HNRS 353-11 Mason’s Legacies
3 Credits Wednesday 4:30-7:10 Petersen Hall 1111

This syllabus is subject to change.

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an introduction to historical research and provide students with an opportunity to explore the ongoing legacy of our University’s namesake, George Mason, to the region and our nation. We will examine the era of American founders and early decades of the United States to help better understand the impact of a variety of issues including the lasting impact of slavery. The required readings include several core texts from the age of Jefferson, Washington, and Mason. Each student will be asked to develop an original research project that incorporates ideas from different disciplines, for example, History, Psychology, Politics, Law, Economics, Math, Engineering, and Health.

Your final project will be disseminated via an online exhibit tool and institutional archive called Omeka, with the hope that your particular study of slavery or other aspects of Mason’s Legacies in Virginia and the United States will help promote broader conversations in the university, our region and the country as a whole.

Grading

Though assignments have a weighted value in the final grade, all assignments are required; failure to complete an assignment may result in failure for the course. Total 100 points
1. Participation: 20%
2. Short Writing Assignments 30%
   a. Will Comparison Assignment 5 points
   b. Historical Site Visit 10 points
   c. Fairfax County Courthouse Assignment 5 points
   d. In class assignment Agnes 5 points
   e. In class assignment Special Collections 5 points
3. Research Project: Total of 50%
   a. Annotated Bibliography and Topic Proposal 10%
   b. Literature Review/Historiography: 10%
   c. Poster Presentation: 5%
   d. Poster: 5%
   e. Individual Omeka Exhibit: 20%
Required Texts


Required articles and excerpts from books to be posted on Blackboard

Policy

If learning will be supported by the addition or revision of policies during the semester, I may choose to do so. In these cases, such revisions will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus will be uploaded to our course site.

Participation

This is a participation-driven, readings-focused course and will be a painful trudge for everyone if even a small fraction of the class fails actively participate in conversation and in-class activities. Consequently, thoughtful participation in all class meetings, including those which take place on the due date of major assignments, is expected from all students. This includes asking meaningful questions of your peers during student presentations.

Absences

You are expected to attend all classes; however, I recognize that there are times when students must miss a class. In order to participate meaningfully, you need to be present for the entire class period; consequently, unexcused absence, tardiness, or early departure will be taken as evidence of non-participation. Unexcused absence, tardiness, or early departure on key days, like days that assignments are due or our concluding class may be counted more severely. Religious observances and holidays, illness of a dependent family member, death or severe illness of a close family member, documented medical issues, certain University activities, jury duty, military service, and personal emergencies are examples of some of the reasons that absence, tardiness, or early departure may be excused, but you will need to communicate with me as soon as possible about upcoming or recent absences. When
absent, you will be responsible for reaching out to a classmate to learn what you missed.

Working Groups
Non-participation or problematic participation in a working group will be grounds for grade deductions.

Peer Review
You will be asked to provide peer review services to your working group at the revision, editing, and proofreading stages of paper development. Willingness to provide timely and meaningful feedback to those in your working group is a condition for taking this class.

Class Preparedness
To succeed in this class, you should expect to spend at least 5 to 6 hours outside of class each week, but there is considerable variation in the time that it takes students to complete reading and writing assignments. There may be some weeks which demand more time than this and others which demand less.

It will be your responsibility to maintain awareness of upcoming long readings and written assignments so that you can be prepared for each class period.

Readings
The readings selected for this class are designed to help provide examples of scholarship and some general familiarity with the time period and subject which we will be focusing on in this course. You will have substantial common readings during the first half of the course. These readings are crucial for understanding the framework of key topics and to help you select appropriate and researchable projects. You will be given writing prompts which will require responses of approximately 750 words which will also prepare you for class discussions and assignments.

Writing
You will write a minimum of about 750 words a week -- but most students will write a great deal more than this in the drafting and revising process.

Office Hours
If you are having difficulty with a concept or reading, would like to explore a reading or idea in more depth, or would like help with your writing, please make an appointment to meet with me during office hours.
Late Policy

The expectation in upper level coursework is that you will complete assignments on time -- and will manage your time in such a way to make this possible. In a highly collaborative classroom, late assignments often negatively impact others. This said, it is also true that real emergencies and unexpected problems sometimes come up. It is your responsibility to reach out to me as soon as possible to let me know what prevents you from following the assignment schedule, so that we can handle your late assignment on a case-by-case basis. I will, under certain circumstances, offer individual extensions on assignments when asked in advance, but the conditions for these extensions may vary. Unexcused late submission will lead to significant grade penalties of at least one letter grade per day to be determined at my discretion. In cases in which unexcused late submission impacts other students, I may choose not to accept late assignments. In the cases of excused late work, individual extensions, and unexcused late work, grading and assessment may be significantly delayed.

Computers and Mobile Devices in the Classroom

We will be using computers in class from time to time. In general, I think they can be used by motivated students to support learning in the classroom. In fact, I would prefer if you brought your laptop to class, if you have one. It is, however, quite rude to surf the internet on unrelated topics, work on other assignments, look at Blackboard sites for other classes, answer emails, check social media, write text messages, or receive phone calls during class. I may ask you to stop and/or leave the class for the remainder of a class period if you are misusing technologies. Misuse of computers and mobile devices in the classroom will adversely impact your participation grade.

Privacy

Since this is a discussion-based course, I would prefer if you did not record class using audio or video technologies, unless you have written permission from everyone in the class or a documented disability accommodation. Likewise, if I decide that I would like an audio or video recording of a class period, I will ask for your permission. To ensure that I follow federal privacy law, I prefer not to respond to emails from non-Mason accounts.

Academic Integrity

Correctly acknowledging sources of information and concepts is a core value of civil intellectual discourse. The University Honor Code (http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/) specifically prohibits
1. plagiarism, which includes quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing without appropriate acknowledgement of sources.
2. “patch writing,” a special case of plagiarism which involves the selective appropriation of short snippets or paraphrases of the work of others where this is not explicitly called for by the assignment
3. representing work done by others as your own
4. submitting work you have completed for another class without permission of both instructors
5. giving false excuses regarding assignments or otherwise misrepresenting yourself in academically significant ways
6. making up data, evidence, or sources
7. negligent or intentional misattribution of data, evidence, or sources

Perhaps more importantly, providing acknowledgement of your sources helps your readers and viewers follow up on any ideas or facts you make use of and is, consequently, important to meaningfully communicating with your audience.

Class Conduct
This class may include material that some students may find controversial. Because of this possibility, it is important that in-class discussions and any work generated for the course be conducted in a civil and respectful manner.

Disability Accommodations
If you have a documented learning disability, health issue, or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Diversity Statement
Diversity is broadly defined at Mason to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, class background, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help us promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard, and respected.

Each course offers an opportunity for us to develop this commitment together, not just as an attitude but a mode of critical practice that can involve, among other things:
● listening to other perspectives and hearing criticism of one’s own views;
● expressing criticisms and differences of opinion in ways that are not personal or hurtful and that leave space for other voices;
● evaluating different positions and avoiding premature certainty;
● grounding one’s own views in evidence, but being willing to consider countervailing evidence or arguments;
● basing critical comments or questions on as good an understanding of another perspective as one can manage;
● and being willing to accept that at any particular time, there will always be things one cannot see or understand.

An important aspect of the commitment to diversity is that it does not mean we should avoid being critical: respecting others’ views means taking their views seriously, i.e., treating them as worthy of close attention, critical interrogation, and evaluation. It also means being open to the ways in which the views of others can challenge and change our own existing views and commitments.
Schedule
This syllabus is subject to change.

January 24, 2018:

Who was George Mason?
Guest Speakers
  Dr. Benedict Carton
  ECGM Students

Introductions
The readings
The project and grades.

What is a Legacy?

Reading George Mason’s Will and his Probate Records
  Manuscript Will (in Blackboard)
  Published http://www.consource.org/document/george-masons-last-will-and-testament-1773-3-20/

Examining George Mason’s Probate Records
  http://chnm.gmu.edu/probateinventory/

Comparing with Washington
George Washington Last Will and Testament


January 31, 2018

Revolutionary Virginia?

What does Revolutionary mean?
Readings

Discussion of Kierner’s Sources and reading a historical monograph.
Kierner’s Scandal at Bizarre

Introduction to Mason University Libraries
Finding Published Primary sources and how historians use them:
Commonwealth v Randolph in Blackboard

February 7, 2018
Fairfax County Court House Visit Class will meet at the Fairfax County Historic Records Center.
Readings:
Johnson, Paul E. *The Early American Republic 1789-1829*. Chapters 1-2; also your selected will.

**Assignment:**
1-Due before class in Blackboard-
Compare and contrast your assigned will with George Mason’s will. What are the similarities between George Mason’s will and what are the differences? Some questions that may help your analysis may include... When was it written? How is it written? Does it name people in the will? What is the purpose that these people are named and can you tell who they are? Does it name property? How so and what kind of property? Are enslaved people mentioned in the will? Are they mentioned by name? Is there anything interesting or distinctive in this will?

Richard Randolph’s Will
Stephen Thomson Mason
Bushrod Washington’s Will
Hannah Washington’s Will
Mary Mason’s Will
Benjamin Mason’s Will
Abraham Barnes Mason’s Will

**In class exercise finding sources in court archives.**

**February 14, 2018**
Dr. Sheri Huerta Visit Discussion of Trials and Punishment of Slaves: Case of Agnes.
Readings:
Johnson, Paul E. *The Early American Republic 1789-1829*. Chapter 3

**In class assignment.**

**February 21, 2018**
Readings:
Glover, Lori “Liberty and Power” in *Founders as Fathers*
Scott E. Casper, “Oliver Smith’s Memories” in *Sarah Johnson’s Mount Vernon*

Johnson, Paul E. *The Early American Republic 1789-1829*. Chapter 4
Submit proposal topic: See assignment in BlackBoard—Annotated Bibliography and Proposed Topic

**February 28, 2018**
GMU Special Collections
Mason Family Account book


Read Perry L. Carter, David Butler, and Owen Dwyer, “Defetishizing the Plantation: African Americans in the Memorialized South.”

Johnson, Paul E. *The Early American Republic 1789-1829*. Chapter 5

**In class assignment.**

**March 7, 2018**


Johnson, Paul E. *The Early American Republic 1789-1829*. Chapter 6 and Conclusion.

Gunston Hall Visit

**Submit Research Proposals**

*Research proposals will be approximately 1000 words.*

**March 12-March 18 SPRING BREAK**

March 21, 2018

NO CLASS Individual Appointments with Dr. Oberle and Ms. Stephanie Walters

**Submit your comparison contrast essay on historical sites. Compare and contrast Gunston Hall with your selected site.** Possible issues to discuss include:

- What did you see at the site?
- How are exhibits laid out and presented to the public?
- What interpretations of the past does the site offer?
- How do the accounts the site offers compare to what we have discussed in class?
- Who manages/owns the site? When did they take control of the site? Does that influence the story being told?
- How does the site engage with the issue of slavery?
Possible locations to visit include:
Mount Vernon
Monticello
Montpellier
Sully Plantation
Belle Grove Plantation (Middletown, VA)
Kenmore Plantation
For other ideas see

Make sure you confirm your site with me before you visit.

March 28, 2018
Omeka overview and poster overview
Ms. Stephanie Walters will lead the overview of Omeka

Working session on Literature Review (Bring Drafts of Literature Review)

April 4, 2018
Working Session on Omeka
**Literature Review/Historiography Due**

April 11, 2018
**Poster/Presentation**
Half of the class will present their posters to the class. Students will sign up for time slots and their posters will be due that day.

April 18, 2018
**Poster/Presentation**
Half of the class will present their posters to the class. Students will sign up for time slots and their posters will be due that day.

April 25, 2018
Rough Draft Peer Review

May 2, 2018
**Final Project Due**

**Potential Topics:**

- Mason Family and Education in late 18th-century early 19th century Virginia.
- Mason, Marriage, and Family Life in late 18th-century early 19th century Virginia.
• Mason's Role as a Member of the Virginia Gentry and early American democracy.
• The Influence of Mason's Declaration of Rights on other state constitutions
• Mason's Reasons for Opposing the US Constitution compared with those of antifederalist Mercy Otis Warren
• Gunston Hall compared with another eighteenth-century English (and/or Virginia) mansion of the time
• Comparison of Colchester and Alexandria Virginia.
• War of 1812 Service
  o Armistead Mason
• Revolutionary War Service
• Mexican American War
  o George Thompson Mason
• Mason's Views on Slavery compared with those George Washington
• Mason’s Success as a Businessman, Land Speculator, and Planter
• Plantation Management in late eighteenth early nineteenth century Chesapeake
• Members of the Mason Family
  o Confederate Masons
    ▪ James Murray Mason
    ▪ George Mason 16 April 1830 – 3 February 1895
  o Thomson Mason Family (Loudoun County)
• Comparative analysis between Mason family figure and comparable figure such as John Mason and Bushrod Washington.
• Enslaved people at Mason Homes and Plantations.
• Study of slavery in Fairfax/Loudoun
• Owners of Gunston Hall: http://www.mountvernon.org/the-estate-gardens/the-mansion/owners-of-mount-vernon/
• Heritage Tourism and/or Monuments and Memorials
• The duel and dueling
• County court as community center
• Medical Knowledge

Grading rubric for final paper:
Organization and clarity of writing: 30%  Depth of research: 35%  Analysis: 35%  
(including assertion of thesis, establishing of historical context, discussion of historical meaning and significance)

**Graduate Research Assistant**
For assistance please come to my office hours or Ms. Stephanie Walters
(Doctoral Candidate and Digital Humanities Graduate Research Assistant) 
She is in the Digital Scholarship Center and her contact information is
sseal2@gmu.edu