materials:

All required materials are posted on Blackboard, or links have been provided. No books are required to be purchased for this class. However, all materials listed in the syllabus, including podcasts, videos, films, and graphics, are required. The only cost you will be asked to cover is the purchase of a notebook for your reading journal.

Assignments and Grading:

Reading Quizzes (30%)

One reading quiz is due almost every week of the course. You'll take these timed quizzes directly on Blackboard. More information will be posted on Blackboard.

Field Trip Reflection (20%)

We will be taking a class field trip to the Wilton House Museum in Richmond (<https://www.wiltonhousemuseum.org/>). After our trip, you will write a reflective review (750-1,250 words) of the site. (Learning Objectives 1, 2, & 3)

In your review, you should:

- Include a vivid description of the site we visited (e.g., what was there to see/do, what condition was it in, what interpretive materials were available, etc.)
- Share your opinion on how accurate/informative the site visit was, based on your understanding of our course material. What worldviews are on display at the site? Who has power here?
- Share your biggest takeaway or the most surprising thing you learned. How did our visit challenge your assumptions?
- Explain how you would improve or modify the site/interpretation if given the opportunity. What would you do to enhance and sustain the site's positive impact in our community?

After our field trip, we will have a discussion in class to compare notes and reflect on how our visit intersects with course themes. (Learning Objective 5)

Historical Research Essay (40%)

Doing history well requires three things: engagement with primary sources, conversation with secondary sources, and—most importantly—a convincing argument. For this assignment, you will put these pieces together by writing a 1,250–2,000 word historical research essay. Your topic, broadly, must be the memory of the American Revolution, our subject for the semester. Under that umbrella, I encourage you to find something to write about that makes you personally excited. (Learning Objectives 1, 2, 3, & 4)

This assignment is broken down into several parts, which are due throughout the semester:

- Topic selection/secondary sources (10%)
- Primary sources/bibliography (20%)
- Thesis/argument (20%)
- Historiography (10%)
- Full draft/peer review (20%)
- Final edits (20%)

I will give you detailed instructions for each step along the way—see Blackboard for more details.

Reading Journal & Participation (10%)

Throughout the semester, you will be keeping a “reading journal” to help you absorb and process our course material. You will need to purchase a physical notebook and write your responses by hand. For each week when readings or other homework assignments are assigned, please prepare a handwritten response in your notebook to the following prompt: **What is one question you have about the readings (including other course media) this week? What is one quote from the readings that you found interesting or thought-provoking?**

I will grade your journals at the end of the semester. They should serve you well during discussions in class, and I may call on you to share your thoughts at any time. **You must complete the assigned readings and prepare your journal response for each date before the start of class.** (Learning Objectives 1 & 5)

Your complete reading journal will form the bulk of your participation grade. At the end of the course, you will also be asked to fill out a self-evaluation form grading your participation in class. Attendance in this class will not be tracked, but it will be difficult to achieve a good grade without coming to class.

Students with a Disability Accommodation Notices should contact me as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams. Students who are experiencing a barrier to access due to a disability and/or temporary condition are encouraged to apply for accommodations by visiting: disability.richmond.edu.

Grading Policy:

Late work will be subject to a penalty. The later you submit a required assignment, the lower your grade will be. I do not accept work that is more than two weeks past deadline.

Course Schedule:

Our class will meet on Mondays and Wednesdays at either 12 noon or 3 p.m., depending on the section for which you are registered.

WEEK 1

August 25: The American Revolution: A Brief Overview

Read:

- The syllabus
- Our course Blackboard site

August 27: What is historical memory? Memory vs. History

Read:

- Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain”
- Hattem, “Introduction,” *The Memory of '76*
- Longfellow, “Paul Revere’s Ride”

No reading quiz this week.

WEEK 2

September 1: How do we know about history? Primary and Secondary Sources

Read:

- Hattem, Part One Intro and Chapter 1, *The Memory of '76*
- Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party* (excerpt) – full ebook available to borrow here: <https://research-ebsco-com.newman.richmond.edu/c/c7usq2/search/details/h7nwez3uer?db=nlebk>
- Schrag, “How to Read a Primary Source”
- Primary vs. Secondary Sources

September 3: “America’s Birthday”: The Fourth of July & Declaration of Independence

Read:

- Armitage, “Introduction,” *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History*
- Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 3

September 8: NO CLASS MEETING

September 10: Historical Research

Read:

- Schrag, “How to Research a History Paper”
- Schrag, “How to Narrow a Research Topic”
- Instructions for our historical research essay assignment on Blackboard

In class:

- Guest Speaker – Kyle Jenkins, UR Social Sciences Librarian
- Intro to historical research essay assignment

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 4

September 15: How to Read History

Read:

- Schrag, “How to Read a History Book”
- Schrag, “Examples of Critical Reading”
- THOMAS: A Useful Mnemonic for Reading Historical Scholarship
- “How to Gut a Book”
- Zagari, “Introduction,” *Revolutionary Backlash*

September 17: Founding Mothers & Fathers

Read:

- Hattem, Chapters 2, 3, & 4, *The Memory of '76*
- Sesay, “Remembering Phillis Wheatley”
- Alexander, “Betsy Ross”
- Teipe, “Will the Real Molly Pitcher Please Stand Up?”

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 5

September 22: Library Visit

In class:

- Meet at Boatwright Library, room G62, for a visit with archivist Natalie Salive

September 24: Writing History: Argument & Historiography

Read:

- Hattem, “The Historiography of the American Revolution”
- Schrag, “Elements of a Thesis Statement”
- Schrag, “Dialectical Thesis Statements”
- Schrag, “A Thesis Statement Template”
- Birkenstein, Graff, and Durst, “So what? Who cares?”

Due on Blackboard before class:

- Historical research essay topic and list of secondary sources

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 6

September 29: Field Trip to Wilton House Museum

Our field trip will take place during our regularly scheduled class meeting time. Details about where to meet, etc., will be posted on Blackboard.

October 1: Movie Day

In class:

- Start watching *1776*

No reading quiz this week.

WEEK 7

October 6: Movie Day

In class:

- Continue watching *1776*

October 8: The Revolution at the Movies

Read:

- Gunning, “Making Sense of Film”
- O’Connor, “The American Revolution on the Screen”

In class:

- Finish watching *1776* and discuss

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 8

October 13: NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

October 15: Movie Day

In class:

- Start watching *The Patriot*

Assignments due:

- Preliminary research essay bibliography, including primary sources

No reading quiz this week.

WEEK 9

October 20: Movie Day

In class:

- Continue watching *The Patriot*

October 22: The Brutal British

Read:

- “Older Americans uncomfortable with Mel Gibson’s playing of patriot game”
- Hannigan, “Enslavement and Enlistment”
- Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation
- Holmes, “The Past is a Foreign Country,” *Faiths of the Founding Fathers*

In class:

- Finish watching *The Patriot* and discuss

Assignment due: Field Trip Reflection due by the end of day Friday

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 10

October 27: Slavery & Sectionalism

Read:

- Hattem, Chapters 5-8, *The Memory of '76*
- “Boston Massacre and Propaganda”

- South Carolina Declaration of Secession

October 29: Happy Anniversaries? The Centennial & Bicentennial

Read:

- Hattem, Chapters 9-10 & 21-23, *The Memory of '76*

Assignments due:

- Draft of your research essay historiography section

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 11

November 3: Teaching the Revolution: Consensus & Contestation

Read:

- Hattem, Chapter 13, 19-20, *The Memory of '76*

November 5: NO CLASS MEETING

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 12

November 10: Whose Revolution?

Read:

- Hattem, Chapter 11, *The Memory of '76*
- Calloway, "The Indians' War of Independence"
- McMillen, "The George Rogers Clark Statue and Native Americans"
- Jernigan, "Nanta ish ikhvna ha? Kucha hoh ilhkoli (What have you learned? Go outside)"

In class:

- Guest speaker: Dr. Lucas Kelley, Valparaiso University

November 12: Movie Day

Read:

- Schrag, "How to Write an Essay"
- Schrag, "Topic Sentences"

In class:

- Start watching *Hamilton*

Assignments due:

- Draft of your essay introduction (including thesis statement) and essay outline

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 13

November 17: Movie Day

In class:

- Continue watching *Hamilton*

November 19: The Revolution on Stage: *Hamilton*

Read:

- Romano and Potter, eds., “Introduction,” “Race-Conscious Casting,” & “*Hamilton* and the American Revolution on Stage and Screen,” *Historians on Hamilton*

In class:

- Finish watching *Hamilton*
- *Hamilton* discussion

Reading quiz due by end of day Friday.

WEEK 14

November 24: NO CLASS – INDEPENDENT STUDY

- Work on your papers!

November 26: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

No reading quiz this week.

WEEK 15

December 1: Peer Review

Read:

- Welke, “The Art of Manuscript Reviewing”

In class:

- Peer review exercise

Assignments due:

- Full draft of your historical research essay (on Blackboard AND printed out)

December 3: LAST DAY OF CLASS: Usable Pasts and Memory Wars

Read:

- Shenkman, “Introduction” and “Patriotism,” *I Love Paul Revere, Whether He Rode or Not*
- Hattem, Chapter 24 & Epilogue, *The Memory of '76*

Skim:

- Kohn, “History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution’s Enola Gay Exhibit”
- Pirok, “Goodwin’s Ghosts”

In class:

- Writing Workshop
- Wrap Up

Assignments due:

- Reading Journal (due in class)
- Participation Self Evaluation

No reading quiz this week.

December 8: Final Deadline for Historical Research Essay

- Today is also the deadline to make up late work.

Honor Code:

I expect everyone to treat others, and themselves, with respect in my classroom. This includes respect for the work that you turn in. This course is taught in accordance with the University of Richmond Honor Code, which can be accessed here: <https://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/Honor-Code.pdf>. Essays are expected to be your own work; plagiarism will not be tolerated. Being found responsible of an Honor Code violation will result in a 0 on the assignment, but I reserve the right to adjust this outcome dependent on the nature of your violation. If you ever have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask me before you act. In the event that you are having any troubles with, or outside of, my course, I encourage you to come and speak to me. Violating the Honor Code is never the right option—we can always work through a solution together. Additionally, the library guide for citing sources can be accessed here (<https://libguides.richmond.edu/citingsources>) and the Honor Councils website can be accessed here (<https://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/>).

AI Policy:

As part of each written assignment for the course, you will be **required to disclose** any use of generative AI tools, including (but not limited to) ChatGPT. In addition to **citing** the specific tool used, you will need to add an **appendix** that includes the prompts you used to get the desired results. Be aware that generative AI tools can produce incorrect or biased outputs. It is your responsibility to ensure that any content you use from AI tools is correct, unbiased, and not harmful.

Writing and Additional Resources:

- For a good website that includes instructions and links on how to correctly cite in multiple formats, go to <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/publichealth/style>.
- History Library Guide from Boatwright Memorial Library: <https://libguides.richmond.edu/c.php?g=41826&p=266731>
- You are also encouraged to utilize the Weinstein Learning Center for help with writing: <https://wlc.richmond.edu/services/writing/>.
- If you have questions about improving your writing or desire extra feedback to grow as a writer, please let me know and I will assist as time allows.

Disability Services Syllabus Statement:

The University of Richmond's office of Disability Services strives to ensure that students with disabilities and/or temporary conditions (i.e., concussions & injuries) are provided opportunity for full participation and equal access. Students who are experiencing a barrier to access due to a disability and/or temporary condition are encouraged to apply for accommodations by visiting: disability.richmond.edu. Disability Services can be reached at disability@richmond.edu or 804-662-5001.

Once accommodations have been approved, students must 1) Submit their Disability Accommodation Notice (DAN) to each of their professors via the Disability Services Student Portal available at this link: sl.richmond.edu/be. and 2) Request a meeting with each professor to create an accommodation implementation plan. It is important to complete these steps as soon as possible because accommodations are never retroactive, and professors are permitted a reasonable amount of time for implementation. Disability Services is available to assist, as needed.

University of Richmond General Education Information:

Historical Studies (FSHT)

Historical studies examine events and actors of the recent or distant past within the context of the ideas, institutions, social norms, cultural practices, and physical environments out of which they arose. Courses with a historical perspective enable us to understand the values and institutions of disparate societies and cultures as they have developed over time.

By emphasizing the critical analysis of sources and the interrelationships among ideas, institutions, social structures, and events within one or more interpretive frameworks, these courses foster students' awareness of the methods and perspectives for understanding past societies and cultures in historical context. Courses that focus narrowly on the history of a discipline, that only use chronology as an organizational structure, or that do not stress the context in which ideas and events occurred fall outside the category of historical studies.

Web of Inquiry: Historical Inquiry

How can we know the past? Why does it matter? These twin questions anchor historical inquiry courses.

Historical inquiry courses study the past by asking broad questions about human worlds (political, cultural, social, economic, and/or physical). Whether focusing on specific periods or on epoch-crossing themes, these courses analyze the historical contexts that influence human thought and action; shape social institutions; and/or alter cultural practices.

Historical inquiry courses foster students' awareness of the methods and perspectives for understanding past societies and cultures in historical context. They do so by emphasizing the critical analysis of objects of study produced in the past and scholarship about the past (i.e., the use of primary and secondary sources), and the interrelationships among ideas, institutions, social structures, and events within one or more interpretive frameworks.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will analyze questions about past events, ideas, and human worlds (political, cultural, social, economic, and/or physical).
2. Students will demonstrate historical thinking by contextualizing and analyzing primary sources and evaluating the nature and limits of historical evidence.
3. Students will apply interpretations and methods employed in the given area of historical study.
4. Students will formulate, advance, and properly document historical arguments, drawing on a combination of primary sources, secondary sources, and other research materials appropriate to the given area of historical study.

This syllabus is my contract with you during our time together this semester. While I reserve the right to change parts of the syllabus or schedule at any time, I will always communicate these changes with you and provide an updated copy of the syllabus on Blackboard.