

HTS 2002 | The American Revolution

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Dr. Elena Telles Ryan

e.eryan38@gatech.edu



Left: "The American Rattlesnake Presenting Monsieur His Ally a Dish of Frogs," by j. Barrow, 1782 (English)

Right: "Join or Die" by Benjamin Franklin, 1754 (American)

Course Description

The American Revolution as political debate, war, and social upheaval, with attention to the framing and ratification of the Constitution.

Learning Objectives

- Develop and defend historical arguments about the causes, course, and consequences of the American Revolution using primary and secondary sources
- Analyze primary sources (e.g., pamphlets, letters, political cartoons) by identifying their context, audience, and purpose
- Explain multiple perspectives on the Revolution, including those of Patriots, Loyalists, Indigenous peoples, enslaved people, and women
- Evaluate the concept of "revolution" by assessing how radical or limited the American Revolution was for different groups
- Situate the American Revolution within a broader context, including Atlantic World dynamics and global conflicts
- Communicate historical ideas clearly in written and/or oral formats, using appropriate evidence and citation practices

Academic Integrity and Use of AI

Intellectual exchange is a critical element of a vibrant scholarly community. To protect the integrity of that community, students are required to cite every instance in which they borrow from or refer to another's idea, language, or other element of another's work. Students are welcome to study with one another, share study guides, visit the Writing Center, and seek additional feedback from the instructor. Students are also encouraged to draw from the whole body of readings, lectures, discussion posts, and sources assigned as part of this class *so long as* all references, quotations, allusions, summaries, or paraphrases are properly cited giving credit to the original author or speaker. Students found to be using AI in graded assignments will be considered in violation of the academic integrity policy. Students suspected of AI use who are unable to provide prior drafts or proper references may be subject to failing the assignment in question. All cases of academic dishonesty will be immediately referred to Student Judicial Affairs. Students with questions are welcome to contact me or to consult the Georgia Tech Honor Code, found here: <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code>.

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:
How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:
Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Technology Policy

Except as a reasonable accommodation, laptops and other electronics are not to be used in class. At best, they function similarly to pen/pencil and paper for notetaking and, at worst, get in the way of individual and class learning. Students will be expected to come prepared with note-

taking materials and keep electronics stowed during class time. Visible cell phone use in class will result in reduction of the cell phone user's participation grade.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Attendance

Each unexcused absence will result in a loss of 10 participation points. Arriving late will result in a loss of participation points proportionate to the amount of class time missed. Excused absences are any absences cleared with the instructor at least 24 hours in advance and with the appropriate documentation.

Late Work

Late work will not affect assignment grades if accompanied by documentation. All other late work will drop a partial grade following the deadline and another for each additional 24 hours without submission. For example, if an assignment is due at 5pm on a Wednesday and a student turns in a paper on Friday at 6pm, the maximum grade that student can achieve is a B (3 partial grades deducted).

Communication and Office Hours

I am very happy to meet or to correspond over email. I will reply within 24 hours to all emails sent between 9am Monday and 5pm Friday unless I've notified the class otherwise or unless the Institute is on break. I ask that students treat email as formal communication.

Required Readings

Common Sense by Thomas Paine (Perusall)

Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution by Kathleen DuVal (Perusall)

Black Americans in the Revolutionary Era: A Brief History with Documents ed. Woody Holton
Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification by David Waldstreicher (Perusall)
No Property in Man: Slavery and Antislavery at the Nation's Founding by Sean Wilentz (Perusall)

Grading and Assignments

1000 total points possible

900 and above = A

800-899 = B

700-799 = C

600-699 = D

Less than 600 = F

300 points: Participation

The participation grade includes attendance/in-class participation, notes on the reading, and engagement with fellow students' discussion leading.

1. First, students will be graded on their level of participation in discussion. Because not all students are equally comfortable with sharing their insights, visits to office hours and participation in small group discussions in class will also factor into the spoken half of the grade. Good participation is not simply talking a lot but rather adding to the discussion productively which always requires strong preparation. This will amount to half the participation grade.
2. Secondly, students are expected to do each class meeting's assigned readings *before* that class meets. They will access the readings through Perusall, adding 5 comments per week throughout the text. The comments should cover the breadth of the reading and must be substantive points about specific parts of the reading.

150 points: Two In-Class Midterms

These tests will ask students to remember and define terms highlighted through the semester, identify events and explain their significance in short answer questions, and analyze events and sources in context in one long answer questions and will be administered at intervals during the term.

150 points: Discussion Leading

Students will lead discussion in groups once per semester, walking the class through sources and leading the source analysis and discussion through questions that invite exploration.

200 points: Reading Quizzes

Five brief readings quizzes throughout the semester will assess students' completion of the assigned reading. Each quiz will ask students to identify the author and date of a primary source and answer questions about sources assigned for the homework. The lowest grade will be dropped.

200 points: Primary Source Project & Presentation

Given a collection of primary sources, students will use those sources to answer the question "How Revolutionary was the American Revolution?" and write a 7-8pp paper with the following components:

- I. Introduction
- II. Statement of argument
- III. Context
- IV. Argumentation based on sources
- V. Conclusion

Rough drafts will be due before Thanksgiving Break and final drafts will be due on the final day of class. Each student will give a 10-15 minute presentation on their findings during the last two weeks of class. Students are required to meet with the instructor at least once over the course of the semester in office hours to discuss their and argument.

Student Faculty Expectations Agreement

[The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) enumerate the instructor and the students' responsibilities towards one another. Most essentially, I strive to create a classroom characterized by mutual respect and generous scholarly exchange.