

History 511

Undergraduate Seminar in American History

Battles of the American Revolution

Fall Semester 2002

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“What battles have in common is human: the behavior of men struggling to reconcile their instinct for self-preservation, their sense of honor, and the achievement of some aim over which other men are ready to kill them. The battle is therefore always a study of fear and usually of courage; always of leadership, usually of obedience; always of compulsion, sometimes of insubordination; always of anxiety, sometimes of elation or catharsis; always of uncertainty and doubt, misinformation and misapprehension, usually also of faith and sometimes of vision; always of violence, sometimes also of cruelty, self-sacrifice, compassion; above all, it is always a study of solidarity and usually also of disintegration—for it is toward the disintegration of human groups that battle is directed.”

John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, pp. 297-298

Your assignment in this class is to write a Keeganesque historical paper about a battle in the War for American Independence—that is, to find as many of these twenty-four variables as you can in a Revolutionary military engagement.

Course Schedule:

Aug. 19 introduction to the course, Library tour

Aug. 26 Discussion of Keegan, ch. 2, 3, 4 and pp. 295-302; also, from any book on the American Revolution, find a narrative paragraph (asking and answering who, where, or what questions) and re-write it in your own words as an analytical paragraph (dealing with matters of how or why).

Sept. 9 Discussion of John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, ch. 9-10; from any book on the American Revolution, find an analytical paragraph and revise it as a piece of narrative.

Sept. 16 Discussion of Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence, 1763-1789: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789*, ch. 3, 5, 7, 8, 14, 15; select a passage from Higginbotham and revise into a counterfactual statement, that is, falsify part of the passage so that it turns out differently than Higginbotham says event did, and do so in such a way as to raise valid questions about what did actually happen.

Sept. 23 Discussion of Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and the American Mind, 1775-1783*.

Sept. 30 Discussion of Robert M. Calhoun, *Dominion and Liberty: Ideology in the Anglo-American World, 1660-1801*, ch. 5.

- Oct. 7 Discussion of outlines and annotated primary and secondary bibliographies; distribute to the class in advance via email.
- Oct. 21 Discussion of a draft of two sequential narrative paragraphs in your paper.
- Oct. 28 Discussion of narrative paragraphs, continued.
- Nov. 4 Discussion of quoted material. Select your more quotable research material and Submit three passages which quote or paraphrase this material in different ways.
- Nov. 11 Discussion of quoted material continued.
- Nov. 18 Discussion of final paragraphs.
- Nov. 25 Discussion of opening paragraphs.
- Dec. 2 Discussion of opening paragraphs continued.
- Wednesday, Dec. 18 (final exam period) Graded papers returned. Reflections on the experience. Course evaluation.