

Georgetown University
Masters and Doctoral Liberal Studies Program

The Founding Era: The Great Debates
LSHV-704-01

Spring, 2008
Charles E. Yonkers

Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30 PM

cey3@georgetown.edu
202-486-9309

Course Description & Objectives: This course examines the events and issues of the American Founding Era, how history has interpreted it, and why our interest in the period remains so vital. We Americans all carry a simplified version of the founding story, but the more we learn about it, the more complex it becomes. Even today, there is a resurgence of “Founder Studies” that raise new questions of interpretation. The course’s objective is to develop both knowledge about and insight into the Era’s issues and the Constitution’s formation. To do that, we will concentrate on the events leading from the Revolution to the Philadelphia Convention and from the Ratification Debates of 1787-88 to the adoption of the Bill of Rights. The great debate of the time was over the proposed new constitution and the allocation of power between the states and a national government, but there were many other debates as well.

Some key questions include: Just who were the Founders: only the so-called “demigods?” Was the Revolution about home rule, or who should rule at home? Just what were the real origins of Revolution? Why have generations of historians differed so in interpreting the Founding? Why was the ratification debate so hotly contested? Who among the proponents and opponents remained the most faithful to the spirit of the Revolution? Why is our interest in the founding period so intense today? Why do biographies and analyses of the founders and framers remain so popular? Was the Founding Era the source of concepts of national uniqueness and American exceptionalism? And why does the U.S. Supreme Court cite with increasing frequency the Federalist or Anti-Federalist arguments from the Ratification Debate?

Approach & Requirements:

The course will be seminar style with examination and discussion of issues and shared and individual readings. To accomplish the course objectives, students will (1) read assigned books and discuss them in class, (2) read and write a 3-5 page report on an additional book of the student’s choosing and make a class presentation on it, and (3) write a research paper and make a class presentation on it. The course makes use of Blackboard and a Class Blog.

Required Books:

Michael Barone: *Our First Revolution* (2007)
Gordon Woods, *The American Revolution* (2002).
Alan Gibson, *Interpreting The Founding* (2006).
Bernard Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution* (1992); selected essays.
Merrill Jensen, *The Articles of Confederation* (1940).
Catherine Drinker Bowen, *Miracle at Philadelphia* (1966) **or**
Max Ferrand, *The Framing of the Constitution* (1913).
Jack N. Rakove, editor. *The Federalist: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay* (2003); selected essays.
Ralph Ketcham, editor. *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Debates* (2003); selected essays.

Book Report: In addition to the assigned general readings, each class member will select either one book or a ratification debate from the list below (or one of their own choice if approved in advance), prepare a three-to-five page book report, and make a class presentation on their selection. An expanded list of recent books published will be provided in class.

Bailyn, Bernard. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967).
Wood, Gordon, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (2004).
Gross, Robert. *The Minutemen and Their World* (1976).
Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense*.
Maier, Pauline. *American Scripture* (1998).
Fischer, David Hackett. *Washington's Crossing* (2004).
Ratification Convention Debates of Massachusetts or Virginia.
Main, Jackson T. *The Anti-Federalists: Critics of the Constitution* (1961).
Elding, Max. *A Revolution in Favor of Government* (2003).
Lubunski, Richard. *James Madison and The Struggle for the Bill of Rights* (2006).
Ferling, John. *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800*.

Research Paper: Each student will submit on the last class a research/analysis term paper (minimum twenty pages), based on primary and secondary sources, with primary (original) sources constituting the bulk of the source material (manuscripts, printed documents, letters, diaries, contemporary newspapers, memoirs, and other such material, including period art). Topics may range from economic, cultural, and social to political and military issues, according to your particular interest. Topics must relate to the “founding;” that is, they should provide insight into some particular dimension of the formative years of the nation. Examples might include events, personalities, governmental institutions, processes of change, or historiographical interpretations, events, etc. The teacher must

approve the topics, so plan early. Citations can be either foot- or endnotes, according to the guidelines in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. During the last classes, time will be allotted to students to make a presentation on their papers. A three-page abstract of the paper will be due when the presentation is made. Please bring enough copies so that each student may have a copy.

Course Due Dates:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| January 23 | - Select book for report and schedule date. |
| February 20 | - Submit research paper proposal and potential sources. |
| March 26 | - Submit Progress Report on research paper with outline and proposed bibliography. |
| April 9 & 16 | - Class presentations on research papers. |
| April 30 | - No Class but Submit research papers |

Grades: The final grade will be based upon attendance and class participation (including the blog) in the weekly discussions (25%), the book or convention reviews and presentations (25%), and the final paper and presentation (50%).

Disabilities Statement:

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

January 16: Introduction & The English Background

Discussion of course requirements, deadlines, assignments, themes, and approach.

Reading: Michael Barone, *Our First Revolution*

January 23: The Road Toward American Revolution

Reading: Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution*, Chapter 8, pp. 185-199.
Wood, *The American Revolution*, Preface and Chapter I [Origins],
pp. 1-24.
Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, Preface, vii-xiv.

January 30: Resistance and Revolution

Bailyn, Chapter 9, pp. 200-224.
Wood, Chapters II & III, pp. 25-62.
Gibson, Chapter 1

February 6: The Year 1776

Reading: Bailyn, Chapter 7, pp. 153-184.
Wood, Chapter IV [Constitution-Making], pp. 65-88.

February 13: Historiography of the Founding Era.

Reading: Wood, Chapter V [Republicanism], pp 91-109.
Gibson, Chapters 2-7, and Epilogue, and
Pasley, "Politics and the Misadventures of Thomas Jefferson's
Reputation" [to be provided].

February 20: The Articles of Confederation and the Continental Congress.

Reading: Wood, Chapter VI [Republican Society], pp. 113-135.
Jensen, *The Articles of Confederation*, Chapters 1-3, pp 3-103.

February 27: The Critical Period

Reading: Wood, Chapter VII [The Critical Period], pp 139-150.
Jensen, Chapters 4-13, pp. 107-245.

[No class March 5]

March 12: The Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia

Reading: Bowen, *Miracle at Philadelphia* OR
Ferrand, *The Framing of the Constitution*.
RESEARCH TOPIC DUE with proposed sources

March 19: The Philadelphia Convention Continued

Students Q & A: Bring a question for the class
Reading: Same as above.

March 26: The Ratification Debate

Reading: Selected Anti-Federalist essays from Ralph Ketchum's *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Debates* and Selected *Federalist Papers* from *The Federalist: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay: The Essential Essays*, Jack N. Rakove. Read Introductions to both books.

Centinel 1,	Oct. 5, 1787	Ketcham, 227-237
James Wilson Speech,	Oct. 6,	Ketcham, 183-188
Federal Farmer 1 & 2,	Oct. 8 & 9	Ketcham, 256-269
Brutus I,	Oct.18	Ketcham, 269-280
John DeWitt 1 & 2	Oct. 22/Nov 5	Ketcham, 189-198
Brutus IV	Nov. 29	Ketcham, 324-331

April 2: Hamilton, Madison, & Jay and the *Federalist* papers

Reading: Bailyn, Chapter 10 and more selected essays:

Federalist 1, 6, 9, 10, 14, 23, 39 Oct. to Jan., 1787-8

Brutus VI, X-XII and XV Dec 27 - Feb Ketcham 280-302

RESEARCH PAPER PROGRESS REPORT DUE

April 9: The *Federalist Papers*

Reading: More Selected *Federalist Papers*

Federalist 45, 51, 62, 70, 78, 84 Jan – May, 1788

Patrick Henry Speeches, June, 1788 – Ketcham 199-216

April 16: The State Ratification Conventions & The Bill of Rights

Reading: Selections from the Massachusetts and Virginia Conventions

Paper Presentations

April 30 RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

