The American Revolution in Unexpected Places

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“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 American Revolution was not a common Event. Its Effects and Consequences have already been Awful over a great Part of the Globe. And when and Where are they to cease?” (John Adams, 1818)

“I can’t help exclaiming now and then, dreadful fruits of Liberty. I confess I have not such romantic notions of the Goddess [Liberty] (as men have).” (Margaret Livingston, 1776)

The history of the American Revolution used to be a story of the thirteen British colonies choosing to rebel against the might of the mother country. It’s so much bigger than that now.
It spills out into a range of geographical locales (the Caribbean, Europe, Canada, Florida, the West, India, South America), as historians strive to place this American Revolution in a global context. In so doing, they also interrogate the ways in which colonialism and imperialism, legacies of the pre-revolutionary days, continued after 1783, so that both the United States and Great Britain displaced indigenous people and established empires in enduring ways.

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 and its animating principles. 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: enslaved women denouncing masters; indigenous people fiercely defending their homes; Loyalist families in exile. 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 1790.

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? How did the same interests—about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness among other goals—result in such wildly disparate, sometimes opposing approaches, concerns, and outcomes?

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 29 February 2020** to an unexpected place associated with the American Revolution. There will also be a revision session in Easter Term.

The paper is capped at a maximum of 14 students.


**Indicative topics**

Michaelmas Term

1. Orientations
2. A Gallows in Bkejwanong: Unity
3. A Tavern in St Kitts: Taxation
4. A Street in Kolkata: Empire
5. A Castle in Guinea: Slavery
6. A Farm in Hesse-Cassel: War
7. A Debating Club in Edinburgh: Happiness

Lent Term
8. A Salon in Paris: Leadership
10. A Mansion in Pensacola: Loyalty
11. A Vibrating Bed in Pall Mall: Life
12. A Freetown in Sierra Leone: Liberty
13. A Manly Cove in Kay-ye-my: Colonies
14. A State in Muskogee: Nations

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 Gallows in Bkejwanong: Unity**

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)


**A Tavern in St Kitts: Taxation**


**A Street in Kolkata: Empire**


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


Rajat Datta, *Society, Economy, and the Market: Commercialization in Rural Bengal, c. 1760-1800* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000), Ch. 5


**A Castle in Guinea: Slavery**

-Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, available at Gilder Lehrman Institute website

-Virginia Runaways Database
  http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/explore.html


**A Farm in Hesse-Cassel: War**


Jack Holmes, “German Troops in Alabama during the American Revolution: The Battle of January 7, 1781,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 38 (Spring 1976)


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 Debating Club in Edinburgh: Happiness**


**A Salon in Paris: Leadership**

[European and military dimensions]


James Corbett David, Dunmore’s New World: The Extraordinary Life of a Royal Governor in Revolutionary America (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013)


Brendan Simms, Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783 (New York: Basic Books, 2007)

[Founding Fathers]


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: Sovereignties**


**A Mansion in Pensacola: Loyalty**


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)


**A Vibrating Bed in Pall Mall: Life**

Benjamin Franklin, *Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, &c* in [William Clarke], *Observations On the late and present Conduct of the French, with Regard to their Encroachments upon the British Colonies in North America* (Boston: Printed and Sold by S. Kneeland in Queen-Street, 1755) https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-04-02-0080
James Graham, *A Lecture on the Generation, Increase and Improvement of the Human Species* (London: M. Smith, 1780?)


Paul Slack, “‘Plenty of People’: Perceptions of Population in Early Modern England,” (Reading: University of Reading, 2011)


**A Freetown in Sierra Leone: Liberty**


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

Anon, *An Account of the Colony of Sierra Leone* (London: James Philips, 1795)


Mary Louise Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown: Black Loyalists after the American Revolution* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 1999)

Deirdre Coleman, ed. *Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies: Two Women's Travel Narratives of the 1790s* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991)


Anna Maria Falconbridge, *Anna Maria Falconbridge: Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone during the Years 1791-1792-1793*, ed. Christopher Fyfe (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000)


**A Manly Cove in Kay-ye-my: Colonies**


Deirdre Coleman, ed. *Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies: Two Women’s Travel Narratives of the 1790s* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991)


Alan Frost with assistance from Isabel Moutinho, *The Precarious Life of James Mario Matra: Voyager with Cook, American Loyalist, Servant of Empire* (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 1995)


**A State in Muskogee: 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


