

Politics in the Early American Republic

History 311.01 Fall 2024

Prof. Sarah J. Purcell (she/her)

Monday & Wednesday 2:00-3:50 pm ARH 3243

Open Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 9:00-11:00 am & by appointment

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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. I expect flexibility from you, and you may expect it from me. Please communicate, so we can help one another.

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!

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. **Analyze 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 “Honesty in Academic Work” here: <https://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=34&navoid=5483#honest-academic>
- 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 with 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](#).
- Grinnell College is committed to compliance with Title IX and to supporting the academic success of pregnant and parenting students and students with pregnancy related conditions. If you are a pregnant student, have pregnancy related conditions, or are a parenting student (child under one-year needs documented medical care) who wishes to request reasonable related supportive measures from the College under Title IX, please email the Title IX Coordinator at titleix@grinnell.edu. The Title IX Coordinator will work with Disability Resources and your professors to provide reasonable supportive measures in support of your education while pregnant or as a parent under Title IX.

If you have other needs not addressed above, please let me know soon so that we can work together for the best possible learning environment. In some cases, I will recommend consulting with the Academic Advising staff. They are an excellent resource for developing strategies for academic success and can connect you with other campus resources as well: <http://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/academic-advising>. If I notice that you are encountering difficulty, in addition to communicating with you directly about it, I will also likely submit an academic alert via Academic Advising's SAL portal. This reminds you of my concern, and it notifies the Academic Advising team and your adviser(s) so that they can reach out to you with additional offers of support.

Books: Required books for this class are for sale/rent at Pioneer Bookshop; they are on 2-hour reserve at Burling library; and Zagarri (Jstor) and Pasley (Project Muse) are also available for free online as e-books—consult the library catalog for access.

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

Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest: 1796 and the Founding of American Democracy* (2016)

Rosemarie Zagarri, *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. Most readings are linked directly in this syllabus.

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 “scholarship note” essay due on October 18. On November 1, each student will turn in a paper proposal that outlines a proposed thesis and argument. On November 18, students will turn in a bibliography and deliver an oral presentation about one, major primary source. The research paper is due December 4, and class presentations and peer review will follow. The final, revised version of the research paper is due December 18.

The research paper is expected to be 20-30 pages long, based upon significant primary sources informed by context and methods 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:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Scholarship note | 5% |
| paper proposal | 10% |
| bibliography | 5% |
| primary source presentation | 5% |
| research presentation | 5% |
| class engagement | 10% |
| research journal | 10% |
| final 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.

I have a chronic illness that necessitates extra COVID precaution. Please consider wearing a mask in class (especially if you are or have been ill), and wear a mask when you visit my office. I will always have masks to share!

Week One: No Class Meeting—the semester starts on Thursday

Before class in week two, please fill in the class survey here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/e32iQh2gxL?origin=lprLink>

If you need a review of the period we will study: [The American Yawp: A Massively Collaborative Open U.S. History Textbook \(2021-22 Updates edition\)](#), Chapters 5-11, <https://www.americanyawp.com/>; Browse through Prof. Joanne Freeman’s “Open Yale Course” on the American Revolution, if you click on “Sessions,” you can view her lectures: <https://oyc.yale.edu/history/hist-116>

Week Two: How and Why to Study Political History

Monday, September 2 **Introduction to class**

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, September 5 **What’s new (and old) in Political History?**

*Reading Due: Michael Kazin, “Preface,” [The Concise Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History](#), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, vii-ix (distributed in class); Richard R. John, “The State Is Back In: What Now?” *Journal of the Early Republic* 38, no. 1 (2018): 105–18, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90018984> ; Browse some of the additional articles in the forum on the U.S. state in Vol. 38 of the *Journal of the Early Republic**

3:30 PM—Peer accountability

Friday, September 7 First Research Journal entry due at noon under “Journal” tab on P-web. An entry is due EACH Friday (with the exception of Weeks Eight, Nine, Fourteen, and Finals Week). Prof. Purcell will provide questions and prompts for the Research Journal entries on a marked tab in P-web, and you are free to write about anything at all related to your research for

this class. Individual entries will not be graded—you will receive full credit with an “A” on the Research Journal overall if you complete 11 or 10 out of the 11 entries. You will receive a “B” on the Research Journal if you complete 9 or 8 entries, and a “C” for 7 entries. Grades adjust downward from there. As with all assignments, doing these entries by the Friday deadline is important, but just let Prof. Purcell if you need to turn in an entry a bit late, and that won’t be a problem. Prof. Purcell will provide feedback and comments in the Journal for you to read, so be sure to check back and look at those. Writing *style* is not particularly important in these entries, and you may regard them as casual conversations about your research and writing *process*. The Journals are marked to be private to each student and Prof. Purcell. The average entry will be around 200 words, but length may vary.

Week Three: New Electoral History

Monday, September 9 *Reading Due: Jeffrey Pasley, The First Presidential Contest, pp. i-223*

Wednesday, September 11 *Reading Due: Jeffrey Pasley, The First Presidential Contest, pp. 224-414*

3:30 PM—Peer accountability

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

Week Four: Black Power

Monday, September 16 *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://www.jstor.org/stable/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, September 18 Research Methods Lab

Meet in Burling Library –second floor classroom

Reading Due: Gautham Rao, “The New Historiography of the Early Federal Government: Institutions, Contexts, and the Imperial State,” The William and Mary Quarterly 77, no. 1 (2020): 97–128,

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5309/willmaryquar.77.1.0097>

3:30 PM—Peer accountability

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

Week Five: Early Elections and Voting Records

Monday, September 23 *Reading Due: Explore “A New Nation Votes”* <https://elections.lib.tufts.edu/>; 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 25 *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>.

3:30 PM—Peer accountability

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

Week Six: Women, Gender, and Politics

Monday, September 30 *Reading Due: Zagarri, Revolutionary Backlash*
PRELIMINARY TOPIC DUE

Wednesday, October 2 Research Methods Lab
Meet in Burling Library –second floor classroom

3:30 PM—Peer accountability

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

Week Seven: The Global Turn

Monday, October 7 *Reading Due: Caitlin Fitz, Our Sister Republics*;

Wednesday, October 9 *Reading Due: Read “Introduction,” and SKIM 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>; 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

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

3:30 PM—Peer accountability

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

Week Eight: Native American and Indigenous Studies Methods

Monday, October 14 *Reading Due: Alyssa Mt. Pleasant, Caroline Wigginton, and Kelly Wisecup, “Materials and Methods in Native American and Indigenous Studies: Completing the Turn.” The William and Mary Quarterly 75, no. 2 (2018): 207–36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5309/willmaryquar.75.2.0207> ; David A. Chang, “The Good Written Word of Life: The Native Hawaiian Appropriation of Textuality.” The William and Mary Quarterly 75, no. 2 (2018): 237–58. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5309/willmaryquar.75.2.0237>*

Wednesday, October 16 Peer work day **meet in classroom during class time**

Friday, October 18 5:00 PM **“SCHOLARSHIP NOTE” PAPER DUE on P-Web under “Assignments”** No journal entry due today

Week Nine: FALL BREAK October 19-27

Week Ten: Research Proposals

Monday, October 28 Co-working research day—meet in classroom

Wednesday, October 30 Co-working research day—meet in classroom

3:30 PM—Peer accountability

Friday, November 1 5:00 pm PAPER PROPOSAL DUE in Pweb No journal entry due today

Week Eleven: Proposal Workshops

When not working on peer-review—spend time researching and working on your paper.

Monday, November 4 Come to class only during your group peer-review time

Wednesday, November 6 Come to class only during your group peer-review time

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

Week Twelve: Research and Writing
Monday, November 11 Writing Day
Co-working: meet in regular classroom

Wednesday, November 13 Writing Day
Co-working: meet in regular classroom

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

Week Thirteen: Source Presentations & Bibliographies
Monday, November 18 **Bibliographies Due**, Begin Source Presentations

Wednesday, November 20 Source Presentations

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

Week Fourteen: Drafting
Monday, November 25 Writing Day
Co-working: meet in regular classroom during class time

Wednesday, November 27 Writing Day
Work on your own; no class meeting

NOVEMBER 28 & 29 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Friday: No Research Journal entry due today

Week Fifteen: Drafting
Monday, December 2 Writing Day
Co-working: meet in regular classroom during class time

Wednesday, December 4 **PAPERS DUE**
During class: Research Presentations
[peer group meetings outside class time]

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

Week Sixteen: Revision & Research Presentations
December 9 & 12 Research Presentations
[peer group meetings outside class time]

FRIDAY at NOON Research Journal entry due on P-web

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18 5:00 p.m. FINAL VERSION OF
PAPERS DUE on P-Web** (note: this is our final exam time)