

Spring 2013
HIS 350R: Debating the American Revolution
Thursdays, 3:30-6:30
Gar 0.132
Unique Number: 39555



Pulling down the statue of King George III, New York City, July 1776

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Prospectus

In this course, students will immerse themselves in the social and ideological background of the beginning of the American Revolution in New York City. After examining the local and political context of New York city at the end of the colonial era, each student will be assigned a historic character (who lived in New York city in 1775) and will then spend the second half of the semester representing their character in an extended role-playing game that traces the “course of human events” from the spring of 1775 to the summer of 1776. Will New York declare its independence and join the revolution or choose to remain loyal to King George III? It will be up to you and your classmates to decide.

Required Books (available for purchase at the University Co-op):

Jill Lepore, New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan, (New York, 2005).

Joseph Tiedemann, Reluctant Revolutionaries: New York City and the Road to Independence, 1763-1776, (Cornell, 1997).

All other readings will be made available either on-line or in a course packet.

Writing Assignments:

There will be eight brief writing assignments (totaling c. 8000 words):

- 1.) An analytical essay examining Lepore's history and Daniel Horsmanden's contemporary record of a slave conspiracy investigation in New York City in 1741. (1000 words)
- 2.) An analytical essay comparing and contrasting the main arguments advanced by both sides in the imperial debate based on your reading of contemporary writings and testimony. (1000 words)
- 3.) A brief paper based upon your analysis of one month (four weekly issues) of a New York City newspaper published between January 1774 and April 1775 - you will be assigned which month and which paper to read (1000 words)
- 4.) A paper providing the background story/personal narrative of your assigned character before January 1775. (1000 words)
- 5.) Two speeches written by your assigned character (these will be presented by you to the class - in character - as well as written and turned in to me) I will tell you when each of these are due once characters are assigned. (1000 words each)
- 6.) Two pseudonymous letters submitted to the class on-line newspaper, speaking to the current issues being debated in class (these will be circulated anonymously to the rest of the class, after first being submitted to me with your name attached). I will tell you when your letters are due once characters are assigned. (500 words each)
- 7.) A final - post-game - analysis of what you think the game has taught you about the American Revolution in general, and in New York city in particular, and what you think became of your character after July 1776 (1000 words).



Grades:

The writing assignments will account for eighty percent of your grade. Each of them will be worth ten percent (except the letters to the editor which will be worth five percent each). You have the option of revising and resubmitting (for a re-grade) any two papers during the semester.

The remainder of your grade will be based on your participation in class; how persuasively you portray your assigned character and how successful you are in achieving your characters' goals as revealed to you (secretly) at the start of the game.

Course Schedule:

17 Jan. - Introductions, Requirements, and Themes

24 Jan. - Living in Colonial New York, I- DISCUSS: Lepore, New York Burning, 5-128, Horsmanden, Journal (extracts).

31 Jan. - Living in Colonial New York, II - DISCUSS: Lepore, New York Burning, 129-232; Horsmanden Journal (extracts).

7 Feb. - Politics in Colonial New York, I - DISCUSS: Tiedeman, Reluctant Revolutionaries, 1-104; Stamp Act Debate (readings); Lepore-Horsmanden papers due.

14 Feb. - Politics in Colonial New York, III - DISCUSS: Tiedeman, Reluctant Revolutionaries, 105-197; Imperial Debate, 1767-1774 (readings). Colonial Newspapers will be assigned.

21 Feb. - NO CLASS

28 Feb. - In-class Presentation of Newspaper reports , Part 1; political papers due

7 Mar. - In-class Presentation of Newspaper reports; Characters Assigned; newspaper papers due.

14 Mar. - NO CLASS

21 Mar. - Re-enacting the Past, 1st Session - (April 1775); character papers due.

28 Mar. - Re-enacting the Past, 2nd Session (July 1775)

4 Apr. - Re-enacting the Past, 3rd Session (October 1775)

11 Apr. - Re-enacting the Past, 4th Session (January 1776)

18 Apr. - Re-enacting the Past, 5th Session (April 1776)

25 Apr. - Re-enacting the Past, 6th Session (July 1776)

2 May - Course conclusion, post-mortem. Final papers due.