

**HISTORY 150A**  
**COLONIAL AND REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA**  
**Fall Quarter 2008**

Instructor: Jack Rakove

This course covers the opening segment of the traditional American history survey. Its major themes are the character of colonial society; the origins and consequences of the American Revolution, from the Stamp Act controversy to the adoption of the Federal Constitution; the impact of the Revolution on the general population and culture; and (implicitly) the long-term significance of the social and political history of this era for our conceptions of American nationhood, society, and citizenship.

Format: The class meets four times a week, with lectures MWF and sections to be scheduled. Regular attendance is expected for lectures and **required for sections**; participation in the latter will affect your grade, which, however, largely rests on four written assignments:

(1) a short essay based on the primary sources relating to Puritans assigned for the week of October 13, and due in class October 22;

(2) a paper analyzing a set of documents relating to the topic of independence to be discussed during the weeks of November 3, due in class Nov. 12;

(3) a paper analyzing a primary source (or set of sources) of your own choosing, relating to the history of the Revolution, due December 3; and

(4) the final exam, Friday Dec. 12, which will strongly emphasize the course reading. Thanks to the generosity of John and Marjorie Hines of Chicago, a prize of \$200 will be given for the best essay submitted for assignment (3).

Grading is better described as an art than a science. Still, you have a reasonable expectation to know how you will be evaluated. The formula for weighing the different assignments is roughly 20% for the first two assignments, and 30% each for the third paper and the final. The teaching assistants have some discretion to improve your grade on the basis of effective participation in discussion, and also to ask you to do modest additional assignments, such as submitting discussion questions in advance of sections.

**Required Texts** (available in bookstore):

Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (1986)

Jon Butler, *Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776* (2000) (also available as an e-book)

Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century America* (2004)

Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: The Declaration of Independence* (1997)

Jack Rakove, *Declaring Rights: A Brief History with Documents* (1997)

Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1992)

## Syllabus of Classes and Readings

### Some Paradigms of American History

- Sept. 22 Atlantic History: The Dominant Model  
Sept. 24 The Transplanted Origins of American Exceptionalism  
Sept. 26 Republican Constitutionalism in the Age of the Democratic Revolution

Discussion: Bailyn, *Peopling of British North America*

### The Makings of Settler Societies

- Sept. 29 The Godly Commonwealths of New England  
Oct. 1 *No Class*  
Oct. 3 The Hobbesean World of the Chesapeake

Discussion: Butler, *Becoming America*, 1-184; Benjamin Franklin, *Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind* (1751); Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*, chap. III (excerpt) (1782)

### Hierarchies of Race

- Oct. 6 Slavery and the Plantation Complex  
Oct. 10 Origins of American Racial Slavery  
Oct. 12 African Americans and the Beginnings of Slave Culture

Discussion: Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*

### America as a Post-Reformation Society

- Oct. 13 America as a Post-Reformation Society  
Oct. 15 Puritans and the Dilemmas of Conversion  
Oct. 17 What Possessed Salem? (Julia Mansfield)

Discussion: Butler, *Becoming America*, 185-224; John Dane, "A Declaration of Remarkable Providences in My Life"; Thomas Shepard, Autobiography; Examination of Anne Hutchinson

### The Sinews of Empire

- Oct. 20 The Political Heritage  
Oct. 22 Commerce and Culture  
Oct. 24 The World Beyond America

Discussion: Butler, *Becoming America*, 225-248; Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 3-92

### **Explaining the Revolution**

- Oct. 27 Constitutional Impasse
- Oct. 29 The View from London
- Oct. 31 The Flashpoint of Massachusetts

Discussion: Rakove, *Declaring Rights*, 1-68

### **Independence**

- Nov. 3 The Crisis
- Nov. 5 How Revolutionary Was the War for Independence?
- Nov. 7 Patriots, Loyalists, and Disaffection

Discussion: Maier, *American Scripture*; Edmund Burke, Speech on Conciliation with America, March 1775

### **A New Birth of Constitutionalism**

- Nov. 10 Leaving the State of Nature
- Nov. 12 The Mirror of Representation
- Nov. 14 Republican Reforms

Discussion: Wood, *Radicalism*, 95-225; Rakove, *Declaring Rights*, 69-96

### **What Did the Constitution Originally Mean?**

- Nov. 17 Two Roads to Philadelphia
- Nov. 19 James Madison, Thinking
- Nov. 21 Three Myths about the Constitution

Discussion: Rakove, *Declaring Rights*, 97-198; Madison, Vices of the Political System of the United States [April 1787]

### **Some Legacies**

- Dec. 1 Hamilton's State Building Project
- Dec. 3 Jefferson's Empire of Liberty
- Dec. 5 The Protestant Republic

Discussion: Wood, *Radicalism*, 229-369; Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, queries XIV, XV, XVIII; Jefferson-Madison correspondence on the rights of the living generation (1789)

**Dec. 12 Final Exam**