

Politics in the Early American Republic
History 311.01 Fall 2022
Course website: <https://arcg.is/1TnTq81>

Prof. Sarah J. Purcell

Monday & Wednesday 1:00-2:20 pm ARH 3243

Office: ARH 3238 Office Phone: 269-3091 Cell Phone: 515-497-0778
E-mail: PURCELL@grinnell.edu

Open Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 10-11:50 and by appointment

Please come and see me during office hours, or make an appointment, so I can meet you one-on-one. Please email, call, or text me any time for help with class, or with anything else. I encourage you to take care of yourself. Let me know what you need, and try to share any concerns before they become severe. I am VERY flexible, and I will always listen to you. Share your triumphs, too.

Please get in the habit of contacting me frequently and of connecting with your classmates. Our main objective in history seminar is for each person to produce excellent historical scholarship, and to do so within a supportive peer community (that's all of us). We will stay connected!

We are studying in a time of global crisis, and life will not always proceed as we envision it. I expect flexibility from you, and you may expect it from me. Please communicate, so we can help one another.

Content Focus:

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 "founders," 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.

Course Objectives:

This is a particularly potent moment in the United States to be studying the politics of the early American republic. We can see daily evidence in the news that the founding era (and present interpretations of its power relations) are still very relevant and their memories provide a language for contests over church/state separation, the regulation of gender and sexuality, state power, white supremacy, and much more. We will be studying history on its own terms, but with the knowledge that in this moment the stakes are high for the topics we are engaging.

In this course, students will:

1. **Research and write a significant piece of original historical scholarship.** Most commonly, students will produce a 20-30 page paper. Alternative formats of scholarship (an op-ed piece for submission to a news outlet; a website; a digital project) supplemented by a shorter paper may be proposed by students. Whatever form the project takes, it will rest upon primary source analysis, relevant historiography, and scholarly apparatus such as bibliography and footnotes.
2. **Achieve an understanding of political history** (its definitions, theories, and uses).
3. **Comprehend and debate important recent trends in the historiography** of politics in the early American republic.

Student Responsibilities:

- To be a good part of the peer community of historians in this course, you must be present and participate.
- Connect to the course hub on PioneerWeb to stay on top of readings and assignments. P-Web will also feature course announcements and other required material.
- Join in all small-group work, peer review, and class discussions.
- Communicate with Prof. Purcell frequently.
- Read your email daily, and be sure to respond to any requests (such as requests to fill in surveys) from Prof. Purcell and your peers.

- Turn in your assignments by the deadlines, but if you need extensions or other flexible arrangements, Prof. Purcell expects you to ask for help, and she will give it.
- Consult and follow the rules for Academic Honesty in the Grinnell College Student Handbook and the college catalog. You can see the academic catalog policies on academic honesty here:
http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=12&navoid=2537#Honesty_in_Academic_Work
- Follow University of Chicago (17th Edition) style citations in footnotes or endnotes for all assignments in this course, unless the assignment directs you explicitly to do something else. You may consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* online through the Grinnell College Library catalog here (off-campus you will need to log into the Library through its proxy server): <https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.grinnell.idm.oclc.org/book/ed17/frontmatter/toc.html>
- For our class discussions, please be prepared at the beginning of class with at least TWO questions about the material for that day. This class is very collaborative, and everyone must be prepared to start off and to continue discussion. Listen carefully, and speak to one another. We will *certainly* disagree many times over the semester as we debate primary and secondary sources (and even current events), but keep in mind our common goal of advancing group knowledge. Be respectful and well prepared.
- Engage with the material, and be ready for controversy and difficult subjects. We are studying a series of events related to racism, sexism, violence, and disorder of all kinds. Take care of yourself as you learn to engage with difficult topics from the past that are, nonetheless, vital to understanding the world.

Note: Some of our primary sources will contain extremely offensive language. To quote literary scholar Dr. Koritha Mitchell, we are scholars, “not re-enactors, so we need not let the text dictate what we *give life to* in the classroom (korithamitchell.com).” We can’t eliminate all racist, sexist, and other offensive language in our sources—but we always need to remember the historical context. Some slurs are too much. I, for one, do not ever say “the N-word” out loud, and I expect no one to do so in this class. If you want to read a quotation out loud with the word in it, just say “N” or “N-word,” instead. Please be sensitive to other slurs (such as r**skin), also, and feel comfortable substituting a similar short-hand substitution in our discussions. We have to grapple with these concepts, but we do not have to give voice to hatred.

Student Support:

- You can expect support from Prof. Purcell for any kind of need (personal or academic) in this class. Feel invited to call, text, or email her at any time. If you have any questions or need help of any kind, you can always start by asking Prof. Purcell.

- You may consult with the Grinnell College Writing, Reading, and Speaking Lab on any assignment in this course. Make an appointment [here](#).
- If you experience any tech problems at all, please let Prof. Purcell know, and she will help you contact the relevant Grinnell College office to get help solving your issues. We can also work around any tech issues.
- For health needs (physical and mental), please consult with Student Health and Wellness [here](#) or go to the SHAW office in the lower-level of the Forum.
- Chris Jones, the college archivist, is the consulting librarian for our class. You may email him directly with questions [joneschr], or you may book a Library Lab appointment [here](#).
- If you require accommodation for any diagnosed disability, please speak with Prof. Purcell during the first few days of class. Grinnell College (and Prof. Purcell) provide reasonable accommodations. Students must also arrange their accommodations with Accessibility and Disability Services; contact Jae Hirschman at 641-269-3710 or email [hirschma]. Information available [here](#).

Books: Required books for this class are for sale/rent at Pioneer Bookshop; they are on 2-hour reserve at Burling library; and Zagari and Cotlar are also available on J-STOR as e-books.

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

Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (2016)

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 and on P-web.

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. Students will complete a short research question essay due on October 5.

Students will complete a series of assignments leading up to the final research paper. Preliminary topic selections are due October 12. On October 26, 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 14.

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.

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).

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

rsch question paper	10%
paper proposal	10%
bibliography	5%
primary source presentation	5%
research presentation	5%
class engagement	15%
Research paper	50%

Attendance is important to this class, so please attend if at all possible. That being said, we all know that illness can/will happen, and you should NOT attend class if you are ill. Please email Prof. Purcell (if at all possible) when you are ill, and we will make arrangements for how you can keep up with course work on a flexible schedule (as your illness allows).

If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, athletic team event, or other co-curricular activity, please let Prof. Purcell know in advance, and she will support you.

Please wear a mask in class and when you visit Prof. Purcell's office.

Week One:

Introduce yourself on Flip.com [instructions found on P-web under "Assignments"]. Since classes start on Thursday, ours won't meet until week 2. After you introduce yourself, check back to the Flip.com site for class, and watch other students' introductions. Ask them a few questions, or make a few comments on other videos.

Week Two: How and Why to Study Political History

Monday, August 29 **Introduction to class**

Material to review: [The American Yawp: A Massively Collaborative Open U.S. History Textbook \(2021-22 Updates edition\)](#), Chapters 5-11, <https://www.americanyawp.com/>; George William Van Cleve, "Founding a Slaveholders' Union, 1770-1797," in [Contesting Slavery](#), ed. John Craig Hammond and Matthew Mason, 118-137 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wrnj6.11>

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 available here: <https://www.historians.org/publications-and->

[directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2011/political-history-today](#) & Michael Kazin, "Preface," *The Concise Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, vii-ix (distributed in class); Jennifer Scheussler, "'Hamilton' and History, Are they in Sync?" *New York Times*, April 10, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/11/theater/hamilton-and-history-are-they-in-sync.html> Aja Romero, "Hamilton is Fanfic, and Its Historical Critics are Missing the Point," *Vox*, July 4, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/2016/4/14/11418672/hamilton-is-fanfic-not-historically-inaccurate>; Jack Rakove, "The Framers of the Constitution Didn't Worry about Originalism," *The Washington Post*, October 16, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/originalism-constitution-founders-barrett/2020/10/16/1906922e-0f33-11eb-8a35-237ef1eb2ef7_story.html; Annette Gordon-Reed, "Uprooting Rights," *New York Review of Books*, May 9, 2022, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2022/05/09/uprooting-rights-roe/?lp_txn_id=1366411 (you may have to register for a free account in order to read this article online)

Note: Prof. Purcell has been summoned for jury duty for all of September, and she has to phone in weekly to see if she is selected for a jury. Please read your email often; she will communicate plans for how to adapt if she is on a jury!

Week Three: The Value (?) of Synthesis

Monday, September 5 *Reading Due: BROWSE: James Roger Sharp, American Politics in the Early American Republic, The New Nation in Crisis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), JSTOR: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vksqm> ; Gordon S. Wood, Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) <https://books.google.com/books?id=AWI8fmyhN5IC&lpg=PP1&pg=PA4#v=onepage&q&f=false>*

Wednesday, September 7 New Takes on Political Questions

Reading Due: BROWSE Volume 34 of the Journal of the Early Republic, found on Project Muse here: <https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/37381> (examine some articles from the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter issues, sample some book reviews, what else does the journal contain?)

Week Four: Transatlantic Radicalism

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

Wednesday, September 14 Research Methods Lab

Meet in Burling Library –second floor classroom

Week Five: Early Elections and Voting Records

Monday, September 19 *Reading Due: Special Issue of The Journal of the Early Republic 33 (Summer 2013): Read pages 183-334, which include the introduction about the "New Nation Votes" project, articles using the project, and the*

afterword; find issue on ProjectMuse:

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_the_early_republic/toc/jer.33.2.html

Wednesday, September 21 *Explore Digital Project: Mapping Early American Elections* project team, Mapping Early American Elections, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, George Mason University (2019):

<https://earlyamericanelections.org>, <https://doi.org/10.31835/meae>.

Week Six: Women, Gender, and Politics

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

PRELIMINARY TOPIC DUE

Wednesday, September 29 Research Methods Lab

Meet in Burling Library –second floor classroom

Week Seven: Black Power

Monday, October 3 *Reading Due: Richard Newman, “Protest in Black and White: The Formation and Transformation of an African American Political Community during the Early Republic,” in Beyond the Founders, ed. Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher, 180-204 (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2004), JSTOR https://doi.org/10.5149/9780807898833_pasley.11; Van Gosse, “Negroes Have Votes As Good As Yours Or Mine: Coming to Grips in New York, 1770-1821,” in The First Reconstruction: Black Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War, 315-376 (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2021), JSTOR https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469660127_gosse.16; Jennifer L. Morgan, “Periodization Problems: Race and Gender in the History of the Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 36 (2016): 351-57, JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jearlyrepublic.36.2.351>*

Wednesday, October 5: No class meeting

5:00 PM **RESEARCH QUESTION PAPER DUE on P-Web under “Assignments”**

Week Eight: The Global Turn

Monday, October 10 *Reading Due: Caitlin Fitz, Our Sister Republics; recommended reading: Rosemarie Zagarri, “The Significance of the ‘Global Turn’ for the Early American Republic, Globalization in the Age of Nation-Building,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (Spring 2011): 1-37, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_the_early_republic/v031/31.1.zagarri.html ;*

Wednesday, October 12 *Reading Due: Read “Introduction,” and one chapter of your choice in The Haitian Revolution and the Early United States, ed. Elizabeth Maddox Dillon and Michael J. Drexler (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1bmzkn3>*

Before class, post your research topic on P-Web under “Discussion Board”

Week Nine OCTOBER 15-23 FALL BREAK

Week Ten: Monday, October 22 Topic Presentations
Wednesday, October 26 **PAPER PROPOSAL DUE No class meeting.**

Week Eleven: October 31 & November 2 Proposal Workshops
Please meet in class only during your assigned group workshop time.

Week Twelve: November 7 & 9 Writing Days **no class meetings**

Week Thirteen: Monday, November 14 **Bibliographies Due,**
Begin 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 [peer group meetings outside class time]

Week Sixteen: December 5 & 7 Research Presentations [peer group meetings outside class time]

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14 5:00 p.m. FINAL VERSION OF PAPERS DUE on P-Web