Well before the war for independence ended, people were already arguing about what the American Revolution might mean, and the argument goes on. How important, and how revolutionary, was the American Revolution? What kind of revolution was it – political, constitutional, nationalist, localist, social, cultural or ideological, settler-colonial? How much emphasis should be placed on the Revolution in understanding the late eighteenth century? The origins of the United States? Or world history? What kinds of before, during, and after stories have historians told about this event? How have trends in politics, in intellectual life, and in the writing of history changed the story? What were – and are - the relationships between what one influential historian of the Revolution called, fifty years ago, "rhetoric and reality"? This readings course begins with the debates among scholars as they emerged and developed during the late twentieth; moves on to an efflorescence of recent work; and concludes with attention to the role that memory of the Revolution plays in U.S. politics and culture today.

Assignments: 1) Two very short (2-3 pp) essays on (a) select older essays from the American Revolution anthologies of 1973, 1976, and 1993 and (b) a synthetic book on the revolutionary era 2) a brief paper proposal and revision of proposal, with bibliography, for 3) a final paper of 15-20 pages on a topic of your choice. Options will include a historiographical review essay, a research proposal, or an evaluation of a museum exhibit or a major work not included on the syllabus.

Schedule of Classes and Readings.

1/31 Introduction: Revolutions in History, Revolutions in America
Recommended reading:
   David Armitage, “Every Great Revolution is a Civil War” (2015), https://scholar.harvard.edu/armitage/publications/every-great-revolution-civil-war

2/7 The American Revolution in Historiography: Neo-Whigs and Neo-Progressives
   -Bernard Bailyn, “The Central Themes of the American Revolution: an Interpretation” (3-31)
   -Rowland Berthoff and John M. Murrin, “Feudalism, Communalism, and the Yeoman Freeholder: The American Revolution Considered as a Social Accident” (256-88)
   -Edmund S. Morgan, “Conflict and Consensus in the American Revolution” (289-309)
   -Gary B. Nash, “Social Change and the Growth of Prerevolutionary Urban Radicalism” (3-36)
Alfred F. Young ed, Beyond the American Revolution (1993):
   -Young, “Afterword: How Radical was the American Revolution?” (317-64)
2/14 (Re-)Defining the Colonial Order
→ Reports on: Countryman, Kay in AR; Kulikoff, Taylor in BtAR

2/21 Imperial Order -- or Disorder -- and Political Economy
→ Reports on: Greene in EAR; Ernst in AR

2/28 Mobilizing and Experience: Men and Cities
→ Reports on: Hoerder, Foner in AR

3/7 Mobilizing and Experience: Women and Cultural Politics
Kate Haulman, The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America (2011)
→ Reports on: Hoff-Wilson in AR; Davidson in BAR

3/14 Mobilizing and Experience: Africans and Masters
→ Reports on: Berlin in AR; P. Wood in BAR
3/21 The Political Economy of War: Virginia
John W. Shy, “The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War” in Kurtz and Hutson eds., Essays on the American Revolution (1973), 121-56
G. Nobles, “Reconsidering Class in the Revolution” in Whose American Revolution Was it?, 192-224
→Report on Hoffman in AR

3/218 Controlling the War Story
Report on: R.M. Brown in BtAR

4/4 South and West of the Revolution – or not
→Report on Jennings in AR

→ Revised paper proposal due

4/11 Religion, Politics, and Nation: Continuities or Changes?
Spencer W. McBride, Pulpit and Nation: Clergymen and the Politics of Revolutionary America (2017)
→Report on: McLoughlin in EAR; Isaac in BAR

4/18 Culture and Identity: Progress or Backlash?
Mechal Sobel, Teach Me Dreams: The Search for Self in Revolutionary America (2006)
→Report on: Countryman in BtAR

--Spring Vacation--

5/2 Constitutionalism: Structure as Settlement and as Process
Roundtable, “Beard at 100 ” [Edling, Holton, Slatoner, Waldstreicher, Bernstein, Cutterham], American Political Thought 2 (Fall 2013), 259-316.
→Reports on: Henderson in AR

5/9 What is the Revolution Now? Memory and History in the 21st Century
Andrew Schocket, Fighting over the Founders: How We Remember the American Revolution (2015)
Lin-Manuel Miranda, Hamilton: an American Musical (CD on reserve)
Recommended: Renee Romano and Clare Potter eds., Historians on Hamilton (2018)

→5/16 Papers due