Cambridge University
Historical Tripos Part II
Paper 24
Specified Subject

The American Revolution in Unexpected Places

Dr. Sarah Pearsall (smsp100@cam.ac.uk)

“The able doctor, or, America swallowing the bitter draught” (London, May 1774), Courtesy, Library of Congress. This British cartoon appeared the year after the destruction of the tea in the Boston harbor. It shows Lord North, with the “Boston Port Bill” in a pocket, forcing tea (Coercive Acts) down the throat of a Native American woman representing America, restrained by Lord Mansfield. Lord Sandwich, known for his interest in women, holds her feet and peers under her skirt. Britannia covers her eyes, too horrified to watch.

Course Description
The history of the American Revolution used to be a story of the thirteen British colonies choosing to rebel against the might of Great Britain. It’s so much bigger than that now. It spills out into a range of geographical locales (the Caribbean, Europe, Canada, Florida, the West, even India), as historians strive to place this American Revolution in a global context. In so doing, they also interrogate the ways in which colonialism, a legacy of the pre-revolutionary days, continued in new ways once the United States had been established, so that the nation-building of the Revolution endured. If the range of locales has spun out beyond the thirteen colonies, then so too has the cast of characters. The main actors in that traditional narrative were the patriotic revolutionaries, the Founding Fathers, who valiantly threw off the yoke of imperial rule. In the last several decades, the range of actors has widened to include those who were left out of
that tale of heroism, including those, such as working-class white men, white women, Native Americans, African-Americans, and others, for whom the revolution was at best an ambivalent legacy. As the geography has expanded, the involvement of an even greater variety of people has also done so.

Students who choose this Paper will learn the basics of the American Revolution, the classic story of those thirteen colonies. In other words, they will learn what people like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson did, and why it matters. Yet they will also consider how historians have stretched and reconfigured that Revolution, with a range of novel approaches and topics. Students will confront all kinds of people in all kinds of locales: Loyalist families in exile; enslaved women denouncing masters who raped them; sailors stuck in foreign gaols; Native Americans sent flying from their homes. Students will learn about the darker side of Washington and Jefferson, as well as the complicated ways in which such men were immersed in global networks and tides. The focus will be on the years from 1763 to 1804.

This Paper privileges not those who chose or engineered revolution—though they appear here—but those who did not, unwitting and sometimes unwilling participants in this transformative Revolution. In other words, our gaze here rests on that native woman, “America,” compelled by violence to swallow that bitter draught. What did the Revolution mean for those women and men—often preoccupied with their own, more personal pursuits of happiness—who found themselves forced into it? And how did different trajectories of rebellion, revolution, and war affect this world in flux?

This Specified paper will be taught in weekly 2-hour discussion classes with lectures integrated into that structure, across seven weeks in Michaelmas and Lent. Each week’s discussion will focus around a specific unexpected place, building outward into the broader issues raised by centering that location. The emphasis is on discussion and debate based on readings and student presentations. Each student will also receive 4 supervisions in groups of 2-4 in Lent Term. There will be a class field trip to London on SATURDAY 9 MARCH 2019, to an unexpected place associated with the American Revolution. There will also be a revision session in Easter Term.

By far the most useful overview is Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: Norton, 2016)

Indicative topics

1. Introductions
2. A Village on the Ohio River: 1764 and its Discontents
3. A Riot in St Kitts: Stamp Acts, Effigies, and Massacre
4. A Counting House in Bengal: Tea to Independence
5. A Church in Meherrin: Slavery and Injustice
6. A Bedroom in Long Island: Women, War, and Violence
10. A Mansion in Pensacola: Other Colonies and Refugees
11. A State in Muskogee: Forging Nations
12. A Bawdy House in Philadelphia: Sexual Revolutions
13. A Sugarcane Field in Haiti: Other Revolutions
14. A Warehouse in Michilimackinac: Empires, Nations, Families

**Examination**
- Three-hour unseen; answer 3 questions; undivided paper
- There will always be a question set on each of the class topics
- Teaching hours: 28-34 hours, to include supervisions
- Reading list: 100-150 items
- Exam paper: 18-22 questions

**Mode of Teaching**
- Michaelmas: 7 x 120-min classes
- Lent: 7 x 120-min classes
- Easter: 1 x 120-min revision class
- Supervisions, 4 per student, in Lent term
- Total contact hours: 34
- Supervision topics are the same as the class topics

Maximum Supervision Capacity: 14 students.

**Reading List**

**Introductions/Overviews**


*Andrew Shankman, ed. The World of the Revolutionary American Republic: Land, Labor, and the Conflict for a Continent* (New York: Routledge, 2014)


Joint Special Issues on the American Revolution in *William and Mary Quarterly* and *Journal of the Early Republic*, October 2017

**A Village on the Ohio River: 1764 and its Discontents**

Documents on Indians and backcountry from Fischer and Hinderaker, eds. *Colonial American History* (Moodle)

“Pontiac Urges Ottawas, Potowatomis, and Hurons to Rise Up Against the British” and “Governor William Tyron Assesses the Potential of North Carolina Backcountry” in Hämäläinen and Johnson, eds. *Major Problems in the History of North American Borderlands* (Moodle)

Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of British Empire in North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Knopf, 2000)


Paul Kelton, “The British and Indian War: Cherokee Power and the Fate of Empire in North America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 69 (2012): 763-792.


A Riot in St Kitts: Stamp Act to Massacre

John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*

Boston Massacre documents (http://www.famous-trials.com/massacre)


A Counting House in Bengal: Tea to Independence


*Declaration of Independence* https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript

Assorted cartoons (see class list)


**A Church in Meherrin: Slavery and Injustice**

-Meherrin VHBS Records ARUP (document on Moodle)


-Virginia Runaways Database [http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/explore.html](http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/explore.html)


Douglas Egerton, Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)


James Sidbury, Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel’s Virginia, 1730-1810 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)


A Bedroom in Long Island: Women, War, and Violence


A Gaol in Plymouth, England: Sailors, Soldiers, and Prisoners of War


Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Campfollowers and Community During the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996)

Ken Miller, *Dangerous Guests: Enemy Captives and Revolutionary Communities during the War for Independence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014)


**A Salon in Paris: Leadership and European Dimensions**

[European and military dimensions]


[Founding Fathers]


Annette Gordon-Reed and Peter S. Onuf, *“Most Blessed of the Patriarchs”: Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of the Imagination* (New York: Liveright, 2016)

Barbara Alice Mann, *George Washington’s War on Native America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008)

Gideon Mailer, *John Witherspoon’s American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture for the University of North Carolina Press, 2016)


A Cornfield in the Country of the Six Nations: Native American Allegiances


James Merrell, The Indians’ New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal (New York: Norton, 1989)

Theda Perdue, Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998)


Leonard J. Sadosky, Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009)


**A Mansion in Pensacola: Other Colonies and Refugees**

Loyalism and empire


See also [http://www.blackloyalist.info/sourceimagesdisplaypage/transcript/15](http://www.blackloyalist.info/sourceimagesdisplaypage/transcript/15)


Rebecca Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion: The Reintegration of the South Carolina Loyalists* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016)


Ruma Chopra, *Unnatural Rebellion: Loyalists in New York City during the Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011)


[Other colonies]


A State in Muskogee: Forging Nations

Federalist Papers http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp

The U.S. Constitution: online at https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript


Saul Cornell, The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828 (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture for University of North Carolina Press, 1999)


A Bawdy House in Philadelphia: Sexual Revolutions


**A Sugarcane Field in Haiti: Other Revolutions**


Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (New York: Liveright, 2016)


Matthew Mulcahy, *Hubs of Empire: The Southeastern Lowcountry and British Caribbean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014)


Sophia Rosenfeld, *Common Sense: A Political History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2014)


**A Warehouse in Michilimackinac: Empires, Nations, Families**


Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008),


Paul Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007)


Sample Exam Questions

1. “Some were born revolutionaries, some achieved revolution, and some had revolution thrust upon them.” Discuss.

2. Did 1776 matter west of the Mississippi?

3. Why did so many colonies not rebel?

4. Why were Americans so angry about cheaper tea?

5. “The American Revolution was fought and won in London and Paris.” Discuss.

6. Who were the biggest losers in the American Revolution?

7. “The greatest blow that could have been dealt us, unless it had been our total destruction.” (Native American chiefs in 1784). Discuss.

8. Did the American Revolution give women new opportunities?


10. How has an expanded sense of what constitutes the American Revolution altered understandings of early national America?

11. Did the American Revolution end in 1783?

12. Did the American Revolution have more impact in French or Spanish colonies?

13. How did Loyalists pursue happiness?

14. Was there an American Revolution for families?

15. “Smallpox unified Americans more than the Revolution” Discuss.

16. Why did Americans care about other revolutions?