The People's University

America 250: Revolution & Constitution

Attend as many classes as you wish.
There are no tests or other requirements.

Class Schedule (All Thursdays)

Class 1: June 25 @ 7PM:
The Meaning of Freedom (1763-1775)

At the conclusion of the French and Indian War, Great Britain had become the dominant empire. Yet, the coffers in London sat bare and money needed to be raised to repay loans and administer the empire. The government under King George III enacted a series of taxes and set a figurative line down the Appalachian Mountains as part of the Proclamation of 1763. How would the colonists react, having been promised land for their prior service in helping to defeat the French and push back the Native American presence? Events between 1763 to the first shots in a Massachusetts town in April 1775, provide an answer.

Instructor: Phillip Greenwalt

Class 2: July 2 @ 7PM:
Independence Declared (1775-1776)

What Lexington and Concord ushered in grew in momentum, from a patriot victory at Breed's Hill, to the announcement of George Washington as commander-in-chief, to the American invasion of Canada. The cause of the colonists expanded. The Siege of Boston won, the war moved south in 1776. On July 9, General Washington read the Declaration of Independence to his troops in New York City. Meanwhile, the mother country was in the process of sending the largest armada of troops to the western hemisphere to date. During the "times that tried men's souls," Washington would lose New York and escape across New Jersey, then rally before the calendar year flipped to 1777.

Instructor: Phillip Greenwalt

Class 3: July 9 @ 7PM:
The Double Sevens (1777)

In the war for our nation's independence, all of the years were significant in many ways. Yet one year, 1777, stands out as exceptionally pivotal with its high and low points that would shape the remainder of the war. "The Double Sevens" began with the Battle of Princeton and Washington's famous crossing of the Delaware River. Other major events ranged from the British campaign to take Philadelphia leading to the winter encampment at Valley Forge to the American siege and weighty victory at Saratoga. The Fall of 1777 would also bring action to the upper Ohio Valley as the first siege and defense of Wheeling's own Fort Henry opened the month of September. This included Major Samuel McCulloch's famous leap to escape capture and the often overlooked fighting in the western frontier region.

Instructor: Mike Giorgianni

Class 4: July 16 @ 7PM:
The Year of the French (1778)

1778 was a pivotal turning point in the American Revolution, as France formally entered the war on the side of the American cause. French military and naval support, through leaders such as the General Rochambeau, Admiral de Grasse, and the Marquis de Lafayette, reshaped the course of the conflict and strengthened the prospects for American independence. The program will also highlight the broader Franco-American alliance and the enduring legacy of these key French figures in the Revolutionary story.

Instructor: Robert Kelly

Class 5:July 23 @ 7PM:
The Battle of Camden(1779 -1780)

The Battle of Camden was one of the worst military defeats in American history. On the heels of the surrender of Charleston, American prospects for victory in the south were never dimmer. This talk will review the events of summer 1780 leading up to the battle and the decisions and field situations that led to an overly confident Horatio Gates fleeing the field.

Instructor: Robert Orrison

Class 6: July 30 @ 7PM:
Siege and Surrender (1781-1782)

As the Revolutionary War continued, our leaders developed and implemented our first national government, The Articles of Confederation. Replaced in less than a decade, a discussion on the strengths, weaknesses, and most importantly, lessons learned is still valuable in understanding the time period. Analyzing the consequential siege and battle of Yorktown, Virginia must be addressed when examining 1781. Our discussion will look closely at various accounts of the surrender and roles of individuals such as Alexander Hamilton and General Cornwallis. Effects of this American victory were seen in both England and in America for many years to come with "the world turned upside down."

Instructor: Mike Giorgianni

Class 7: August 6 @ 7PM:
Foundations of Freedom (1783-1789)

Once peace was secured in 1783, Americans still faced a very uncertain future. Citizens needed to build a government that could protect their young country's independence and fulfill revolutionary principles. The origins of the federal government unfolded over several fitful years. Deeply divided citizens argued, compromised, and persevered in this challenging struggle to turn abstract ideas about self-government into a viable structure. This week's class explores the push toward the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, the contentious ratification debates of 1787-1788, and the 1789-1791 conflicts over creating a Bill of Rights. Far from a single "original" design, these enduring foundations of freedom emerged from a deeply divided country, more like our own than we usually remember, with vital lessons for 21st-century Americans.

Instructor: Lorri Glover

Finale: August 13 @ Noon:
A Republic — If you can keep it.

On September 17, 1787, as the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia came to a close, Ben Franklin was asked whether the delegates had created a monarchy or a republic. "A republic," Franklin famously replied, "if you can keep it." Franklin's words remind us that self government is fragile and difficult and must be guarded diligently, especially by the governed. In recognition of these existential truths and in the glow of our nation's Semiquincentennial, OCPL will feature a main exhibit celebrating our relatively young experiment in keeping a republic, exploring 250 years of successes and failures, and, on August 13 at noon, we will invite members of our community to participate in public readings of selections from our most cherished documents: the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Instructors

(see full bios at www.ohiocountylibrary.org/calendar):

Michael Giorgianni has taught middle school social studies in the Hempfield Area School District for over 25 years. He has also published articles on the website Emerging Civil War. Mike earned his Bachelors in Secondary Education - Social Studies from Clarion University of PA in 1998 and his Masters in Education from University of Pittsburgh in 2002.

Lorri Glover is the Bannon Endowed Professor in the History Dept. at Saint Louis University. Her books include *The Fate of the Revolution: Virginians Debate the Constitution* (2016), and *Eliza Lucas Pinckney: An Independent Woman in the Age of Revolution* (2020). She has served as president of the Southern Assoc. for Women Historians and the Southern Historical Association.

Phillip S. Greenwalt is the co-founder of Emerging Revolutionary War and a full-time historian with Emerging Civil War. He is the author or co-author of seven books on the American Revolution and Civil War. A graduate of Wheeling Jesuit University, Phillip also holds graduate degrees in American history from George Mason University and International Affairs and Leadership from Arizona State University. He has worked for the National Park Service for the last 19 years.

Robert Kelly graduated from Old Dominion Univ. with a B.A. in History and began his career as a Historian at Fort Monroe National Monument in 2011, focusing on African American and Franco-American histories. Since 2020, Robert has been Director of the Gloucester Museum of History. He also serves as VP of the American Friends of Lafayette, and co-directed the Lafayette Bicentennial. Robert was awarded the 2024 Médaille d'Honneur du Souvenir Français for strengthening U.S.-France relations.

Robert Orrison received his B.A. in Historic Preservation at Longwood University and his Master's in Public History from George Mason University. He serves as the Director for the Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation. His published works include several articles and books focused on the Civil War and the American Revolution including *The Battles of Lexington and Concord and the Beginning of the American Revolution, April 19, 1775* and *All That Can Be Expected: The Battle of Camden and the British High Tide in the South, August 16, 1780*.

Interested in local history?

www.archivingwheeling.org

www.facebook.com/archivingwheeling

What is the People's University?

In keeping with the mission of public libraries as sanctuaries of free learning for all people, the Ohio County Public Library created The People's University, a ***free*** program for adults who wish to continue their education in the liberal arts. The People's University features courses—taught by experts in each subject—that enable patrons to pursue their goal of lifelong learning in classic subjects such as history, philosophy, & literature.

52-16th Street

Wheeling, West Virginia 26003

Telephone: (304) 232-0244

www.ohiocountylibrary.org

facebook.com/peoplesuniversityOCPL/

Library-Sponsored Programs Policy

The purpose of Ohio County Public Library-sponsored programs is to provide education, information, and entertainment for library patrons. The Library reserves the right to exercise sole discretion in selecting and inviting presenters for its programs. In selecting presenters, the Library does not discriminate on account of race, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, political affiliation, religion, ancestry or national origin, and the views expressed by presenters of Library-sponsored programs, or by any person in attendance at the programs, do not necessarily reflect the views of the Library, its staff, and /or its representatives.

People's University

LIFE LONG LEARNING AT YOUR LIBRARY

Ohio County Public Library

52-16th Street

Wheeling, WV 26003

304-232-0244

www.ohiocountylibrary.org