

**History 553: Birth of the American Republic**  
**Professor S. Gronim**  
**Fall 2006**

**Contact Information**

Office: Hoxie 312  
Phone: 516-299-2731  
Email: [sara.gronim@liu.edu](mailto:sara.gronim@liu.edu)

Office Hours:  
Mondays 2:30-4:30  
Wednesdays 11:30-1:30  
and by arrangement

webpage: <http://myweb.cwpost.liu.edu/sgronim/index.htm>

**Course Overview**

History 552 is a graduate survey of salient issues in the interpretation of the American Revolution and the initial establishment of the United States. You will read an array of books and articles that will expose you to some of the current scholarship in this area. Through discussions in class you will become conversant with a range of contemporary scholarly concerns. We will also concern ourselves with how this history is presented popularly. To that end you will investigate and analyze some venue in which the history of the founding of the United States is presented to a popular audience.

**Required Reading**

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*.

Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, and Slaves in the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*.

Judith Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York*.

Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean*.

Sylvia Frey, *Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age*.

Gregory O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age, 1750-1830*.

Jack Rakove, *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*.

Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*.

Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America*. (hardcover availability only)

David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*.

Packet of articles, available in the History Office, top floor of Hoxie Hall.

## **Course Requirements**

1. Participation in Discussion 30%

In class we will focus solely on discussing the assigned reading. You are expected to attend all classes and to offer useful comments on the reading consistently. I shall expect you to have a basic familiarity with the events and people that serve as the subjects of the scholarly monographs and articles that are assigned in this class; we will not go over these in class. Our discussions will help you develop a thorough understanding of each author's arguments, and to put these arguments in the context of wider debates about the interpretation of this historical period.

In preparation for discussion, I would like you to email me a summary of the author's or authors' basic thesis and your judgment about whether, by the end of the book, you feel s/he has developed the thesis persuasively. These emails are due to me by 4 o'clock on the day of class.

Grading rubric:

A: Emails show accurate understanding of authors' thesis; misses no more than two emails over the course of the semester; offers perceptive observations about the reading during discussion; offers reasonable speculations in response to analytic issues; misses no more than two discussion classes.

B: Emails show varying grasp of authors' thesis; misses no more than two emails over the course of the semester; offers perceptive observations or reasonable speculations in at least half the classes; misses no more than two discussion classes.

C: Misses three-four emails; rarely contributes to the discussion.

## 2. Paper

30%

You will write one 8-10 page paper in which you analyze how some aspect of the history of the United States from 1763-1800 is presented to a popular audience in comparison to its presentation in the scholarly literature. The presentation may be a film, a novel, or an historic site. You may choose from the accompanying list or you may design your own (although if you design your own, you will need to check it with me.) The paper is expected to be formal: typed, with correct grammar and spelling, and footnoted. The paper is due November 13<sup>th</sup>

## 3. Final Exam

40%

The final exam will be a substantial paper in which you synthesize the material we have discussed over the semester. You will bring this paper to the final class on December 18<sup>th</sup>. In this paper you will answer the following question: "How should the history of the origins of the United States be told?" In the paper you should incorporate a minimum of eight of the books and articles that we have read together. You should make clear arguments about what should be emphasized and what is less significant. You should make it clear how you believe the period should be interpreted overall. You should acknowledge other points of view and discuss why you, yourself, are not in accord with them. The paper should exhibit professional standards; it does not need to be footnoted unless you quote directly from someone else.

**Please note: I reserve the right to drop a student who misses more than two class sessions from the course.**

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

Please note that I take intellectual honesty very seriously. I hold you as Masters students to particularly high standards in this area. Students found to have cheated on an examination, to have copied another person's words or ideas into a paper without crediting them properly, or to have handed in work that is not their own will flat out receive an F for the course. If you are ever in doubt about whether something you are doing falls within the bounds of intellectual honesty, ask me.

## Paper Options

As part of the requirements for this class, you will write a 8-10 page paper in which you analyze how some aspect of the founding of the United States is presented to a popular audience. You should incorporate both a critical, detailed discussion of the presentation itself and an example of a major scholarly interpretation of that same process or incident. You should assess how similar or different the two presentations are and offer some possible reasons for their congruence or divergence. Overall, you should analyze the effectiveness of the public presentation. The paper should be formal.

You may choose among the following or you may design a comparable topic on your own. (If you choose to do the latter, you will need to get my OK before you start.)

### 1. Films.

#### a. *Last of the Mohegans* (1992)

A film about, among other things, a massacre during the Seven Years War that was a prelude to the Revolution. Use for comparison Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre."* (1990)

#### b. *The Patriot* (2000)

A film about the Revolution as it unfolded in South Carolina. Read John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas* (1997) for comparison.

#### c. *Jefferson in Paris* (1995)

A film about Thomas Jefferson and his relationships while he was the American envoy to France. Use the essays in Jan Ellen Lewis and Peter S. Onuf, eds., *Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson: History, Memory, and Civic Culture* (1999)

### 2. Novels.

a. John E. Harr, *Dark Eagle: A Novel of Benedict Arnold and the American Revolution* (1999) and compare with a non-fiction biography: Clare Brandt, *The Man in the Mirror: A Life of Benedict Arnold* (1994).

b. Douglas Glover, *The Life and Times of Captain N* (1993) and compare with Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (1995) or Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (1973).

- c. Jeff Shaara, *Rise to Rebellion: A Novel of the American Revolution* (2001) and compare with Jon Butler, *Becoming American: The Revolution Before 1776* (2000)

3. Historic Sites.

- a. Raynham Hall Museum, 20 West Main St., Oyster Bay (922-6808).  
The home of Robert Townshend, part of a spy ring inside British lines on behalf of the Continental Army, as well as the headquarters of a British regiment during the Revolution. For background and comparison, use the following articles:  
--Joseph S. Tiedemann, "A Revolution Foiled: Queens County, NY, 1775-76," *Journal of American History*, 75 (1988): 417-444.  
--Sung Bok Kim, "The Limits of Politicization in the American Revolution: The Experience of Westchester County, NY," *Journal of American History*, 80 (1993): 868-889.  
--Charles Royster, "The Nature of Treason: Revolutionary Virtue and American Reactions to Benedict Arnold," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 36 (1979): 163-193.
- b. William Floyd Estate, 20 Washington Ave., Mastic Beach (part of Fire Island National Seashore), (631) 399-2030. For background and comparison read three chapters in *The Other New York: The American Revolution Beyond New York City, 1763-1787*, ed. Joseph S. Tiedemann and Eugene R. Fingerhut (2005):  
--Joseph S. Tiedemann, "Queens County"  
--John G. Staudt, "Suffolk County"  
--Edwin G. Burrows, "Kings County"