

Master of American History and Government  
Ashland University

**AHG 501B:**  
**The American Revolution**  
Sunday, July 20 to Friday, July 25, 2008

Instructors: Natalie Taylor and Christopher Burkett

This seminar is designed to immerse you in the study of the American Revolution. It focuses on three major topics: political developments in North America and the British Empire and the arguments for and against independence, culminating in the Declaration of Independence; the Revolutionary War as a military, social, and cultural event in the development of the American nation and government; and the United States under the Articles of Confederation. The fundamental question guiding this course is: What were the political ideas of the American Revolution, and how did those ideas take shape and give shape to events and institutions before, during, and immediately after the Revolution?

**Learning Objectives**

1. Students will understand the key ideas of the American Revolution and the philosophic and political logic connecting these ideas in the “American Mind” of the Revolutionary period.
2. Students will understand how these ideas were related in the minds of the American revolutionaries to the foundations, forms, and purposes of government – and American government, in particular.
3. Students will understand the various meanings of the term “revolution,” and the criteria for judging the sense in which the American Revolution was in fact a revolution.
4. Students will understand the steps by which the colonists came to think of themselves as Americans, as people connected to but somehow distinct from the English.
5. Students will understand the effect of the Revolutionary War on the self-understanding of the American people.
6. Students will understand the terms of the Revolutionary War settlement and its consequences for American politics, foreign and domestic.
7. Students will understand what “defects” or “vices” Madison, Washington, Hamilton, and others discerned in the foundations and forms of both the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions created in the course of the Revolution.

**Requirements:**

- A final examination, which will consist of 100 multiple choice questions. The exam questions will be selected from a Study Guide consisting of approximately 250 possible questions. The Study Guide will be distributed at the beginning of the first session.

**Students auditing the course as a part of a Teaching American History Grant program must complete the readings and fully participate in the seminars during the week.**

**Required Texts**

- Ashbrook Center Booklet, *Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States of America* (Ashland, Ohio: Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs, 2001, ISBN-10:1878802232, ISBN-13: 978-1878802231)
- Jack P. Greene, ed., *Colonies to Nation, 1763-1789: A Documentary History of the American Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975, ISBN-10:0393092291, ISBN-13:978-0393092295)
- Charles S. Hyneman and Donald S. Lutz, eds., *American Political Writing during the Founding Era, 1760-1805*, 2 volumes (Liberty Fund, 1983, ISBN-10:0865970416, ISBN-13:978-0865970410)
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, C.B. Macpherson, ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980, ISBN-10: 0915144867, ISBN-13: 978-0915144860)
- \* Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003 (Reissue edition), ISBN-10:0142437603, ISBN-13: 978-0142437605)
- \* Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier* (New York: Penguin (Signet Classics), ISBN-10:0451528115, ISBN-13:978-0451528117)
- Course Packet ("CP") of additional reading materials. These materials are required texts for your course.

**Recommended Texts**

- \* Gordon Wood, *The American Revolution* (Modern Library, 2003, ISBN-10:0812970411, ISBN-13:978-0812970418)
- \* David McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005, ISBN-10:0743226720; ISBN-13: 978743226721)

\* Please read Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and Joseph Plumb Martin's *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier* before you arrive. We recommend that you read two additional books before you arrive: David McCullough's *1776* and Gordon Wood's *The American Revolution*. Both are good introductions (in different ways) to the American Revolution.

## Schedule

### Sunday, July 20

---

#### **4:30 pm – 6:00 pm: Introduction and Session 1: Was the American Revolution a revolution?**

Professors Taylor and Burkett

**Topic:** Was there an American Revolution?

**Focus:**

- What is a revolution?
- How do we know when a revolution has occurred? Is a change of government, any change of government, the same thing as a revolution? If not, what other changes do we look for to decide if a revolution has occurred?
- What did Adams mean when he said that the Revolution occurred in the minds and hearts of Americans and that there was “a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations”?
- How has the American Revolution been interpreted?

**Required Reading:**

- John Adams to H. Niles, February 13, 1818 (CP)
- Locke, *Second Treatise*, §§ 89-91, 134-142, 202-230, 240-242
- Burke, “On Conciliation with the Colonies” (CP)
- David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution (American Political Writing volume II pp. 719-27)*
- R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution, Volume I: The Challenge*, “The Revolution: Was There Any?” pgs. 185-190 (CP)
- Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, introduction (CP)

#### **7:30 – 9:00 pm: Session 2: Institute Lecture**

### Monday, July 21

---

#### **9:00 am - 10:30 am: Session 3: The colonies before 1763**

Professor Taylor

**Topic:** The colonial system in British North America

**Focus:**

- What was the political and economic relationship between Great Britain and the American colonies before 1763?
- What features of the period allowed the colonies to move toward union?

**Required Reading:**

- Penn’s Plan of Union, 1697 (CP)
- Keith, “A Short Discourse,” 1726 (CP)

- Albany Plan of Union, 1754 (PRP pp. 35) (CP)
- Benjamin Franklin to Governor William Shirley, December 22, 1754 (CP)
- Message of the Pennsylvania Assembly, 1755 (CP)
- Ames, “A Thought Upon the Past, Present, and Future State of North America,” 1757 (CP)
- The Treaty of Paris, 1763 (CP)
- Horrocks, “Upon the Peace,” 1763 (CP)

### **10:50 am - 12:20 pm: Session 4: The colonies after 1763**

Professor Taylor

**Topic:** British rule and American resistance

**Focus:**

- Was the British Empire following the French and Indian War inherently unstable?
- What were the key differences in the arguments for or against colonial taxation by Parliament?
- Was there any way that the government in London could have kept the colonies part of the Empire?
- What were the main features of the colonies that made possible their movement toward independence?

**Required Reading:**

- Governor Francis Bernard, “Principles of Law and Polity, Applied to the Government of the British Colonies” 1764 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 8-12)
- James Otis, *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved*, 1764 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 28-33)
- Stephen Hopkins, *Rights of Colonies Examined*, 1764 (*American Political Writing* volume I pp. 45-61)
- New York Petition to the House of Commons, 1764 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 33-39)
- Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress, 1765 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 63-65)
- Whately, “The Regulations Lately Made,” 1765 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 46-51)
- The Virginia Resolves, 1765 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 60-61)
- Richard Bland, *Inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies*, 1766 (*American Political Writing* volume I pp. 67-87)
- The Resolves of Parliament, 1769 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 144-45)
- The Virginia Resolves, 1769 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 157-58)
- David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (*American Political Writing* volume II pp. 727-38)

**Recommended Reading:**

- The Sugar Act, 1764 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 19-24)
- The Currency Act, 1764 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 25-26)
- The Stamp Act, 1765 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 42-43)
- The Quartering Act, 1765 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 43-44)
- The Declaratory Act, 1766 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 84-85)

- The Townshend Revenue Act, 1767 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 115-17)
- The New York Suspending Act, 1767 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 118-19)
- Circular Instruction of 11 September 1767 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 119)
- Lubert, “Thomas Hutchinson and James Otis on Sovereignty, Obedience, and Rebellion” (SCP, 3)

**1:45 pm – 3:15 pm: Session 5: The colonial mind: British or American?**

Professor Burkett

**Topic:** Becoming Americans

**Focus:**

- What are the distinguishing characteristics between Americans and Englishmen in the period? What criteria do you have in mind for saying that someone is an American? Are these the criteria that someone in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Philadelphia, for example, would have used?
- A recent biographer called Franklin the first American. In what ways does Franklin’s autobiography reveal him becoming American?

**Required Reading:**

- John Adams to Mercy Warren, 8 January 1776 (CP)
- John Adams to Mercy Warren, 16 April 1776 (CP)
- Benjamin Franklin, “Information to Those Who Would Remove to America,” 1782 (CP)
- Franklin, *Autobiography*

**Recommended Reading:**

- Steven Forde, “Benjamin Franklin: A Model American and an American Model” (SCP, 23)

**Tuesday, July 22**

---

**9:00 am - 10:30 am: Session 6: Reason, passion and politics in the 1770s**

Professor Burkett

**Topic:** The revolutionary tide in the 1770s

**Focus:**

- What events from 1770-1776 made the colonists inclined to revolution? How did these events affect the American Union?
- What are the arguments of those for or against declaring independence from Great Britain? How did American patriots view “loyalists”?

**Required Reading:**

- Revere, “The Bloody Massacre,” 1770 (*Colonies to Nation*, p. 165)
- Report of a Committee of the Town of Boston, 1770 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 166-72)

- Exchange Between Governor Thomas Hutchinson and the House of Representatives, 1773 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 182-88)
- Virginia Resolves, 1773 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 193-94)
- Resolves of the New York Sons of Liberty, 1773 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 198-200)
- Benjamin Franklin to Joseph Galloway, 1775 (CP)
- Memoirs of Alexander Graydon, August 1775 (CP)
- Benjamin Franklin to Lord Howe, 1776 (CP)
- Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 270-83)
- Samuel Adams to James Warren, February 16, 1777 (CP)
- David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (*American Political Writing* volume II pp. 738-43)

**Recommended Reading:**

- The Tea Act, 1773 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 196-97)
- Boston Port Act, 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 203-4)
- Massachusetts Government Act, 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 204-7)
- Administration of Justice Act, 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 207-8)
- Quartering Act, 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 208-9)
- Quebec Act, 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 209-11)
- Koritansky, “Thomas Paine: The American Radical” (SCP, 37)

**10:50 am - 12:20 pm: Session 7: The Revolution in religious “sentiments”**

Professor Burkett

**Topic:** Religion, politics and the “American mind”

**Focus:**

- In his letter to Niles, John Adams spoke of a change in religious sentiments. What were those sentiments? How did they support the cause of revolution? Were they simply religious? Are any religious sentiments incompatible with the principles of the revolution?
- What is the role of religion in the American Revolution?
- Did religion affect the Revolution and Founding or did the Revolution and Founding change religion?
- Do the similarities and differences among these documents tell us anything about religion and politics at the time of the American Revolution and Founding?

**Required Reading:**

- Jonathan Mayhew, “A Discourse concerning Unlimited Submission,” 1750 (CP)
- Abraham Williams, “Election Sermon,” 1762 (*American Political Writing* volume I pp. 3-18)
- John Tucker, “Election Sermon,” 1771 (*American Political Writing* volume I pp. 158-74)
- Samuel West, “On the Right to Rebel against Governors,” 1776 (*American Political Writing* volume I pp. 410-48)

**Recommended Reading:**

- Nathaniel Niles, Sermons, 1774 (SCP, 55)
- Samuel Williams, “A Discourse on the Love of Our Country,” 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 376-86)
- Gad Hitchcock, “An Election Sermon,” 1774 (*American Political Writing* volume I pp. 281-304)
- Simeon Howard, “A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in Boston,” 1774 (*American Political Writing* volume I pp. 185-208)

**1:45 pm – 3:15 pm: Session 8: Dissolving “the political bands”**

Professor Taylor

**Topic: The move toward independence**

**Focus:**

- What were the main arguments for and against independence? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each argument?
- How did the move toward independence affect the American Union?

**Required Reading:**

- Galloway’s Plan of Union, 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 241-242)
- Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress, 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 243-46)
- Jefferson, “A Summary View of the Rights of British North America,” 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 227-38)
- Samuel Seabury to Alexander Hamilton, December 24, 1774 (CP)
- “Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms,” July 6, 1775 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 255-59)
- “Olive Branch Petition,” July 8, 1775 (CP)
- Proclamation of George III, August 23, 1775 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 259-60)
- Journal of Peter Van Schaack, January 1776 (CP)
- Joseph Hawley to Elbridge Gerry, May 1, 1776 (CP)
- Resolves of the Virginia Convention, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, p. 284)
- Richard Henry Lee, Resolves for Independence, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 284-85)
- John Dickinson, “Arguments against the Independence of the Colonies,” 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 292-96)
- John Adams to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 296-97)
- Witherspoon, Speech in Congress on Confederation, July 30, 1776 (CP)
- Thomas Hutchinson, Strictures upon the Declaration, 1776 (CP)
- David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (*American Political Writing* volume II pp. 743-47)

**Recommended Reading:**

- Continental Association (Articles of Association), 1774 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 247-50)

- Continental Congress, Appeal to the Inhabitants of Quebec, 1774 (*American Political Writing* volume I pp. 231-39)

## Wednesday, July 23

---

### 9:00 am - 10:30 am: Session 9: The Declaration of Independence, Part I

Professor Burkett

**Topic:** The Centrality of the Declaration of Independence in American Political Life

**Focus:**

- What is the importance of the Declaration?
- What does the Declaration say, and why and how does it say it?
- What does the Declaration mean, and what does the Declaration not mean?
- What does it mean by “one people”, the “laws of Nature and of Nature’s God”, “self-evident” truths, and “all men are created equal”?

**Required Reading:**

- Declaration of Independence (Ashbrook Booklet)
- Jefferson, “Letter to Henry Lee” (Ashbrook Booklet)
- Jefferson, “Letter to Roger Weightman” (Ashbrook Booklet)
- Alexander Hamilton, The Farmer Refuted, 1775 (CP)
- Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Debates in Congress, 1776 (CP)
- Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address (Ashbrook Booklet)
- Abraham Lincoln, Fragment on the Constitution and Union (Ashbrook Booklet)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., “I have a Dream”: speech delivered at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963 (CP)

### 10:50 am - 12:20 pm: Session 10: The Declaration of Independence, Part II

Professor Burkett

**Topic:** The Centrality of the Declaration of Independence in the American Revolution

**Focus:**

- Thomas Jefferson wrote that in drafting the Declaration of Independence he meant to give expression to "the American mind." What does the Declaration tell us about the American mind as it related to the foundations, forms, and purposes of the newly sovereign United States? What is the foundation and purpose of government, according to the Declaration?
- What is the political logic of the argument of the Declaration?
- What is the philosophical and historical heritage on which the Declaration draws?
- How do we see the Declaration’s fundamental principles embodied in its charges against the king?
- What variations on the Declaration do we see in the state declarations of rights?

**Required Reading:**

- Declaration of Independence (Ashbrook Booklet)
- English Bill of Rights, 1689 (CP)
- John Locke, *Second Treatise*, §§ 4, 6-7, 123-127, 210, 222, 225
- Samuel Adams (Town of Boston), “The Rights of the Colonists,” 1772 (CP)
- Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 332-34)
- Massachusetts Constitution: Preamble and Part the First, 1780 (CP)

**Recommended Reading:**

- Tessitore, “Legitimate Government, Religion, and Education: The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson” (SCP, 65)

**1:45 pm – 3:15 pm: Session 11: Waging the war, 1775-1783**

Professor Taylor

**Topic:** The American diplomatic and military campaign

**Focus:**

- Why were the Americans successful in the war?

**Required Reading:**

- Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*
- John Dickinson to Arthur Lee, 29 April 1775 (CP)
- Meeting between Lord Howe and American Commissioners, 11 September 1776 (CP)
- Thomas Paine, “The American Crisis,” 1776 (CP)
- Henry Knox to his wife, December 28, 1776 (CP)
- “The Annual Register,” 1777 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 408-409)
- Journal of Arthur Lee, 1777 (CP)
- The French Alliance: The Treaty of February 6, 1778 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 410-413)
- Response to British Peace Proposals, 13 June 1778 (CP)
- George Washington to Henry Laurens, November 14, 1778 (CP)
- Cornwallis to Clinton, 1781 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 415-418)
- Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, November 1781 (CP)
- Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, March 17, 1783 (CP)
- The Treaty of Paris, 1783 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 418-422)

**Thursday, July 24**

---

**9:00 am - 10:30 am: Session 12: George Washington, General and Statesman**

Professor Burkett

**Topic: Washington's character and leadership during the Revolution**

**Focus:**

- What is the place of Washington in the Revolution? How does he compare to other historical military commanders and political leaders?
- What does Washington's conduct reveal about him and the requirements of successful self-governance?
- What does the affair at Newburgh reveal about republican government?
- At the close of hostilities, what does Washington believe is necessary to complete the Revolution?

**Required Reading:**

- George Washington to Congress, June 16, 1775 (CP)
- George Washington to Martha Washington, June 18, 1775 (CP)
- George Washington to John Augustine Washington, July 27, 1775 (CP)
- George Washington to General Charles Lee, November 30, 1776 (CP)
- George Washington to Lund Washington, December 17, 1776 (CP)
- George Washington to Lewis Nicola, 22 May 1782 (CP)
- George Washington to Joseph Jones, 14 December 1782 (CP)
- George Washington to Nathanael Greene, 6 February 1783 (CP)
- Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, February 13, 1783 (CP)
- George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, March 4, 1783 (CP)
- John Armstrong, The Newburgh Address, March 1783 (CP)
- George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, March 12, 1783 (CP)
- Washington Addresses the Officers of the Army, March 15, 1783 (CP)
- George Washington to Nathanael Greene, 31 March 1783 (CP)
- George Washington to LaFayette, 5 April 1783 (CP)
- General Orders, 18 April 1783 (CP)
- George Washington, Circular letter to the States, 1783 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 436-43)
- Farewell Orders to the Armies, 2 November 1783 (CP)
- Washington's Resignation (CP)

**Recommended Reading:**

- Carrese, "Liberty, Constitutionalism, and Moderation: The Political Thought of George Washington" (SCP, 83)

## 10:50 am - 12:20 pm: Session 13: The political effects of the Revolutionary War

Professor Taylor

**Topic:** The promise and perils of independence

**Focus:**

- What is the state of the American Union at the end of the Revolution?
- What were the most important issues facing the new country? Which result from the principles of the revolution and which from the circumstances (demographic, geographical, etc) in which the new nation finds itself?
- Does the Revolutionary War reveal anything about the Revolution or about what it meant to be American?

**Required Reading:**

- Alexander Hamilton to John Jay, March 1779 (CP)
- Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1781, Queries 14, 17, 18, 19 (CP)
- George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, 31 March 1783 (CP)
- George Washington to Tench Tilghman, 24 April 1783 (CP)
- George Washington to William Gordon, 8 June 1783 (CP)
- George Washington to John Augustine Washington, 15 June 1783 (CP)
- George Mason to Patrick Henry, 1783 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 453-55)
- Price, "Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution," 1784 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 422-425)
- Alexander Hamilton, "Phocion" Letters, 1784 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 445-53)
- John Jay to R. Lushington, 15 March 1786 (CP)
- Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty, 1786 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 390-392)
- Shay's Rebellion, 1786 (CP)
- George Washington to Henry Knox, 1786 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 507-8)
- The Northwest Ordinance, 1787 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 469-74)

## 1:45 pm – 3:15 pm: Session 14: Establishing self-government

Professor Burkett

**Topic:** State constitutions and the Articles of Confederation

**Focus:**

- What forms of government did the Americans establish to effect the safety and happiness of the newly independent American people?
- On what principles did they lay the foundation of their new governments?
- What do the state constitutions show us about revolutionary political thinking, especially American ideas of constitutionalism?

**Required Reading:**

- Resolves and Recommendations of Congress, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 283-84)
- John Adams, *Thoughts on Government*, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 306-11)
- Virginia Constitution, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 336-39)

- Pennsylvania Constitution, 1776 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 339-45)
- Articles of Confederation, 1781 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 428-36)
- Massachusetts Constitution, 1780 (CP)
- David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (*American Political Writing* volume II pp. 747-55)

**Recommended Reading:**

- Samuelson, "John Adams and the Republic of Laws" (SCP, 101)

**Friday, July 25**

---

**9:00 am - 10:30 am: Session 15: "On the brink of a precipice": The Revolution in peril**

Professor Taylor

**Topic:** Vices of the Political System or Crisis of Forms: 1780-1787

**Focus:**

- What defects or vices did Americans discover between 1776 and 1787, in the new governments they had instituted and in the principles on which the foundations of those governments had been laid?
- How did these defects threaten the "safety and happiness" of the American people?
- What remedies were suggested that seemed more likely to effect Americans' safety and happiness?

**Required Reading:**

- Alexander Hamilton to James Duane, September 3, 1780 (CP)
- George Washington to James Warren, October 7, 1785 (CP)
- Rufus King to Elbridge Gerry, April 30, 1786 (CP)
- George Washington to John Jay, August 1, 1786 (CP)
- John Jay to Thomas Jefferson, October 27, 1786 (CP)
- James Madison, Vices of the Political System of the United States, 1787 (*Colonies to Nation*, pp. 514-19)
- Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist* No. 15 (CP)

**10:50 am - 12:20 pm: Session 16: Review and Final Questions**

Professors Taylor and Burkett

**1:00 pm - 2:30 pm: Session 17 Final Comprehensive Exam**