

Politics in the Early American Republic
History 311.01

Prof. Sarah J. Purcell

Website: <http://www.grinnell.edu/courses/his>

Library Guide:

http://www.lib.grinnell.edu/subsplus/subjects/display.php?subject=cg_his311

Monday & Wednesday 8:00-9:50 a.m. Mears 217

Office: Macy House 201 Phone: 269-3091 E-mail: PURCELL@grinnell.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 9-11:00 and by appointment; Note, I will plan to meet with students right after class in Mears on most days if needed.

Please come and see me during office hours, or make an appointment, so I can meet you one-on-one. Call my office or e-mail me at any time. Because my schedule is somewhat unpredictable (because I direct the Rosenfield Program), appointments are always a good idea. I can always make time for you, but you need to let me know you want to get together.

Students in this seminar will discover and debate recent developments in the study of political history by focusing intensely on one of its most exciting periods, the early American republic. During roughly the years 1789-1824, the American political system first took shape as federal and state governments established themselves, as the country experienced its first era of party conflict, and as philosophical ideas about the structures of American power and concepts such as "republicanism" and "democracy" were put to the test. The seminar will analyze traditional topics of political interest in this period such as political party formation and interaction among the "founding fathers," and it will also explore the many ways that recent historians have broadened their view of politics to include such factors as political culture, female involvement in politics, and the politicization of everyday life.

We will study the content of political history in the early republic, and we will also give a great deal of attention to the style, theory, and method of political historical study. While political history of the United States in the founding era is a very popular branch of historical writing, it is also often highly controversial. We will immerse ourselves in a number of hot debates about the theory and practice of political history.

Students will hone a variety of skills over the course of the semester as they engage in the process of history. While the main goal of this course is to produce an excellent research paper, students will also focus on the methods of historical research, writing, and revision. Peer review will enhance the cooperative nature of the process.

Books:

R. B. Bernstein, *The Founding Fathers Reconsidered* (2009)

Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (2011)

Douglas Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion* (1993)

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th Ed. (2007) *HIGHLY RECOMMENDED*

Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (2009)

Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (2007)

Supplemental Readings will be handed out in class and/or available online.

Assignments: While this course is mainly focused around the major primary research paper, students are expected to keep up with reading assignments for discussion in class. In the first half of the semester, all students will complete a short historiographical essay comparing two authors' approaches to the study of politics.

For regular class discussions (beginning August 31), each member of the class must post one discussion question on the PioneerWeb discussion board for HIS311 by **7:00 pm** on the evening before our discussion—this will usually be Sunday night before our Monday discussion. Your first question is due at 7:00 p.m. on August 30.

Students will complete a series of assignments leading up to the final research paper. Preliminary topic selections are due October 3. On October 27, each student will turn in a paper proposal that outlines a proposed thesis and argument. On November 14, students will turn in a bibliography and deliver an oral presentation about one, major primary source. The research paper is due November 30, and class presentations and peer review will follow. The final, revised version of the research paper is due December 13. The research paper is expected to be 20-30 pages long, based upon significant primary sources informed by context from the relevant scholarly secondary sources.

All papers for this course must follow correct citation format using footnotes or endnotes in University of Chicago style. Consult your Turabian book for a guide. For more in-depth questions, you should consult *The University of Chicago Style Manual*, 16th ed., in Prof. Purcell's office or in the Library. Written assignments for this class should be turned in on PioneerWeb by attaching a file to the assignment. If you use a Mac or a word processing program other than Microsoft Word, you should save your file in rich

text format (.rtf). Extensions on written assignments for sickness or other emergency must be approved by Prof. Purcell in advance. Papers turned in late without an extension will receive a deduction of one-half letter grade per day.

Grades will be assigned in the course according to the following formula:

historiography paper	15%
paper proposal	5%
bibliography	5%
primary source presentation	5%
research presentation	5%
class participation	15%
Research paper	50%

Please consult and follow the rules for Academic Honesty in the Grinnell College Student Handbook.

Attendance is essential. If you must miss class or an individual meeting due to illness or for another reason, please let me know.

If you require an accommodation for any diagnosed disability, please let me know during the first week of class.

Week One:

Introduce yourself on PioneerWeb! Since classes start on Thursday, ours won't meet until week 2.

Week Two: How and Why to Study Political History

Monday, August 29: **Introduction to class**

Start reading Wood's book for next week

Wednesday, August 31: What's new (and old) in Political History?

Reading Due: "Political History Today" forum in Perspectives on History 49 (May 2011) 25-60; Issue available here:

<http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/issues/2011/1105/index.cfm> NOTE: Your first discussion question will be due in PioneerWeb by 7:00 on TUESDAY, AUG. 30

Week Three: The Value of Synthesis

Monday, September 5 : *Reading Due: Wood, Empire of Liberty*

Wednesday, Sept. 7: Research Methods Lab

Meet in Burling Library basement, IIF computer room

Recommended Reading: Turabian, Chapters 1, 3, & 4

Week Four: Transatlantic Politics

Monday, September 12: *Reading Due: Cotlar, Tom Paine's America*

Wednesday, September 14: Research Methods Lab
Meet in Burling Library basement, IIF computer room

Week Five: Founding Fathers & Political Culture

Monday, September 19: *Reading Due: Bernstein, Founding Fathers Reconsidered*

Wednesday, September 21: *Reading Due: Jeffrey L. Pasley, "The Cheese and the Words: Popular Political Culture and Participatory Democracy in the Early American Republic" conference paper version available at:*

http://www.pasleybrothers.com/jeff/writings/Pasley_Cheese.pdf

(Note: If you wish to cite this article, please use the version that appears in the book *Beyond the Founders*, 2004); Simon Newman, "Principles or Men: George Washington and the Political Culture of National Leadership," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 12 (1992): 477-507 (available on J-Stor).

Week Six: Women, Gender, and Politics

Monday, September 26: *Reading Due: Zagari, Revolutionary Backlash*

Week Seven: Black Power

Monday, October 3: *Reading Due: Egerton, Gabriel's Rebellion*;

PRELIMINARY TOPIC DUE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5 5:00 PM **HISTORIOGRAPHY PAPER DUE**
on PioneerWeb

Week Eight: Culture & Politics

Monday, October 10: *Reading Due: Frank Bösch and Norman Domeier, "Cultural History of Politics: Concepts and Debates," European Review of History 15 (2008): 577-586 (find the article using Historical Abstracts); Liam Riordan, "Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be?: The Urban Early Republic and the Politics of Popular Song in Benjamin Carr's Federal Overture" *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (2011): 179-227 (find the article using *America: History and Life*)*

Wednesday, October 12 Research Methods Lab meet in Burling IIF

Post your research topic on PioneerWeb

Week Nine OCTOBER 15-23 FALL BREAK

Week Ten: Monday, October 25: Topic Presentations

Wednesday, October 27: **PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

Recommended Reading: Turabian, chapters 5 & 6

Week Eleven: October 31 & November 2 Writing Days
Please meet in class for writing workshop time.
Recommended Reading: Turabian, chapter 7

Week Twelve: November 8 & 10 Writing Days no class meetings

Week Thirteen: Monday, November 14 **Bibliographies Due**, Source Presentations
Wednesday, November 16 Source Presentations

Week Fourteen: November 21 & 23 Writing Days no class meetings

NOVEMBER 24 & 25 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week Fifteen: Monday, November 28 Writing Day no class meeting
Wednesday, November 30 **PAPERS DUE** Research Presentations

Week Sixteen: December 8 & 10 Research Presentations
Recommended Reading: Turabian, Chapters 9-12

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13 5:00 p.m. FINAL VERSION OF PAPERS DUE on PioneerWeb

Extra Credit and a chance to win \$1,000. Enter the Virginia Historical Society Historical Mystery prize contest, and be sure to send Prof. Purcell a copy of your entry, so you can get extra credit: <http://www.vahistorical.org/research/historicalmysteryprize.htm>