

Legacies of the Age of Revolutions

Professor Nora Slonimsky

Summer 2021

Course Description

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, there are timeless as well as new questions about its legacy. Situating the struggle for American independence amidst the broader transformations of the Age of Revolutions, this course explores the meanings and scope of revolution, both in the long eighteenth century and in contested memories today. By considering how contact and imperial expansion in North America set the stage for global conflict over sovereignty and freedom, we will study how complex interactions between Indigenous people, enslaved people, and settler colonialists fermented equally complex views and ideologies surrounding revolution. This process was not limited solely to British North America, but in the Haitian and French revolutions as well. We will explore how the American Revolution was remembered by subsequent generations: as a singular event, a cluster of ideologies and protests, and in comparison with other late eighteenth-century movements. We will especially consider whose voices surrounding revolution are celebrated, criticized, or left out all together. Drawing on public and digital history resources as well as archival studies, the course will focus on how the study of the Age of Revolutions speaks to contemporary understandings.

Course Readings

1. Adelman, Joseph. *Revolutionary Networks: The Business and Politics of Printing the News, 1763–1789*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021.
2. O'Brien, Jean. *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010.
3. Young, Alfred. *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2000.

Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards
- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page paper or project of appropriate rigor

Learning Objectives

1. Students will consider the American Revolution's origins and interpretations, historical actors as well as classic and contemporary scholarship, in order to determine a nuanced and multifaceted approach to what exactly the American Revolution meant in the eighteenth century.
2. Students will then use this foundation in order to gain a clear understanding, based in primary and secondary materials, of the connection between the American Revolution and movements in Haiti and France.
3. Students will explore the connections between the Age of Revolutions and present-day issues surrounding commemoration and historical memory, considering how these issues apply to a number of public-facing spaces including classrooms, museums and other GLAM institutions, parks, monuments, and other historical sites.

Class Schedule

Week 1: May 27: America in the Age of Revolutions, Then and Now

Readings

- Primary:
 - Examine the website for Rev250 and note any observations:
<https://revolution250.org/>
- Secondary:
 - Excerpt from Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 1 module.)
 - O'Brien, introduction and chapter 1
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - Liz Covart, "Episode 165: The Age of Revolutions," podcast, Ben Franklin's World, December 19, 2017. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 1 module.)
 - Select one entry of your choice to read from the *Age of Revolutions* roundtable, "Challenging Democratic Revolutions." (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 1 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board One

Q&A Session One: Wednesday, June 2 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 2: June 3: Origins of Revolution

Readings

- Primary:
 - Examine Lewis Evans, *A Map of the Middle British Colonies* (Philadelphia: 1755) and compare with John Mitchell's *A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America* (London: 1755). Please note any observations. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 2 module.)
- Secondary:
 - Staughton Lynd and David Waldstreicher, "Free Trade, Sovereignty, and Slavery: Toward an Economic Interpretation of American Independence," *William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2011): 597–630. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 2 module.)
 - Excerpt from Martin Bruckner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 2 module.)
 - O'Brien, chapters 2–3
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - Examine the MapScholar data visualization tool, and note any observations. (A link can be found in the Week 2 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Two
 - Short Paper One due June 9
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week 3: June 10: Movements and Transformation

Readings

- Primary:

- o Article from John Peter Zenger's *The New York Weekly Journal* and a selection of images involving the Stono Rebellion. Please note any observations. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)
- Secondary:
 - o Excerpt from Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)
 - o Excerpt from Anne Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)
 - o O'Brien, chapter 4 and conclusion
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - o Examine the website "Slavery and Remembrance: A Guide to Sites, Museums, and Memory," Colonial Williamsburg. Pay particular attention to the entry on "Slavery in the Age of Revolutions" and note any observations. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)
 - o Jennifer M. Black, "Roundtable: Historical Memory and Contemporary Politics," *Junto Blog*, August 9, 2017. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Three
- Final Paper/Project Question due June 16
 - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final paper or project will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular paper or project is worth pursuing.

Q&A Session Two: Wednesday, June 16 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 4: June 17: Wars for Independence

Readings

- Primary:
 - o Selected poems by Phillis Wheatley (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)
 - o Excerpt from Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1775) (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)

- Secondary:
 - David Waldstreicher, “Phillis Wheatley: The Poet Who Challenged the American Revolutionaries,” in *Revolutionary Founders*, eds. Alfred F. Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael (New York: Random House, 2012), 97–113. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)
 - Jill Lepore, “A World of Paine,” in *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*, eds. Alfred F. Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael (New York: Random House, 2012), 87–96. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)
 - Adelman, introduction, chapters 1–2
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - Jennifer Schuessler, “A New Parchment Declaration of Independence Surfaces. Head Scratching Ensues,” *New York Times*, April 21, 2017. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)
 - “Declaring Independence: Drafting the Documents,” online exhibition, Library of Congress, 1997. Note any observations. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Four
- Short Paper Two due June 23
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Week 5: June 24: Rebellious Legacies

Readings

- Primary:
 - Excerpt from Hannah Adams, *A Memoir of Miss Hannah Adams* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1832). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.)
 - National Museum of the American Indian, “Repatriation,” statement. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.)
- Secondary:
 - Excerpt from Kate Davie, *Catharine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.)

- o Adelman, chapters 3–4
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - o Heather Munro Prescott, “Thoughts on the National Women’s History Museum, Women’s History Scholars, and Public History,” blog post, *Nursing Clio*, April 29, 2014. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.)
 - o Jubilee Marshall, “What to Do about Native Artifacts in Museums?” blog post, *Hindsight*, May 20, 2019. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Five
- Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due June 30
 1. Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor’s feedback, AND
 2. Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final paper/project.

Q&A Session Three: Wednesday, June 30 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 6: July 1: French Revolutions

Readings

- Primary:
 - o Translated excerpt from Anne Louise Germaine de Stael, *De La Littérature Considérée dans Ses Rapport* (London: H. Colburn, 1812). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.)
- Secondary:
 - o Excerpt from Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.)
 - o Adelman, chapters 5–6, conclusion
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - o Lynn Hunt, “The World We Have Gained: The Future of the French Revolution”(presidential address, American Historical Association, January 3, 2003). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Six
 - Short Paper Three due July 7
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week 7: July 8: Haitian Revolutions

Readings

- Primary:
 - o Henri Grégoire, "Letter to the Citizens of Color and Free Negroes of Saint-Domingue," in *Henri Grégoire, Lettre aux citoyens de couleur et nègres libres de Saint-Domingue et des autres isles françoises de l'Amerique*. Paris, *Imprimerie du Patriote Français* (1791), trans. Mitchell Abidor. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)
 - o Haitian Declaration of Independence (1804) (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)
- Secondary:
 - o Excerpt from Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)
 - o Young, introduction, chapters 1–4
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - o Liz Covart, "Episode 164: The American Revolution in the Age of Revolutions," podcast, *Ben Franklin's World*, December 12, 2017. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Seven
 - Short Paper Four due July 14
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week 8: July 15: Revolutionary Legacies

Readings

- Primary:
 - John Adams, "Letter from John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 24 August 1815." (1815) (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 8 module.)
- Secondary:
 - Karsten Fitz, "Commemorating Crispus Attucks: Visual Memory and the Representations of the Boston Massacre, 1770–1857," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 50, no. 3 (2005): 463–484. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 8 module.)
 - Young, chapters 5–9
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - Michael Hattem, "The Historiography of the American Revolution," *Journal of the American Revolution*, August 27, 2013. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 8 module.)
 - Examine the website "The Revolutionary War as a Civil War," Cowpens National Battlefield, South Carolina, National Park Service. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 8 module.)

Assignments

- Paper/Project Preview due July 21
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper
 - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

Week 9: July 22: The American Revolution in Historical Spaces

Readings

- Primary:
 - Examine the New-York Historical Society exhibition "Beyond Midnight: Paul Revere" (2019–2020). Please note any observations. (A link can be found in the Week 9 module.)
- Secondary:
 - David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (1996): 7–23. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.)
 - Young, chapters 9–12

- Contemporary/Digital:
 - Stephen F. Knott, “America Has Been Fighting Over Statues Since the Founding,” *Politico*, October 27, 2017. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.)
 - Jennifer Schuessler, “A New Museum of the American Revolution, Warts and All,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2017. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight
- Short Paper Five due July 28
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Four: Wednesday, July 28 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 10: July 29: Contested Commemorations

Readings

- Primary:
 - A selection of images from the Thomas Paine National Historical Association collection. Please note any observations. (A link can be found in the Week 10 module.)
- Secondary:
 - Zara Anishanslin, “‘This Is the Skin of a Whit[e] Man’: Material Memories of Violence in Sullivan’s Campaign” in *The American Revolution Reborn*, eds. Patrick Spero and Michael Zuckerman (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 10 module.)
 - Young, chapters 1–5 (part 2)
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - Kirk Savage, “History, Memory, and Monuments: An Overview of the Scholarly Literature on Commemoration,” National Park Service. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 10 module.)
 - Brian Lehrer, “Black History Reframed: Seeing the Past through Auction Sites,” interview with Anne Bailey, *Brian Lehrer Show*, WNYC, February 28, 2020. (A link to this interview can be found in the Week 10 module.)

Assignments

- Rough Draft due August 4
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
 - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
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Week 11: August 5: Historical Memory in the Archive

Readings

- Primary:
 - o Explore the materials included in the National Archives' catalog for Memorial Day. Please note any observations. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)
- Secondary:
 - o Michael Hattem, "Citizenship and the Memory of the American Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Political Culture," *New York History* 100, no. 3 (2020): 30–53. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)
 - o Excerpt from Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)
 - o Young, chapters 6–9 (part 2)
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - o Anne C. Bailey, "Citations Are a Metaphor for Erasure in American History," *History News Network*, October 22, 2019. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)

Assignments:

- Discussion Board Nine

Q&A Session Five: Wednesday, August 11 - 8:00–9:30 p.m. ET

Week 12: August 12: The Age of Revolution in the Digital Age

Readings

- Primary: n/a

- Secondary:
 - Sylvie Kleinman, “Revolutionary Commemoration and the Mythologisation of History,” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 105, no. 417 (2016): 31–40. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 12 module.)
 - Young, afterword
- Contemporary/Digital:
 - A selection of documents from and related to the *New York Times* 1619 Project. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 12 module.)

Assignments

- Final Draft due August 18