

**Brock University  
Department of History**

**THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

**HIST 3P16**

WINTER 2014

Dr. Mark G. Spencer

**Research Essay**

Your assignment is to write an historical research essay related to some aspect of the American Revolution.

**Choosing a Topic and Defining a Focus:**

Your topic will be one that you define based on one of the chapters in Brown and Carp, eds. *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution, 1760-1791*. Start by choosing one of the chapters in Brown & Carp (other than chapter 1). You are free to choose any chapter from 2 to 12, and it makes sense to select a chapter whose topic interests you. Once you have decided upon a chapter and have read it, begin to formulate a particular question or outline a particular problem that comes out of your reading. At this stage you will also want to begin reading the related works of other historians and other related primary sources to help situate your question or problem in its historiographical and historical contexts. Potential secondary sources are listed in the “Further Reading” section at the end of each chapter in Brown & Carp. Many of those books, and others, will be found in the Gibson Library (several have been put on course reserve). Don’t forget about Gibson Library staff, such as Denise Smith (Liaison / Special Projects Librarian) who knows about this assignment. You can reach her at [dsmith5@brocku.ca](mailto:dsmith5@brocku.ca). You should start your research early as you may also have to use Interlibrary Loans (RACER). Also useful for identifying sources is the “Bibliographic Note” at the end of Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution*. You might find other potentially useful sources in electronic databases such as *America: History and Life* and *Historical Abstracts*. By far the most useful resource for relevant primary documents for this course is *America’s Historical Documents* (Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, also known as the “Digital Evans Collection,” or “Early American Imprints,”) to which the Gibson Library subscribes.

**Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography:**

As a part of your assignment you are required to prepare a “Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography.” In your proposal you should briefly (in two, double-spaced, pages) explain what your historical question or problem is. State your question or problem clearly, in a sentence, and outline how you intend to address it. Be clear and concise.

You are required to use at least **four** primary sources and at least **four** scholarly secondary sources. (For most topics more sources than the minimum ought to be utilized.) While two of your primary sources may be documents that are reprinted in

Brown & Carp, at least two others must be sources you have found in *America's Historical Documents*. For your secondary sources, you may use any of the required readings for this course (Raphael and Wood, for instance), but those sources do NOT count towards your four secondary sources. You must also use at least one secondary source that was published in either 2013 or 2014. Each entry in your bibliography must be annotated with a 150-word description of how that source will be used in your essay (see Rampolla, 27-29) and properly referenced following *The Chicago Manual of Style* (see Rampolla, chapter 7, "Quoting and Documenting Sources").

The "Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography" is due at the beginning of lecture on **Monday, February 3** and is worth **10%** of your final grade in the course. Remember to upload your assignment to Turnitin (see course outline for details) before submitting it to the instructor in lecture. No essays will be accepted for which a "Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography" has not been submitted. Additions and substitutions can be made to your bibliography as your paper takes shape, but significant changes should only be made with the permission of the instructor. Keep your graded "Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography" as it must be submitted with your final essay.

### **Researching and Writing your Essay:**

Rampolla (pages 49-97) has several useful suggestions on the process of taking research notes, organizing your thoughts in an outline, and writing and revising early drafts of your essay. For your final draft, you may find it useful to think in terms of three basic criteria: 1. content, 2. organization, and 3. grammar and style. Here are a few points to consider:

- It is not the function of historians simply to write things that are true. Historians must prove the truth of what they write. No statement of fact is credible unless it is supported by references. Prove what you write.
- Never make a statement of fact unless it bears a clear and logical relationship to the argument of your essay. What gives unity to an essay is a strong logical relationship between the central argument and the evidence cited in its support.
- To convey well organized and logically sound ideas, you will need to use good English. Avoid errors of grammar and spelling. Be clear and concise.

Your essay must be 10-12 double-spaced, typed pages (approx. 2800 words). You must staple your graded "Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography" to the back of your essay. The essay is due at the beginning of lecture on **Monday, March 31** and accounts for **25%** of your final grade (together the proposal and essay account for **35%**). Remember to upload your assignment to Turnitin (see course outline for details) before submitting it to the instructor in lecture.

**Note:** If in doubt about any aspect of this assignment, consult with the course instructor. Also, remember to review the section on "Written Assignments" in the outline for this course. Pay particular attention to the discussion of plagiarism and to the penalty for late submissions.