

HIS 100: Introduction to Historical Methods: The World of Thomas Jefferson

Fall 2010

Professor T. Slaughter

Tuesday and Thursday RR Library 456, 9:40-10:55.

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11-noon, and by appointment.

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Thomas Jefferson is an ideal focus for discussions of the range of subjects that fascinated him, from gardening to food, wine, women, education, politics, philosophy, architecture, and plantation management. He provides an exquisite example of Enlightenment culture during the age of revolutions, and of a Founding Father who, as Secretary of State, Vice President, and President attempted to implement the revolutionary and constitutional principles on which the United States was founded. His private correspondence and public papers, his published writings and private musings, give access to Jefferson's inner landscape as well as the world in which he lived.

Through films, non-fiction and fiction, and primary source documents relating to case studies—The Declaration of Independence and its contrast to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*; the Burr Conspiracy; and Jefferson's relationship with his slave Sally Hemings—we will explore historical research and interpretation, both our own and that of other historians. In particular, we will look at some of the ways that historical research can go wrong, and how historical writing is always a reflection of perspectives rather than of gathered facts, of interpretations rather than recovery, of creativity rather than objective engagement with sources.

Your grades will be based on attendance; active, knowledgeable participation in class discussions; and three papers that you will re-write after the first drafts are returned to you.

First draft of papers: ten percent each (30% total).

Rewrites of papers: ten percent each (30% total).

Attendance and participation (40%): Your course grade will be penalized for every unexcused absence and for every class in which you do not participate actively in the conversation or I cannot tell that you have done the reading. A missed class penalizes you on all three counts—absence, lack of preparation, and non-participation.

Course Materials: You must either purchase the three books that have been ordered through the university bookstore or read them on library reserve:

Gore Vidal, *Burr: A Novel* (NY, 1973).

Joseph Ellis, *What Did the Declaration Declare?* (NY, 1999).

Joyce Appleby, *Thomas Jefferson* (NY, 2003).

You will receive in class a photocopy of Reed and Williams, eds., *The Case of Aaron Burr*. In the second week of class you are assigned a number of articles that you can find on [Jstor](#). The online syllabus on the Blackboard page for this class contains links primary source documents and book excerpts that are also required reading. Paper copies of these sources are also available on reserve at the circulation desk.

Syllabus

1. Thursday September 2

Introduction

2. Tuesday, September 7

Historians Accused and Convicted: *Arming America*

Reading and discussion:

Michael A. Bellesiles, "The Origins of Gun Culture in the United States, 1760-1865," *Journal of American History* 83 (Sept. 1996): 425-255.

Jack N. Rakove, "Words, Deeds and Guns: 'Arming America' and the Second Amendment," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., 59 (Jan. 2002): 205-210.

Gloria L. Main, "Many Things Forgotten: The Use of Probate Records in 'Arming America,'" *WMQ* 3d ser., 59 (2002): 211-216.

Ira D. Gruber, "Of Arms and Men: 'Arming America' and Military History," *WMQ* 3d ser., 59 (2002): 217-222.

Randolph Roth, "Guns, Gun Culture, and Homicide: The Relationship between Firearms, the Uses of Firearms and Interpersonal Violence," *WMQ* 3d ser., 59 (2002): 223-240.

Michael A. Bellesiles, "Exploring America's Gun Culture," *WMQ* 3d ser., 59 (2002): 241-68.

3. Thursday, September 9

Historians Accused and Convicted: Vesey Conspiracy

Youtube: Vesey as martyr in modern perception
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j05sCUvzKQ0>>

Reading and discussion:

Michael P. Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators," *WMQ* 3d ser., 58 (Oct. 2001): 915-76.

Edward A. Pearson, "Denmark Vesey and His Historians," *WMQ* 3d ser., 59 (Jan. 2002): 147-52.

Winthrop D. Jordan, "The Charleston Hurricane of 1822; Or, the Law's Rampage," *WMQ* 3d ser., 59 (Jan. 2002): 175-178.

4. Tuesday, September 14

Film: Thomas Jefferson: A View from the Mountain (first half).

*Paper due at beginning of class (late papers penalized one letter grade and an additional letter grade for each day late after due date): Assess comparatively the mistakes of and consequences for the two historians in the cases we read about. Be specific in your use of evidence from the assigned reading (5 pages, double-spaced with one-inch margins and 12 point font). What, if anything, were they guilty of? Were the accusations or the defenses more convincing? Were the outcomes fair? (You will have to do some online research to discover the outcomes.)

5. Thursday, September 16

Burr Conspiracy

Reading and discussion:

Gore Vidal, *Burr: A Novel* (New York, 1973): 3-104.

6. Tuesday, September 21

Burr Conspiracy

Reading and discussion:

V.B. Reed and J.D. Williams, *The Case of Aaron Burr* (Boston, 1960): 2-100.

*First paper returned to you.

7. Thursday, September 23

Burr Conspiracy

Reading and discussion:

Vidal, *Burr*: 105-227.

8. Tuesday, September 28

Film: Thomas Jefferson: A View from the Mountain (second half).

*First paper rewrite due at beginning of class along with the first draft that I returned to you (late papers penalized one letter grade and an additional letter grade for each day late after due date).

9. Thursday, September 30

Burr Conspiracy

Reading and discussion:

Reed and Williams: 101-98.

10. Tuesday, October 5

Burr Conspiracy

Reading and discussion:

Vidal, *Burr*: 227-322.

11. Thursday, October 7

Burr Conspiracy

Reading and discussion:

Vidal, *Burr*: 323-End.

12. Tuesday, October 12

Film: Jefferson in Paris (first part).

*Second paper, on Burr Conspiracy due at beginning of class (late papers penalized one letter grade and an additional letter grade for each day late after due date): Was there a conspiracy? If so, to do what and was it treason?

13. Thursday, October 14

Reading and discussion:

Thomas Paine, [Common Sense](#) (Philadelphia, 1776).

14. Tuesday, October 19

Declaration of Independence

Reading and discussion:

Joseph Ellis, *What Did the Declaration Declare?* (New York, 1999).

*Second paper returned.

15. Thursday, October 21

Film-Jefferson in Paris (second part).

*Rewrite of second paper due at beginning of class (late papers penalized one letter grade and an additional letter grade for each day late after due date).

16. Tuesday, October 26: Meet with Margaret Becket, history librarian, for introduction to online database.

Jefferson attacked

In class work with *America's Historical Newspapers* online database. Responses to the following questions are due at the beginning of the next class.

Newspaper HW assignment on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings.

1. When and where did the first accusation that Jefferson had a relationship with a slave appear?
2. How widely did the charges spread?
3. Were there regional concentrations of the publications? Where did more appear; where did fewer appear?
4. What was the defense?
5. When did the story die out?
6. What, in its broadest claims, were the charges against Jefferson? Were they confined to accusations that he had a sexual relationship with a slave?

17. Thursday, October 28

Read and discuss:

Joyce Appleby, *Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 2003): 1-71.

18. Tuesday, November 2

Reading and discussion:

Appleby, *Thomas Jefferson*: 72-158.

19. Thursday, November 4

Thomas Jefferson Primary Sources

Reading and discussion:

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ch. 14 "[Law](#)," and ch. 23 "[Manners](#)."

Thomas Jefferson to Maria Cosway, Paris, October 12, 1786. **(ER)**

Martha Jefferson Randolph, "[Diary](#)," in *The Life of Thomas Jefferson* by George Tucker (London, 1837): 171-172.

20. Tuesday, November 9

Jefferson Primary Source Exercise

Reading and discussion

In-class assignment: Attempt to transcribe the letter given to you at the beginning of class.

21. Thursday, November 11

Reading and discussion:

James Callender, "The President Again," *Richmond Recorder*, Reprinted in *The Republican* (September 6, 1802).

Anonymous, "Letter from a Representative..." *Salem Gazette* (February 10, 1803).

22. Tuesday, November 16

Reading and discussion:

Madison Hemings, "Life Among the Lowly, No. 1," *Pike County (Ohio) Republican*. March 13, 1873. Reprinted in Fawn Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (New York, 1998): 471-476. **(ER)**

Israel Jefferson, "Reminiscences of Israel Jefferson." Reprinted Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 477-92. **(ER)**

"The Family Denial," Reprinted in Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 493-498. **(ER)**

23. Thursday, November 18

Reading and discussion:

Eugene A. Foster *et al.*, "[Jefferson Fathered Slave's Last Child](#)," *Nature* 396 (November 5, 1998): 27-28.

Report of the Research Committee on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings., Thomas Jefferson Foundation, January 2000, [Appendix B: Opinions of Scientists Consulted](#).

24. Tuesday, November 23

*Paper number three due at the beginning of class (late papers penalized one letter grade and an additional letter grade for each day late). What do we know? What can we know? What do you think? How does it matter?

Film-TBA

25. Thursday, November 25. NO CLASS

26. Tuesday, November 30

Reading and discussion:

James Parton, [*Life of Thomas Jefferson: Third President of the United States*](#) (New York, 1902): 567-570.

Douglass Adair, "The Jefferson Scandals," in *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, Trevor Colbourn ed. (New York, 1974): 160-91. **(ER)**

*Paper number three returned.

27. Thursday, December 2

Reading and discussion:

Joseph Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1997): 216-220. **(ER)**

Eric S. Lander & Joseph J. Ellis, "[Founding Father.](#)" *Nature*, **396** (November 5, 1998): 13-14.

Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: an American Controversy*. (Charlottesville, 1997; 2000): vii-xiii. **(ER)**

Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* (New York, 2008): 21-32. **(ER)**

28. Tuesday, December 7

Reading and discussion:

Jill Lepore, "[President Tom's Cabin: Jefferson, Hemings, and a Disclaimed Lineage.](#)" *The New Yorker*, September 22, 2008.

William G. Hyland Jr., *In Defense of Thomas Jefferson: The Sally Hemings Sex Scandal* (New York, 2009): 1-12, 76-93. **(ER)**

*Revised paper number three and the first draft returned to you are due at the beginning of class.

29. Thursday, December 9