Reading the American Revolution

English 146a (Fall 2015)
MWTh 10:00-10:50 am, Room TBA
Professor Tharaud
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Office Hours: Mondays 3:30 to 4:30, Thursdays 11 am to 1 pm, and by appointment

Course description: This course explores the vibrant literary cultures that emerged in late eighteenth-century America and their role in the creation of an independent nation. Reading across a range of literary genres and modes including essays, seduction novels, autobiographies, poetry, plays, and political documents, we will pose a series of vital questions about the relationship between literature and politics: Do books actually help spark revolutions, or are they lagging indicators that provide explanations after the fact? To what extent did the American experiment in representative democracy depend on new ways of writing and reading? And in what sense did literature contribute to forming the kinds of selves necessary to be citizens rather than subjects? As we read, part of our task will be to excavate the cultural world behind the texts. So, for example, we will trace the circulation of books as well as goods and people (enslaved and free) across the Atlantic; the competing claims of oral and printed expression in revolutionary culture; the tension between local, state, and national identities; and the paradoxical ways in which the experiences of Native Americans, slaves, and women undercut the revolution’s egalitarian claims even as those groups became powerful symbols of the new republic. We will conclude by looking ahead to the legacies of revolutionary ideology in antebellum domestic reform movements and in revolutions elsewhere in the Americas. Throughout the semester we will reflect on our current political moment and on the continued (and contested) presence of the revolutionary period in contemporary culture. Class will consist of discussion and occasional lectures. Requirements include class participation, a few brief response papers, two essays, and a visit to a revolutionary-era historical site.

Required books:
Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography and Other Writings (Oxford World’s Classics, 1998)
Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (Penguin, 1999)
Thomas Paine, Common Sense (Dover, 1997)
Royall Tyler, The Contrast (Forgotten Books, 2012)
Phillis Wheatley, Complete Writings (Penguin, 2001)

These texts are available for purchase at the Brandeis University Bookstore. If you buy them from another source, please make sure you get these editions. Readings not listed above will be available on the course page on Latte (http://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/newlatte/). They are marked “Latte” on the reading schedule below.
**Course Plan**

**Weeks 1-2: Republican print culture**

Aug 27 (Th)  Welcome and introduction


Sept. 3 (Th)  Keyword: Conspiracy
Paine, *Common Sense*, part IV (pp. 33-58)
Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” (1965) [Latte]

Sept. 7 (M)  No Class—Labor Day

Sept. 9 (W)  John Adams, *Thoughts on Government Applicable to the Present State of the American Colonies* (1776) [Latte]
Charles Inglis, “The True Interest of America Impartially Stated” (1776), Preface and Section I [Latte]

Sept. 10 (Th)  Keyword: Propaganda

**Weeks 3-5: Declaring Independence**

Sept. 14 (M)  No Class—Rosh Hashanah

Sept. 16 (W)  Patrick Henry, Liberty or Death speech (1775) (online at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/patrick.asp)
Samuel Sherwood, *The Church’s Flight into the Wilderness* (1776) [Latte]

Sept. 17 (Th)  Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), Query VI
Pontiac, “Speech at Detroit” (1763) [Latte]

Sept. 21 (M)  Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query VIII, XI-XII, XVII-XIX, XII

Sept. 23 (W)  No Class—Yom Kippur

Sept. 24 (Th)  Keyword: Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings

**Friday, Sept. 25: Response paper #1 (2-3 pp.) due in my box by 4:30 p.m.**

Sept. 28 (M)  No Class—Sukkot (Brandeis Day on Tuesday, Sept. 29)

Sept. 29 (T)  J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), Letters I-III


Oct. 1 (Th)  Keyword: Agrarianism
             Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*, Letter XII

**Week 6: Revolutionary Poetics**

Oct. 5 (M)  No Class—Shmini Atzeret

Oct. 7 (W)  Phillis Wheatley, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), front matter (pp. 3-8) and the following poems: “To the University of Cambridge, in New-England,” “To the King’s Most Excellent Majesty,” “On being brought from Africa to America,” “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield,” “On the Death of a young Lady of Five Years of Age,” “To a Lady on the Death of her Husband,” “Goliath of Gath,” “To a Lady on the Death of Three Relations,” “A Funeral Poem on the Death of C.E. an Infant of Twelve Months”; Letters: To the Countess of Huntingdon, Oct. 25, 1770 (p. 139), To Arbour Tanner, May 19, 1772 (pp. 141-42), To the Countess of Huntingdon, June 27, 1773 (p. 144), To Obour Tanner Newport, March 21, 1774 (pp. 153-54), To John Thornton, March 29, 1774 (pp. 154-56).

Hopkins, May 6, 1774 (pp. 157-58), To John Thornton, Oct. 30, 1774 (pp. 158-60).

**Weeks 7-8: Raising the Roof, Extending the Sphere: the Constitutional Debates**

Anti-Federalist papers: “Elbridge Gerry to the Massachusetts General Court,” “Brutus” I, and “John Humble” [Latte]

Oct. 14 (W) *The Federalist*, Nos. XV-XVII, XXII-XXIII, XXVII-XXVIII, XXXII, XXXV
Anti-Federalist papers: “Brutus” VI [Latte]

Oct. 15 (Th) *The Federalist*, Nos. XXXVII, XXXIX, XLI, XLV-XVIII

Oct. 19 (M) *The Federalist*, Nos. LI, LVII, LX, LXII, LXVII-VIII, LXXVIII
Anti-Federalist papers: “Centinel” I [Latte]

Oct. 21 (W) *The Federalist*, Nos., LXXXIV-LXXXV
Anti-Federalist papers: Federal Farmer no. 15

Oct. 22 (Th) Keyword: Federalism

**Week 9: A Nation of Contrasts**


Oct. 29 (Th) David Humphreys, Joel Barlow, John Trumbull, and Lemuel Hopkins, *The Anarchiad: A New England Poem* (1786), Nos. 1-6 (pp. 3-34) [Latte]

Friday, October 30: Essay #1 (5-6 pp.) due in my box by 4:30 p.m.

**Week 10: Self-Made Men?**

Nov. 2 (M) Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, pp. 3-60

Nov. 4 (W) Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, pp. 60-120

Nov. 5 (Th) John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord’s Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black* (1785) [Latte]

**Weeks 11-12: Fallen Women, Or, The Seductions of Democracy**
Nov. 9 (M)  Jill Lepore, *Book of Ages: The Life and Opinions of Jane Franklin* (2013), chaps. 6-7, 9-14, 16 (pp. 25-33, 39-89, 103-110) [Latte]

Nov. 11 (W)  John and Abigail Adams, selected letters [Latte]
              Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (1797), Letters I-XXX (pp. 107-53)

Nov. 12 (Th)  Foster, *The Coquette*, Letters XXXI-XLII (pp. 153-81)

Nov. 16 (M)  Foster, *The Coquette*, Letters XLIII-LXVI (pp. 182-223)

Nov. 18 (W)  Foster, *The Coquette*, Letters LXVII-LXXIV (pp. 224-42)

Nov. 19 (Th)  Keyword: Sex, seduction, and gender in U.S. politics

**Weeks 13-15: The Contagion of Liberty**

              Documents from the Haitian Revolution: Thomas Jefferson letters (1797-1802); Charles Brockden Brown, “St. Domingo” (1804); Toussaint Louverture, Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue (1801); Jean-Jacques Dessalines, The Haitian Declaration of Independence (1804); The Haitian Constitution (1805)[Latte]

Nov. 25 (W)  No Class—Thanksgiving

Nov. 26 (Th)  No Class—Thanksgiving

Nov. 30 (M)  Simon Bolivar, “The Angostura Address” (1819) [Latte]
              Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (1819) [Latte]

Dec. 2 (W)  David Walker, *Walker’s Appeal, in Four Articles* (1830), Preamble, Articles 1-2 (pp. 3-39) and pp. 58-86 [Latte]

Dec. 3 (Th)  William Apess, “Eulogy on King Philip” (1836) [Latte]

Dec. 7 (M)  Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno* (1855), pp. 164-222 [Latte]

Dec. 9 (W)  Melville, *Benito Cereno*, pp. 222-247 (finish)

**Monday, Dec. 14: Essay #2 (7-8 pp.) due in my box by 4:30 p.m.**
Course Policies and Requirements

Prerequisites: None

Four-Credit Course (three hours of class-time per week): Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Learning goals:

- Improve your ability to close-read and analyze texts, including traditional literary forms (essays, novels, poems, etc.) as well as legal documents, newspapers, and images.
- Gain familiarity with several foundational works, authors, and genres of the period.
- Hone your ability to think historically: learning to understand the past in terms of a set of ideas, practices, and cultural categories different from our own; and understanding history as the body of narratives we construct about the past.
- Apply the tools of reading closely and thinking historically to questions and debates taking place in contemporary public discourse.
- Improve your academic writing skills

Course requirements include:

1. Attendance: Regular and prompt class attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss class because of sickness, religious holidays, or an emergency, please contact me in advance. You will be responsible for posting a response to the readings for the session you missed on the discussion board on Latte before the next class. Students who come to class without bringing that day’s assigned readings will be marked absent. Each unexcused absence will lower your attendance and participation grade (20% of the total) by a letter grade. Missing more than three classes will result in failing the class.

2. Active class participation: Participating fully in this class requires completing the assigned readings and contributing to class discussion. Reading assigned material carefully and in its entirety before class on the day it is assigned is essential for your success. This is a literature class, and the readings are substantial: you can expect to read between 50 and 100 pages per class period. Please be sure to buy the editions listed on the syllabus so we can all refer to the same page numbers, and bring all texts to class in hard copy (bring the book and print out any other course readings for the day). Most of our time will be spent in detailed discussion of these texts, and your participation is vital. Every student is expected to speak at least once per class. I may call on you even if you haven’t raised your hand. Two ongoing class projects will also be part of your participation grade. First, we will assemble an archive called the “Digital Republic of Letters” by posting links, documents, and photographs that document the presence of the revolutionary period in popular culture; you will be responsible for posting a minimum number of these over the course of the semester and posting brief comments about them. You will also be asked to visit two revolutionary sites during the semester and to record your experience on an online mapping application. Together we will produce a “deep map” of Revolutionary Boston.

3. Response papers: These brief (2-3 pp.) papers account for 20% of your grade. Response papers do not need to be as formal or as polished as essays—I am most interested in your ideas and your thoughtful response to a text. I will provide a prompt intended to jump-start your own thinking about a text, but you may opt to write on a different text or topic. I will grade these on a
three-point scale: a check for satisfactory work; a check-minus for work that is sloppy, too short, or turned in late; and a check-plus if you really wow me. I will make brief written comments to these papers (often some marginal comments and two or three handwritten sentences at the end).

4. Formal essays: These longer (5-8 pp.) papers account for more than half of your grade. For our purposes, an essay should make a clear claim (expressed in a thesis statement) and support it with relevant textual evidence. The argument should unfold in a logical, well-organized fashion and be framed by a compelling introduction and conclusion. Formatting guidelines are below.

Grading breakdown:
- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Response papers: 20%
- Essay #1: 25%
- Essay #2: 35%

Formatting guidelines: Written assignments must be turned in in hard copy (they must be printed out) by the deadline specified in the Course Plan. Printer malfunctions, ink or paper shortages, etc., will not excuse late papers, so please plan ahead. All papers should be in 11- or 12-point type, double-spaced, using Times New Roman or another standard, readable font, and not in italics. Margins should be 1 inch all around. Any citations should use Chicago style (for a helpful overview see the “Quick Guide” at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html).

Late policy: Papers will be docked a half-grade for each day they are late (e.g., from A to A-).

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s ideas or words in your writing without acknowledging the source. It is a serious offense, and may result in failing the class and suspension from the university. When in doubt, see me or consult the student resources listed by Brandeis Library & Technology Services (https://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/instruction/academic-integrity/index.html), including this handout on “How to avoid plagiarism” (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html).

Writing Center: Students who want additional help with their writing are encouraged to visit the campus Writing Center (http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writingcenter/; Goldfarb Main Library, Room 107; 781-736-2130; writingcenter@brandeis.edu).

Electronic devices: Computers and tablets are allowed during class for taking and reviewing notes only. Browsing the Internet, checking email or Facebook, etc. is not allowed during class; if I find you doing those things I will bar you from bringing your device to future classes. Cell phone and smartphone use during class is prohibited.

Communications: Any changes to the syllabus or class schedule, including accommodations for snow days, will be communicated via the class email list and posted on Latte. Please plan to check your university email account and Latte daily to keep informed.

Disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.