

**A More Perfect Union:  
The Origins and Development of the U.S. Constitution  
Seminar on Teaching American History  
South Shore Educational Collaborative  
Syllabus: Year One**

**Updated 6/7/09**

*Please note that the syllabus, while essentially outlined below, may be subject to some shifts to accommodate educational opportunities that may arise during seminar.*

**Wednesday, January 23      Orientation, Book Distribution, Welcoming Dinner**  
4:15-7:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, April 15      Breakout sessions on reading materials and papers on “Slavery and the Constitution”**  
4:15-7:30 p.m.

**Summer Session: Week One**

*Preparation for Tuesday, July 7:*

Paper due on “Private Correspondence of the Founders”

Read: *Thomas Jefferson*, pp. ix to p. 54

Read on the web: James Madison, “Vices of the Political System”; and John Adams, “Thoughts on Government.” Googling these titles will bring them up.

Read from *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, Chapters 6.

**Tuesday, July 7                      The Anchoring of American Law, R. B. Bernstein**

8:00 a.m.                              Coffee

8:30-9:30                              Evaluation Solutions, Matthew Peterson

9:30-10:30                              Part One: Becoming Independent  
The first part will examine how a family quarrel within the British Empire spiraled out of control until it led to the first successful colonial revolution against a mother country. It will stress, among other things, the need to understand that the American Revolution had its roots in Anglo-American constitutional history, with colonists and mother country's polemicists disputing the meaning of the unwritten British constitution as applied to America.

10:30-11:00 a.m.                      Break

11:00-12:00                              Part Two: An Age of Experiments in Government  
The second part will focus on the Americans' efforts to restore Legitimate government in a form that recognized their rejection of monarchism. It will consider the development of written

constitutions and declarations of rights, the constitutional convention and the proper means of exercising the constituent power, and the quandary of relations between church and state.

12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-2:30	Breakout Sessions Breakout sessions: Discussion of papers on the Private Correspondence of the Founders. <b>At the conclusion of this session, please hand your papers into the session leader.</b>
2:30-2:45	Break
2:45-3:30	Reports from Breakout Sessions

*Preparation for Wednesday, July 8*

R. B. Bernstein,

*In Book of Readings:* R. B. Bernstein, "Prologue"; "The Confederation in Quandary"; "The American Revolution as a Constitutional Crisis"; "History Quotations."

In Kammen, *The Origins of the American Constitution*: pp. 38-50 (The Constitution); pp. 10-18, (The Articles of Confederation).

**Wednesday, July 8**

**The Anchoring of American Law, R.B. Bernstein**

8:00 a.m.	Coffee
8:30-9:00	Review
9:00-10:30	Part Three: The Making of the Constitution This part will examine the Americans' hesitant experiments with government for the thirteen United States. First, it will consider the ramshackle Articles of Confederation, assessing the Confederation's achievements as well as its drawbacks. Second, it will explore how Americans who thought in national terms began to recognize the Confederation's weaknesses and to begin to design solutions for them.
10:30-11:00	Break
11:00-12:00	The Making of the Constitution, continued
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-1:45	Douglas Adair's Vision of James Madison
1:45-2:00	Break
2:00-3:30	Breakout Session, Quotations on History from the Book of

Readings: #6, 8, 11, 17, 20.

*Preparation for Thursday, July 9*

R.B. Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 55-134; *Founding Fathers Reconsidered*, pp. 3-38 and pp. 115-180.

**Thursday, July 9                      The Founding Fathers Reconsidered, R.B. Bernstein**

8:00 a.m.	Coffee
8:30-9:00	Review
9:00-10:30	Peter Gibbon, Jefferson as Leader R. B. Bernstein, Jefferson as Politician
10:30-11:00 a.m.	Break
11:00-12:00	R. B. Bernstein, <i>The Founding Fathers Reconsidered</i>
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-2:00 p.m.	Documentary, Selections from HBO <i>John Adams</i>
2:00-2:15 p.m.	Break
2:15-3:30	Selections from dvd <i>1776</i>

*Preparation for Friday, July 10*

In *Book of Readings*: article on John Adams by Bernard Bailyn.

**Friday, July 10                      Adams National Historic Park**

**8:45                      Meet at the South Shore Educational Collaborative Headquarters for bus departure to Adams National Historic Park (no coffee available that morning). At the end of the day, bus will be leaving Adams at 3 p.m.**

**Summer Session: Week Two**

*Preparation for Monday, July 13*

In Carol Berkin's *Revolutionary Mothers*, Chapters One and Ten. In *Book of Readings*, primary sources on women's role in Revolution.

**Monday, July 13                      Confederation and Constitution, Part One, Carol Berkin**

8:00 a.m.	Coffee
8:30-9:00	Review
9:00-10:30	Women in the Revolution

10:30-11:00	Break
11:00-12:00	Articles of Confederation, Carol Berkin
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-1:45	Carol Berkin, Open
1:45-2:00	Break
2:00-2:45	Documentary <i>Liberty, Are We To Be A Nation?</i> PBS
2:45-3:30	Discussion of Documentary

*Preparation for Tuesday, July 14*

Review *A Brilliant Solution* (participants read book in advance of the seminar).

**Tuesday, July 14                      Constitution and Confederation, Part Two, Carol Berkin**

8:00 a.m.	Coffee
8:30-9:00	Review
9:00-10:30	Constitutional Convention, Carol Berkin
10:30-11:00	Break
11:00-12:00	Carol Berkin, on Patrick Henry
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Roger Desrosiers, on Web Resources relating to the Constitution
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:30	Open

*Preparation for Wednesday, July 15*

In *Book of Readings*: "First Report on the Public Credit"; Federalist Papers, nos. 12, 13, 30, 31.

Review pp. 3-131 of Darren Staloff's *Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson: The Politics of Enlightenment and the American Founding*.

**Wednesday, July 15                      Hamilton and the New Nation, Darren Staloff**

8:00 a.m.	Coffee
8:30-9:00	Review
9:00-10:30	The American Enlightenment, Darren Staloff
10:30-11:00	Break
11:00-12:00	Hamilton and Politics
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-2:00	<i>Alexander Hamilton</i> Documentary, Part I
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:30	Breakout discussion of Documentary

*Preparation for Thursday, July 16*  
 Staloff, *The Politics of Enlightenment*, pp. 234-361;  
 From *Book of Readings*:  
 Selections from *Notes from Virginia*.

8:00 a. m.	Coffee
8:30-9:00	Review
9:00-10:30	Thomas Jefferson: Romantic American, Darren Staloff
10:30-11:00	Break
11:00-12:00	Election of 1800, Darren Staloff
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-1:45	Thomas Jefferson's Vision of Education
1:45-2-00	Break
2:00-3:00	Evaluations Solutions, Matthew Peterson
3:00-3:30	Preparation for fall meetings.

*Preparation for September 25:*

Read Gordon Wood's *Ben Franklin*

Read from Wood's *The Purpose of the Past*: Introduction, Chapters 2, 4, 8, and 12.

Projects due.

**Wednesday, September 25 Projects Due**

4:15-7:30

*Preparation for October 28:*

Read John Kaminski's *The Founders on the Founders*

**Wednesday, October 28 Farewell Dinner**

4:15-7:30

**Guest Speaker: John Kaminski**