

University of North Texas  
Department of History

History 4490: Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution, 1607-1800

Maymester

Dr. Chet

Office hours: by appointment ([guy.chet@unt.edu](mailto:guy.chet@unt.edu)).

The outbreak of the American War of Independence (1775-1783), and the formation of the United States as a democratic political entity, ushered in a new era in the history of the West. By couching their grievances against Great Britain in the popularized political philosophy of the Enlightenment, the patriots turned British North America into a practical testing ground for European liberalism. Thus, the American Revolution set the stage for the French Revolution not only by bankrupting and weakening the French Crown, but also by providing European liberals and republicans with a model of a viable and enlightened republic.

The rejection of the mother country by its colonists was, and still is, a remarkable and curious aberration for some, while for others it was the culmination of a long-term natural progression. This course will trace the growing social, cultural, economic, and political tensions between Great Britain and its American colonies. The class will examine to what degree these developments can explain the acrimony of the early 1770s and Americans' willingness to wage war against the British Empire for political independence. The class will also examine the aftermath of the war, gauging the Revolution's impact on Americans' lives.

There are no prerequisites for this course.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Developing analytical skills – understanding that historical narratives are arguments, which can and should be evaluated based on evidence.
2. Gaining familiarity with the general history of colonial and Revolutionary America.
3. Understanding competing analyses of the American Revolution.
4. Understanding how the two US constitutions (the Articles of Confederation and Federal Constitution) encapsulate competing narratives of the Revolution.
5. Developing an independent understanding of the causes and consequence of the American Revolution.
6. Developing writing skills – learning how to compose an argumentative essay, in which one formulates an analytical argument, lists relevant evidence, and then explains how the evidence supports the argument.

**COMMUNICATION:** Learning content will be delivered in class, and through the textbooks and reading materials posted on Blackboard. Students must use their UNT accounts to log into the course from the UNT Blackboard Learn page. To correspond with me, please use email ([guy.chet@unt.edu](mailto:guy.chet@unt.edu)), rather than Blackboard. It is too easy for me to miss Blackboard messages; please use email.

**GRADING:** During the course of the semester, students are expected to contribute to class discussion, submit reading responses, and complete 2 exams (if a student cannot attend an exam, s/he should contact me *in advance* in order to arrange a make up exam). Assignments are graded on a scale of 0 to 100, with the final course grade assigned according to the following scale: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (0-59). In grading the exams, I pay close attention to both substance and form (grammar, spelling, and clarity). In evaluating substance, I examine whether the author has demonstrated a critical, historical understanding of the material by presenting and substantiating a thesis (a historical argument). In order to compute the final course grade, I will add the relative values of each student's number grades for the 2 e-responses (5% each), mid-term (40%) and the final examination (50%).

**LATE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK:** Assignments must be completed by the due date for full credit. Late submissions will incur a 5-point late-penalty for the first hour, and 5 additional points for every hour thereafter.

**TIME COMMITMENT:** Students should anticipate at least 10 hours per week for studying materials and completing class assignments. Falling behind schedule in this course will be detrimental to a student's final grade, since the concepts covered are cumulative – not becoming proficient with information in a particular week will lead prevent a student from comprehending material delivered in subsequent weeks.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM:** As a student-centered public research university, the University of North Texas promotes the integrity of the learning process by establishing and enforcing academic standards. Academic dishonesty breaches the mutual trust necessary in an academic environment and undermines all scholarship. Students are held accountable for understanding UNT's policy on academic integrity. Any violations of this policy may result in a 0 or F on the particular assignment or an F in the course.

**STUDENT SUCCESS AT UNT:** Students who have trouble keeping up with assignments should inform the professor as early as possible. "Succeed at UNT" provides students support services and resources for success. Moreover, the History Department's Help Center (WH #220, 940-565-4772) and the History Department Library (WH #267, 940-369-7681) are staffed by graduate students who can assist students with tutoring and essay writing advice.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Students with special circumstances covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act should register with the Office of Disability Accommodation, and also inform the instructor of the class. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the special needs of students with disabilities where such adjustments are necessary to provide equality of educational access.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

Jack Green, "The Glorious Revolution and the British Empire 1688-1783" [handout via Blackboard]

George Tindall & David Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, vol. I (The FULL – not the brief – edition. Any edition of this textbook is good & acceptable for this class, as long as it is not the brief

edition). **If you buy a new copy (i.e. the latest edition, you should take advantage of the support website for *America: A Narrative History*. In it you'll find outlines, essays, self-evaluation quizzes, points of interest and further research etc.**

Schedule:

Week 1: The English Civil Wars to the Glorious Revolution; Reconsidering the Atlantic Cultural Divide  
Tindal & Shi — the chapters covering the start of English colonization in VA up to (& including) the outbreak of the War of American Independence.  
Jack Green, “The Glorious Revolution and the British Empire 1688-1783” [handout]

Week 2: Political Autonomy and Political Dependence; Acrimony and Resistance  
Tindal & Shi — the chapters covering the War of Independence up to the election of 1800 (that is, up to the end of the John Adams presidency).  
**Tuesday: take-home midterm exam (due Thurs. 4 pm at [guy.chet@unt.edu](mailto:guy.chet@unt.edu))**

Week 3: Dynamics of Post-Colonial Strife and Disintegration  
**Wednesday: take-home essay exam (due Thurs. 4 pm at [guy.chet@unt.edu](mailto:guy.chet@unt.edu))**