

The American Revolution (512:301)

Monday, Wednesday 7th Period (6:10-7:30) FH-B2

Paul G. E. Clemens

clemens@rci.rutgers.edu or 848-932-8232



The American Revolution continues to shape the way Americans think about government, rights, violence, and war, and the way the rest of the world thinks about the United States. This course charts the creation of the American Republic from the French and Indian War

to the formation of a new national government under the Constitution. We focus primarily on the Revolution itself: its causes, its larger Atlantic context, the way it was fought, and its consequences for the many peoples of America.

Students debate what happened at the Boston Massacre of 1770, the decision for independence and war, the battle at the 1789 Philadelphia Constitutional Convention about whether creating an executive for the new government recreated a monarchy, and the effort to define and protect in a new Bill of Rights the "right to bear arms." We look at selected scenes from film versions of the events of this era: *The Last of the Mohicans* (for its depiction of the Fort William Henry "massacre"); *Mary Silliman's War* (a recreation of the life of a Connecticut farm family during the war); *The Crossing* (both for Jeff Daniels's portrayal of George Washington and for what it tells us about the early days of the war); and *All for Liberty* (war in the South Carolina backcountry). You will get to think about how people experienced the Revolution by following over the course of the semester the lives of Tom Paine, Benjamin Franklin and Betsy Ross.

Readings include a revolutionary war soldier's diary, Tom Paine's "Common Sense," a study of the Fort William Henry "Massacre" during the Seven Years' War, a text that places the revolution in a broader geographical and chronological context than you might otherwise imagine; and studies that allow you to consider in more detail either a revolutionary war battle (Cowpens) or the role of women and loyalists in the Revolution.

There will be a mid-term, a final, a paper, a journal (for reflection on the films and on the lives of Tom Paine and Betsy Ross), several short written assignments, and required discussion participation. Students can earn extra credit by visiting and reviewing a national or state park (in the New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania area) that depicts events of the Revolutionary War. Other extra credit options will be discussed during class.

Books to be Purchased Rutgers Bookstore (Barnes & Noble) has received a book order. The current price for the books is given below. Used copies can also be purchased online and through the bookstore..

Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (Random House, 2015) ISBN: 978-0812981209. In e-book or paper, around \$14.

Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre"* (Oxford University Press 1990). ISBN: 978-0195084269. About \$25 paperback and \$17 as an e-book.

Joseph Plumb Martin, *Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier: Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of Joseph Plumb Martin* (Signet Classics, 2010). ISBN: 978-0451531582 (or any other edition). About \$7 as a paperback and \$2 as an e-book.

Judith Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). ISBN: 978-0812218220. About \$20 in paperback.

OR Lawrence Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998). ISBN: 978-0807849262. About \$16 paperback and \$10 as an e-book.