A More Perfect Union:
The Origins and Development of the U.S. Constitution
Seminar on Teaching American History
Cape Cod Collaborative
Syllabus 2008

Updated 6/1/08

Please note that the syllabus, while essentially outlined below, may be subject to some shifts to accommodate educational opportunities that may arise during seminar.

Thursday, January 24
Orientation, Book Distribution, Welcoming Dinner
4:15-7:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 10
Breakout sessions on reading materials and papers on “Slavery and the Constitution”
4:15-7:30 p.m.

Summer Session: Week One

Preparation for Monday, June 23:
Paper due on “Private Correspondence of the Founders”
Read on the web at: http://revolution.h-net.msu.edu/essays.html
Read on the web: James Madison, “Vices of the Political System”; and John Adams, “Thoughts on Government.” Googling these titles will bring them up.
Read from Fame and the Founding Fathers, Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6.

Monday, June 23
The Anchoring of American Law, R. B. Bernstein
8:00 a.m.     Coffee
8:30-9:00     Evaluation Solutions, Bob Peterson
9:00-10:00    Part One: Becoming Independent

The first part will examine how a family quarrel within the British Empire spiraled out of control until it led to the first successful colonial revolution against a mother country. It will stress, among other things, the need to understand that the American Revolution had its roots in Anglo-American constitutional history, with colonists and mother country's polemists disputing the meaning of the unwritten British constitution as applied to America.
10:00-10:30 a.m. Break

10:30-12:00 p.m. Part Two: An Age of Experiments in Government

The second part will focus on the Americans' efforts to restore legitimate government in a form that recognized their rejection of monarchism. It will consider the development of written constitutions and declarations of rights, the constitutional convention and the proper means of exercising the constituent power, and the quandary of relations between church and state.

12:00-1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00-1:45 p.m. Jefferson and Constitutionalism; Jefferson and Slavery

2:00-3:30 p.m. Breakout sessions: Discussion of papers on the private correspondence of the founders. At the conclusion of this session, please hand your papers into the session leader.

Preparation for Tuesday, June 24


Tuesday, June 24

The Anchoring of American Law, R.B. Bernstein, Peter Gibbon

8:00-8:30 a.m. Coffee

8:30-10:00 a.m. Part Three: The Making of the Constitution

This part will examine the Americans' hesitant experiments with government for the thirteen United States. First, it will consider the ramshackle Articles of Confederation, assessing the Confederation's achievements as well as its drawbacks. Second, it will explore how Americans who thought in national terms began to recognize the Confederation's weaknesses and to begin to design solutions for them.

10:00-10:30 a.m. Break

10:30-12:00 p.m. The Making of the Constitution, continued

12:00-1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00-1:45 p.m. Douglas Adair’s Vision of James Madison

1:45-2:00 Break
2:00-3:30 p.m. Breakout Session, Quotations on History from the Book of Readings:
#6, 8, 11, 17, 20. Reports back to the group conclusions about two of them.

Preparation for Wednesday, June 25.
In Pauline Maier’s, American Scripture: Chapters 1 and 2, appendices B and C. From the Book of Readings: The 1780 Massachusetts State Constitution; Merrill Jensen and John P. Kaminski et. al., eds., Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution; Selected Town Returns.

Wednesday, June 25
The People As Sovereign: Independence and the Ratification of the Constitution,” Pauline Maier
8:00-8:30 a.m. Coffee
8:30-10:00 a.m. Pauline Maier
10:00-10:30 a.m. Break
10:30-12:00 p.m. Discussion of issues based on assigned reading:
- Why did "the people," insofar as the documents in Appendix B of American Scripture reflect their views, support independence?
- Were their reasons different than those in Congress's Declaration?
- Why did Congress make the changes it made in the committee draft of the Declaration (see Appendix C)?
- With regard to the ratification of the Constitution in Massachusetts, what objections did the towns make to the proposed Constitution?
- Why did some persons—who favored ratification—not want the towns to instruct their delegates (see Northampton)?
- What was the flap in Sandwich about?
- What did that controversy—and the way the towns acted—have to do with the idea that "We the People" were supposed to ordain and establish the Constitution?
- Did Massachusetts' form of ratification sufficiently address the objections raised by some towns?

12:00—1:00 p.m. Lunch
1:00-2:00 p.m. Documentary, Liberty: The Making of the Constitution
2:00-2:30 p.m. Break
2:30-3:30 Breakout Discussion of Documentary with Pauline Maier

Preparation for Thursday, June 26
In *Book of Readings*: article on John Adams by Bernard Bailyn.

**Thursday, June 26**

**Adams National Historic Park**  
*Guest Lecturer: Richard Ryerson*

8:00  
Meet at the Cape Codder for bus departure to Adams National Historic Park (no coffee available that morning).  
**Bus will be leaving Cape Codder at 8:15 a.m. and leaving Adams National Historic Park at 3 p.m.**

**Summer Session: Week Two**

*Preparation for Monday, June 3*

Review *A Brilliant Solution* (participants read book in advance of the seminar).

**Monday, June 30**

**Confederation and Constitution, Part One, Carol Berkin**  
Coffee

8:00 a.m.

8:30-10:00 a.m.  
Problems of the Confederation

10:00-10:30 a.m.  
Break

10:30-12:00 p.m.  
Constitutional Conventions: Key Issues, Personalities of Delegates

12:00-1:00 p.m.  
Lunch

1:00-1:45 p.m.  
Patrick Henry as Anti-Federalist

1:45-2:00 p.m.  
Break

2:00-2:30  
Documentary on Alexander Hamilton, Part I

2:30-3:30 p.m.  
Discussion of Documentary

*Preparation for Tuesday, July 1.*  
In Carol Berkin’s *Revolutionary Mothers*, Chapters One and Ten. In Book of Readings, primary sources on women’s role in Revolution.

**Tuesday, July 1**

**Confederation and Constitution, Part Two, Carol Berkin**  
Coffee

8:00-8:30 a.m.

8:30-10:00 a.m.  
Who Was Left Out: Voting Requirements, Racial Discrimination

10:00-10:30 a.m.  
Break

10:30-12:00 p.m.  
New Roles for Women, Women’s Contributions to the Revolution

12:00-1:00 p.m.  
Lunch
1:00-2:10 p.m. | Primary Sources Exercise
---|---
2:00-2:30 p.m. | Break
2:30-3:30 p.m. | Discussion

Preparation for Wednesday, July 2

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday, July 2</th>
<th>Hamilton and the New Nation, Darren Staloff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-8:30</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
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<td>8:30-9:00</td>
<td>Evaluation Solutions</td>
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<td>9:00-10:00</td>
<td>Hamilton’s Reports</td>
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<td>10:00-10:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>10:30-12:00</td>
<td>Hamilton and Politics</td>
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<td>12:00-1:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>1:00-2:00</td>
<td>Alexander Hamilton Documentary, Part II</td>
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<td>2:00-2:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>2:30-3:30</td>
<td>Breakout discussion of Documentary</td>
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Preparation for Thursday, July 3
In *Book of Readings*: Articles on Plimoth Plantation

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<tr>
<th>Thursday, July 3</th>
<th>Field Trip to Plimoth Plantation</th>
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<tr>
<td>8 a.m.</td>
<td>Meet at the Cape Codder for bus departure to Adams National Historic Park (no coffee available that morning). <strong>Bus will be leaving Cape Codder at 8:15 a.m. and leaving Plimoth Plantation at 3 p.m.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Thursday, September 25</th>
<th>Projects Due</th>
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<th>Thursday, October 30</th>
<th>Farewell Dinner</th>
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Guest Speaker: Gordon Wood