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HSTA 307Y.01: The American Revolution and Founding Era

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The American Revolution and Founding Era

HSTA 307Y | Fall 2021 | 3 credits

Class meets Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:20 | LA 205

Professor Claire Arcenas | claire.arcenas@umontana.edu | Office: LA 261

Student hours: Tuesdays 1-3pm & by appointment

Course Overview:

This class introduces you to one of the most exciting, uncertain, and misunderstood periods in American history: the era of the American Revolution and Founding moment. Between 1776 and 1787, inhabitants of 13 colonies-turned-states declared independence, successfully fought and won a revolution, and produced a written constitution (the first of its kind!) that established the foundation for a national government still in place to this day. Together we will explore how and why these events unfolded in the ways they did.

Throughout the semester, we will discuss, read, and learn about the kind of government the founders envisioned for the new United States. And we will grapple with the many contradictions that lie at the heart of the founding era and the Constitution itself. Was the United States founded as a republic or a democracy? Who could participate in this government? What does the text of founding documents such as the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution mean? More generally, how did politics, society, culture, religion, and the economy change (or not) following the American Revolution and the Constitutional Convention? Whose perspectives and voices can historians use to make sense of this transformative period? These are among the many questions we will consider in this class, as we explore the transformation of the 13 British North American colonies into the United States of America.

The Role-Immersion (RI) Game [Stay Tuned!]:

This semester, we will also spend time imagining ourselves back in the eighteenth century, assuming roles and perspectives of real historical men and women who participated in and were affected by the American Founding moment. With the help of a role-immersion game, you will learn history by doing history, by reacting to the past.

In the RI game our class will play, you will immerse yourselves in the world of New York City on the eve of the American Revolution as we experience what it was like to contemplate, and then support, or oppose independence. Outcomes that may seem certain and obvious to us today were far from preordained or even expected in 1775/6. You can read more about *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76* at <https://reacting.barnard.edu/node/3164>.

Learning Outcomes:

By successfully completing this class, you will:

- acquire foundational knowledge about one of the most important periods in American history, the period of the American Revolution and Founding era;
- be able to identify the key causes, outcomes, and consequences of the American Revolution;
- understand the processes of drafting, debating, and ratifying the United States Constitution;

- engage deeply with questions about the origins, limits, and possibilities of American democracy as well as historical and presently relevant questions about democratic engagement and citizenship;
- become familiar with strategies historians use to understand the past from a variety of perspectives and voices;
- become familiar with using a diverse range of primary and secondary sources;
- hone your critical thinking, close reading, and oral and written communication skills;
- and gain an appreciation for understanding the past through role-immersion learning.

Furthermore, as a General Education Course, which satisfies the Group IX: Democracy & Citizenship (Y) requirement of the University of Montana’s General Education Program, this class adopts the specific “Y” learning outcomes. These are copied verbatim below.

Upon completion of this Democracy and Citizenship (Y) course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate informed and reasoned understanding of democratic ideas, institutions and practices, from historical and/or contemporary perspectives;
- Analyze and evaluate the significance and complexities of engaged citizenship; and
- Articulate the causes and consequences of key historical and/or contemporary struggles within democratic systems or their antecedents, including but not limited to those pertaining to issues of diversity, equity, and justice.¹

Course Structure, Expectations, and Policies:

Our class meetings will generally take one or a combination of three forms: a lively discussion based on shared readings for the day; a lecture by the professor; or active participation in the role-immersion *Reacting to the Past* game.

You are expected to attend all class meetings and participate actively and respectfully; complete all assignments by the deadlines given on Moodle; and engage thoroughly and thoughtfully with all the readings, materials, and class activities.

If you confront a challenge that might impact your attendance, participation, or performance in class, please speak with me as soon as possible, so I can help you stay on track and come up with a plan of action. Given the nature of role-immersion-learning, policies for late and make-up work will vary depending on the assignment. Generally speaking, you will lose points for all unexcused absences and late work. Please speak with me as soon as you think you might miss a class or be late with an assignment!

Required Texts (Available for Purchase at the UM Bookstore):

- William Offutt, *Patriots, Loyalists, and Revolution in New York City, 1775-76*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013).
- Jack Rakove, *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution* (Knopf, 1996).
- All other primary and secondary source readings will be available online via Moodle.

¹ For more details, please see <https://catalog.umt.edu/academics/general-education-requirements/>.

Assignments and Grading:

Overview: Over the course of the semester, students will take three comprehension quizzes and write three substantial reading responses of approximately 500 words each (weeks 10, 13, & 15) and two shorter reading responses of about 250 words each (weeks 2 & 4). For most other class days with readings, students will complete what I call a “Short Questions” assignment for credit/no credit. Some days, these will take place during class. Other days, you will answer these questions ahead of time. You will find details for all assignments on Moodle. During weeks 5 - 9, students will participate actively as players of the role immersion (RI) game, which will include oral presentations, group work, and written assignments. Assignment descriptions and further details will be distributed in class and posted on Moodle. Provisional due dates are on the syllabus below, but please check Moodle regularly and listen in class for any changes!

Your grade for this class will be determined by the following components:

- Class Attendance, Participation, and Short Questions (30%)
- Quizzes (x3) and Reading Responses (x5) (50%)
- Role-Immersion Game Activities & Assignments (or equivalent) (20%)

Grading Rubric:

A: 93-100	B-: 80-82	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-92	C+: 77-79	D: 63-66
B+: 87-89	C: 73-76	D-: 60-62
B: 83-86	C-: 70-72	F: 59 and below

Formatting Specifications:

Unless otherwise noted, here are the formatting guidelines you should follow for all written work in this class:

- 12-point, Times New Roman font; Double-spaced text; 1-inch margins; and *Chicago Manual of Style* citations.

Electronics Policy: Before coming to class, please silence and put away all electronics, including your cell phone. Recording our class meetings is prohibited. On the first day of class, we will discuss appropriate use of laptops and tablets for discussion, presentations, and activities.

Academic Honesty: Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with UM’s Student Conduct Code and conducting themselves accordingly. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating, will result in appropriate disciplinary action and possibly a failing grade. An easy rule to follow is that all work you produce for this class should be your own. Please ask if you have any questions.

Students with Disabilities: The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and the Office for Disability Equity (ODE). If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability, please contact the ODE at: (406) 243-2243, ode@umontana.edu, or visit www.umt.edu/disability for more information. Retroactive accommodation requests will not be honored, so please, do not delay. As your instructor, I will work with you and the ODE to implement an effective accommodation, and you are welcome to contact me privately if you wish.

COVID-19-Related Policies: You are **required to wear a face mask covering your nose and mouth** at all times while inside our classroom. You can find more details and up-to-date information from the University of Montana here: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus/campus-covid-plan/default.php>. In addition to the mask requirement, please make note of the following policies:

- You are discouraged from eating or drinking while inside our classroom.
- Stay home if you feel sick and/or if you are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. We will work together to ensure you don't fall behind in class.
- If you are sick and/or displaying COVID-19 symptoms, please contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330 ASAP.
- Thank you for your vigilance! We are all in this together.

Flexibility and Adaptability: This semester, we will all need to be flexible as we navigate the uncertainties wrought by Covid-19. I will do my best to communicate any changes related to our class as quickly and clearly as I can. I will also do my best to accommodate any special circumstances that may arise and ask that you do the same.

A Note on Student Hours & Email: I am looking forward to getting to know all of you! I will be holding both in-person and Zoom “student hours” (a.k.a. office hours) from 1-3pm on Tuesdays. Please email me in advance if you'd like to meet via Zoom. During the week, I can be reached by email and will do my best to respond within 24 hours. Please use your UM email address for all communication.

Civic, Academic, and Career Competencies Statement:

This class will prepare you for a range of civic, academic, and employment opportunities. On a fundamental level, this course will prepare you for what the political theorist Danielle Allen calls “participatory readiness”—that is, your role as a member of our twenty-first-century democratic society.

This course will also prepare you for a range of specific academic and career opportunities, such as a graduate degree in history (or a related field), advanced degrees in law, business, or journalism, or work in museums, schools, archives, non-profits, law firms, and governmental agencies.

I encourage all of you to review the following National Association of Colleges and Employers Career Readiness Statement, which includes attention to eight essential competencies of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, digital technology, leadership, work ethic, career management, and intercultural fluency: <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>. Over the course of the semester, we will reflect on the ways in which this course and its specific assignments align with these competencies.

Provisional Schedule of Classes:

(Note: Please check Moodle regularly for reading assignments, schedule changes, and all other details!):

Unit 1: Setting the Stage: British North America and the Atlantic World, c. 1500-1775

Week 1: Setting the Stage

Tuesday, August 31: Welcome and Introductions

Thursday, September 2: Oceanic Worlds & Early America in World History

Week 2: North America and the British Empire

Tuesday, September 7: Indigenous North America & Vast Early American History

Thursday, September 9: The Seventeenth-Century Colonies

Reading Response 1 Due

Week 3: The Eighteenth-Century Colonies I

Tuesday, September 14: Slavery in Early America

Thursday, September 16: Political Life & Culture in British North America I

Week 4: The Eighteenth-Century Colonies II

Tuesday, September 21: Political Life & Culture in British North America II

Thursday, September 23: The 1760s & 1770s

Reading Response 2 Due

Unit 2: Patriots, Loyalists, and Revolution Game

Most readings for this unit will be assigned from William Offutt, *Patriots, Loyalists, and Revolution in New York City, 1775-76*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013), which includes a primary source supplement. In addition to Quiz 1 & Reading Response 3, assignments for this unit will include 2 short essays (written “in character”) as well as at least one speech (“in character”) delivered during class.

Week 5: Patriots, Loyalists, and Revolution in New York City, 1775-1776

Quiz 1 Will Likely Take Place This Week

Tuesday, September 28: Context Session 1: *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76*

Thursday, September 30: Context Session 2: *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76*

Week 6: Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76

Tuesday, October 5: Context Session 3: *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76*

Thursday, October 7: Game Session 1: *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76*

Week 7: Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76

Tuesday, October 12: Game Session 2: *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76*

Thursday, October 14: Game Session 3: *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76*

Week 8: Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76

Tuesday, October 19: Game Session 4: *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76*

Thursday, October 21: Game Session 5: *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76*

Week 9: Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76

Tuesday, October 26: Game Session 6: *Patriots, Loyalists & Revolution in New York, 1775-76*

Thursday, October 28: Reacting to the Past Debrief

Unit 3: The Founding Era & the Constitution

Week 10: The War & Its Impact

Tuesday, November 2: The Declaration of Independence & the Revolutionary War

Reading Response 3 Due

Thursday, November 4: The Articles of Confederation & the 1780s

Week 11: The Constitutional Convention of 1787 I

Tuesday, November 9: The Constitutional Convention of 1787: Who were the “Founders” and “Framers”?

Quiz 2

Thursday, November 11: No Class – Veterans Day.

Week 12: The Constitutional Convention of 1787 II

Tuesday, November 16: The Constitutional Convention of 1787: Major Debates

Thursday, November 18: The Constitutional Convention of 1787: The Text

Week 13: The Federalist Papers

Tuesday, November 23: Independent Investigation into the *Federalist Papers* & the *Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*.

Reading Response 4 Due

Thursday, November 25: No Class - Thanksgiving.

Week 14: Ratifying & Implementing the Constitution

Tuesday, November 30: The *Federalist Papers* & Ratification

Thursday, December 2: The Bill of Rights & The United States in the 1790s

Quiz 3

Week 15: The Constitution Then and Now

Tuesday, December 7: The Constitution then and now

Thursday, December 9: Course conclusions and reflection

Reading Response 5 Due