



Colonial and Revolutionary Boston and Its People* A History Workshop course

University of Connecticut, Fall semester 2015, H3556W

We meet in Laurel Hall 308 on Mon & Wed 4:40 to 5:55

Prof. Cornelia H. Dayton

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Office Hours: Tues 1:30-2:30, Wed. 3:30-4:30 and by appointment

Boston is well-known for its prominent role in the lead-up to the American Revolution and for the revolutionary leaders it produced, such as Sam Adams, James Otis, and John Adams. In terms of street politics, it certainly was a lively place in the 1760s and 1770s. Unlike other eighteenth-century cities whose outer bounds ended in a wall or in farms, Boston was surrounded by water: it was practically an island, connected to the mainland only by a thin neck lapped by the tides. New Englanders were diligent about keeping records, and hence we have a trove of maps, daily diaries, marriage and death registers, merchants' daybooks, and much more chronicling the lives of residents.

This course offers an immersion into the eighteenth-century city. (Properly, it should be called a town, as it did not incorporate as a city until 1822.) You will get to know the crooked and narrow streets intimately and be able to trace the paths specific residents took as they passed favorite taverns and public buildings—all before the massive landfill projects changed the shape and extent of the place.

* This watercolor, probably of Philadelphia street scene ca. the 1720s, is thought to have been by Peter Cooper (it is in his style).

A major goal of this course is to build your practice and confidence in *doing* history. For many sessions, we will constitute ourselves a history Lab, with all of us engaging in hands-on research. Our premise is that for any community in the British colonies, there existed many inhabitants whose lives have not yet been researched. (There are not enough historians and not enough human-hours!) We zoom in on Boston—because it’s geographically close to us and thus knowable in certain ways and it has available rich resources for discovering lots about individual Bostonians. Your instructor will be your guide as you discover even more Resources (digital, printed, visuals) to add to the fount that we start with.

The central project (occupying Weeks 6-11) has you conducting independent and *original* research on a colonial Boston resident about whom no other researcher has ever published. This project is laid out in 4 steps and culminates in a Life and Times Portfolio. A final class project will be collaborative—and what it will be rests on class members’ collective decision. Outside of class lab sessions, you will become well-versed in consulting many books and digital databases as you do your sleuthing. Whether we decide to create our own website or to send some of our research to Prof. Nat Sheidley, historian of the Old State House Museum in Boston, for future revision of the website *Mapping Revolutionary Boston* (www.mappingrevolutionaryboston.org--check it out!), we can see ourselves as adding to the fund of historical knowledge about the peoples of the colonial and revolutionary periods.

About Boston, we are asking: How did colonial Bostonians understand who belonged to the town? In what contexts did women (who could not vote in town elections), Algonquian New Englanders, and Afro-New Englanders think of themselves as belonging to or loyal to Boston? How much population turnover was there in the 1760s and why? What was it like to live and work in a colonial port of 16,000 people? How was the town run without figure familiar to us like a major or police? Can we locate where corruption, kindness, or inefficiency permeated governance and people’s conduct?

Here are some skills that you can hope to hone this semester:

- ✓ knowing where to go to trace a colonial New Englander’s life
- ✓ being able to dissect and appreciate an 18th-century newspaper
- ✓ developing a knack for writing for the web and public history projects
- ✓ offering encouragement, tips, and candid advice to fellow workers facing similar research challenges you do
- ✓ identifying and critiquing the ever-growing # of reliable, educationally valuable websites and digital projects
- ✓ gauging what the public and students at all levels want to know/should know about the subjects of your research and what it means to “do” history
- ✓ being able to tell your friends quite a bit about the colonial Atlantic world beyond the bounds of what we think of as the original 13 colonies
- ✓ developing a good sense of what we cannot know about 18c Boston life—and why

- ✓ going out into your social worlds as myth-busters about colonial and revolutionary America!

Now for the nitty-gritty:

There are no required books. We are doing a normal amount of reading for an upper-division history course. Your readings are made up of secondary and primary sources and you will receive these as Course-packets from the instructor OR will find them as .pdfs on our HuskyCt course site. Other course reading consists of the materials you locate and need to develop your Life and Times Portfolio and contribute to the final class project. Note, too, that there is neither a mid-term nor a final exam. The intensive writing strand of the course focuses on writing cogently about the historical sources and subjects that we are researching. Re-writing and revising (the keys to effective writing!) are built into our two class projects. We will help one another discern and experiment with strategies for writing and designing effectively for the web—that means the larger public—so that your original research is discoverable to audiences within and beyond UConn.

Keeping up with the reading is a crucial key to passing and doing well in this course. Be sure to BRING to class each time the book or materials that we are scheduled to discuss. Almost all of our sessions will be interactive.

Apportioned grading for the course:

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| Response paper, occupation report, newspaper worksheet (Weeks 3-4) | 10% |
| Posts, quizzes, in-class film critique, etc. | 10% |
| Effort and engagement, wks. 6-11 project | 15% |
| Life and Times Portfolio | 35% |
| Effort and engagement, final class project (weeks 12-14) | 10% |
| Final Class Project—written and resource contribution component | 20% |

Two points about my approach to your final course grade:

- 1) Since we are collaborating together throughout the semester, your active, thoughtful, and informed participation in class, small group discussions, and peer partner consultations is crucial. Note that no student can earn a final course grade above “C” without such sustained, good-faith participation. The expectation is that you will be an active, engaged historian during our time together, and in meeting that condition, the high quality of your participation, engagement, and peer support are significant factors in your final grade.
- 2) Evaluation of the research and writing you produce in Steps 1-4 of the Life and Times Project: I will act as your chief coach and editor, giving you feedback at each step

(e.g., on research strategies and ideas on how to express your findings clearly). Note that the writing you turn in during these weeks will be **ungraded**. This gives you the chance to experiment, incorporate new discoveries, and improve, tighten, and revise the written presentation up until the final, polished version is due. That product—your portfolio—*will* receive a grade.

All posts, short research reports, written Steps, or in-class quizzes or writings that are missed because, presumably, an emergency developed that prevented you from joining us, **have to be made-up: email** Prof. Dayton immediately to receive your instructions. Note that no student can pass the course without completing ninety percent of the small assignments listed above, and achieving passing grades on the Life and Times Portfolio and the final Class Project.

It turns out that one big reason individual plagiarize is because they do not know how to do research! Acquiring good research skills is just what we are about in this course, and I hope this is a comfort to you. Yet, in the process of research and writing up our findings, we all at times have doubts about how much to cite, or quote, and what is proper paraphrasing, and thus I encourage you to raise any questions or concerns you have either in class or in individual conferences, at any time you wish. Don't hesitate to bring up your questions, because this helps everyone to think through the ethical dilemmas and issues involved. A brief, pungent definition of plagiarism is: "Presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own--in any form." This includes doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated; presenting the same or substantially the same papers or projects in two or more courses without the instructor's knowledge or permission; submitting a paper that contains phrases, sentences, ideas that you gathered from a website, book, article, or even a friend or parent and which you did not put in quotation marks and properly attribute. When you turn a paper in, *make sure it is your own work* and that you have cited sources and authorities correctly. Note that the UConn library has a helpful webpage with a checklist and quiz: go to <http://lib.uconn.edu/help/writing/plagiarism-how-to-recognize-it-and-how-to-avoid-it/>

Another good site where you can practice and visualize what works and doesn't work, include the 10 slides at <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/practice.html>

Classroom rules: Remember to turn off cellphones before the start of class. No texting! Phones used for texting will be ordered to be put away, or else quarantined(!), until the end of the class session. When possible, print out the documents and readings that we will discuss, rather than planning to view them on screen. As a lab course, ours is a lap-top and notebook/tablet-**friendly** environment. However, I will be asking students to sign a pledge NOT to let yourself get distracted by non-professional use of your electronics, such as consulting email, Face-book, twitter, personal materials during class time, however tempting

that may be. If you abuse this pledge, I reserve the right to ban your use of your electronics for a class session or longer.

Be aware that changes may be announced to this syllabus as we progress through the semester.

Websites that we will be using (with abbreviations):

Mapping Revolutionary Boston = MPR

<http://www.bostonhistory.org/sub/mappingrevolutionaryboston/>

This is the 1769 Jacob Price map, supposedly updating the 1722 John Bonner map, but some new streets and buildings (espec. in New Boston) were not added.

***Common-place*: The interactive journal of early American life**

<http://www.common-place.org/>

Other abbreviations in the syllabus:

CR = course readings posted on HuskyCt, under “Readings and Weblinks”

RLW = *Robert Love’s Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston*, by Cornelia H. Dayton and Sharon V. Salinger (2014) [excerpts will be in your coursepackets]

Lab, with the Portable BookShelf:

Room 119 on the first floor of Wood Hall is a place that you can go during working hours (roughly 8-5) M-F to consult physical copies of some of the important finding aids and sources you need for your Life and Times sleuthing. As you will discover, handling the physical copies of these books can be easier, and help you avoid mistakes and misunderstandings, than relying on the digitized version (though those are helpful to have access to!). You will receive a Checklist from me indicating which books are in the Lab. Often, I will be bringing the Portable Bookshelf to our in-class lab sessions, so you will get to know the sources well.

Schedule of Meetings and Readings

Week 1

M Aug 31 Brainstorming

W Sep 2 Boston's terrain

Read: Walter Muir Whitehill, *Boston: A Topographical History*, 2d ed. (1968), Chaps. 1 & 2 (pp. 1-46, incl. lots of illustrations); two of Prof. Jeffrey Howe's animated slides on the history of Boston's landfills (go to HuskyCt for specifics on what to click on)

Tip: Follow along with Whitehill using the MPB website

Optional: email Prof. Dayton by today or Friday evening ideas or a wish-list of research activities you'd enjoy having as part of our course

Week 2

M Sep 7 No class: Labor Day

W Sep 9 Getting to know Paul Revere's Boston

Read: Esther Forbes, *PR and the World He Lived In* (1942), 27-36, 49-51 (and see her map); David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (1994), 3-20; read about the Revere house (and neighboring Pierce/Hichborn house) on <https://www.paulreverehouse.org/about/>; and locate the PR house on MRB

Homework for Monday: Research one of the important locations in Revere's life (other than the Revere house) and Post a summary of your findings, with web-links. (We will identify key locations in class today, and you will receive research tips.)

Week 3

M Sep 14 Boston compared to early modern cities world-wide

Homework: 1) **Read** about two cities profiled in *Common-place*, 4:3 (July 2003)--**jot down** 4+ notable features of each & bring your list to class (see Instructions on HuskyCt). 2) Scout out whether a fabulous educational website exists for ONE early modern/18c city other than Boston: **post** the best URL!

Post by Sunday afternoon at 5 p.m.: see above. Read classmates' posts!

W Sep 16 Neighborhoods; patterns of travel and interaction

Read: *RLW*, Prologue, Interlude (7 pages); Dr. Hamilton's "itinerarium" (travel diary) about visiting Boston in 1744 (16 pp.; for unfamiliar words or word usages, look the word up in the *O.E.D. (Oxford English Dictionary)* via Babbidge e-databases: bookmark this!

Response paper due in class (2 pages; in paragraph form or bullets with full sentences.): What patterns did Dr. Hamilton adopt as tourist, notably in the sort of things he noticed (and wrote down) and the sight-seeing or other activities he engaged in?

In-class: each student will choose an occupation (e.g., cooper, tavern-keeper, jappaner, shopkeeper, carter) to a research report on, posting their report (with full citations) the evening before next Wed's class

**** Note that the SYLLABUS FROM Week 4 on is somewhat TENTATIVE—the final results will depend on the class's input especially concerning the last few weeks of the semester ****

Week 4

M Sep 21

Governance: how was the town run?

Read: excerpts (e.g., from the selectmen's minutes, criminal docket, almshouse admissions, annual election results, a short bio or two)

W Sep 23

Market town

Read: Morison and Tyler on Boston's commerce and merchants

Post (by Tuesday at 5 p.m.): your research report on one 18c occupation (2 pages minimum)

BID by Friday at 5 p.m.: on two Bostonians (one from each list) you would like to research. See the list and instructions on HuskyCt.

Week 5

M Sep 28

Figuring out the town's social order: better, middling, and lower sorts

Read: *RLW*, Chaps. 6-8 (52 pp.)

In-class: there may be a quiz or game based on the reading!

Handout: Worksheets for Wed's newspaper exercise

W Sep 30

Newspapers as key sources

Homework: You will read carefully one issue (4 pp. jammed with information) of one Boston paper (for specific dates that I will assign to you ON your Worksheet, in 1765 and 1766) and fill out a Worksheet on it to bring to class to hand in. **Read** also: Excerpts from Charles Clark on producing a newspaper.

And, now that you can know about newspapers and the EAN database, search for your two Bostonians!

In class, we will study various types of advertisements, including runaway ads that offer detailed physical descriptions of bodies and clothing

Week 6 Step 1: research on your own Bostonians!

M Oct 5 Lab session (in-class): Looking up your two figures in Boston births, marriages, deaths, port arrivals, & more: hands-on research with The Portable Bookshelf and on-line sources. A checklist of the sources you should use will be in your hands by now.

W Oct 7 Women and African-origins residents of Boston

In-class: for part of our session you will have quiet time to take a first stab at writing your biographical profiles, with peer input

Homework: do more sleuthing on your subjects via the on-line sources listed on the Checklist and/or by coming to Wood Hall Room 119 and using our Lab Bookshelf (in the bottom drawers of the copper cabinet)

****DUE by Friday Oct 9 at 5 p.m.,** by email to Prof. Dayton as a .docx or .rtf file: Biographical profiles of your two subjects in your own words (as polished as possible) based on your research so far. Minimum length: at least 1 page/2 paragraphs long. Send ALSO filled-out Checklists indicating in which sources you found info on your subject, which not (type an X). Also, at the end of the file that contains your Profiles, please indicate which of the 2 Bostonians you wish to continue investigating for the next steps and why.

Week 7 Step 2: Expanded profile (family history, map locations)

M Oct 12 Church life; marriage and divorce; baptism and funeral rituals—are areas that I will address in class this week.

Read: short readings TBA

In-class: some lab-time

Your task this week is to investigate your Bostonian *more*—in terms of family (parents, surviving siblings; the fates of spouses, children; and in terms of pertinent locations & buildings in Boston and elsewhere that help narrate his/her life; also, occupation, social standing, religious affiliation, and anything else that you come across. Bring your findings and notes to our class sessions. **Start** keeping a portfolio of primary documents and images/illustrations (e.g., maps close-up, drawings of buildings, portraits) related to your figure (xerox/scan, download/printout, or transcribe these, as appropriate). NOTE that nothing written is due on this expanded research (except your posting for Wed.) until the end of Week 8.

W Oct 14 Mapping your Bostonian

In-class: You will start to develop your Source Note (citation list) and we will bring up the digitized 1769 map and place some of your figures on the map and start to see where and how they probably interacted.

Post (by Tuesday at 5 p.m.): Part 1: a bullet on your figure's occupation (or occupations, if more than one in his/her lifetime). **Part 2:** Explain what social class you think your figure fit into and what the evidence is. Guesstimating is fine! but be as well-informed as you can be. **Part 3:** a list of at least 4 locations in Boston (identify by street address or corner) associated with your Bostonian. **Part 4:** State whether probate records exist for your figure and if so, give the details. If not, note where you have looked and state which relative of your figure did leave/would be likely to have had a probated estate.

Week 8 Step 3: Political affiliation

M Oct 19 Boston street politics, from the Stamp Act to the Coercive Acts

Read: Al Young on shoemaker George Robert Twelves Hewes (to p. 33); Prof. Dayton's Boston timeline: read it for years 1765-67 (HuskyCt)

Note: Besides being very informative, Young's portrait is a model to inspire your writing!

W Oct 21 Boston is Occupied!

In-class: besides discussing Boston politics, we will have a lab session for brainstorming with peer partners to imagine scenarios related to pre-revolutionary Boston politics that your figure plausibly could be involved in. If time permits, begin writing the two paragraphs due by Friday

Read: Al Young on shoemaker Hewes, pp. 33-57; Prof. Dayton's Boston timeline: read it for years 1768-75

****DUE by Friday Oct 24 at 5 p.m.,** by email attachment to Prof. Dayton: Steps 2 & 3 write-up (see Instructions on HuskyCt). Include your current thinking on what you would like to do for Step 4: writing up a Report-to-Filmmaker or a Historically-Grounded Creative Episode

Week 9

M Oct 26 Probate records and material objects workshop

Read: Sample wills and inventories (TBA)

Bring to class: Printouts or transcripts of probate information pertinent to your Bostonian (a spouse, parent, or other kin, if no probate exists for your figure).

W Oct 28 John and Abigail Adams's Boston

Read: Excerpts from JA's diary, late 1760s-early 1770s; and other docs TBA

In-class: we will view clips from the 2008 HBO series, *John Adams*, and you will get to bring all your knowledge of family life, ways of speech and dress and deportment, Boston street life, etc. to critique the film's representations of the 18c (required assignment; make-up must be done if you miss class)

Be sure that by today, or Friday at the latest, you know what you are tackling for Step 4 and that you and Prof. Dayton have worked out a reading list

****This week and next: individual appointments with Prof. Dayton to discuss how your “Life and Times” portfolio is coming together**

Week 10 Step 4: Episode or Report

M Nov 2 No class session: use this time to read for and develop this week’s draft of Step 4

W Nov 4 Peer review and swap of components of your “Life and Times” that are ready (either Steps 1-3, or Steps 1-4, or the revised and modified Biographical Profile plus draft Step 4)

Homework: Exchange these PRIOR to Tuesday at 5 p.m.; mark-up with constructive editing and other suggestions. Bring to class for discussion with peer partner(s).

**** DUE Saturday Nov. 7 at noon:** a DRAFT of your Research-Report-to-screenwriter or Historically-Grounded Creative Episode. See details for this Step 4 assignment posted on HuskyCT.**

Week 11

M Nov 9 Degrees of Separation

Prepare: a 5-minute slam/TED talk with visuals on your Bostonian, emphasizing social nodes and mapped locations. In class, we will brainstorm about the likely degrees of separation between your figure interacted and the other 8 Bostonians.

W Nov 11 Wartime Boston: Occupation, Siege, Evacuation of Loyalists

Read: Jacqueline Carr, “The Siege of Boston” (30 pp.)

**** DUE by Sunday Nov. 15 at noon: Your Life and Times portfolio**, made up of components you have been drafting and refining in previous weeks plus a few other reflections spelled out in the Instructions. Email it to Prof. Dayton’s office (as no more than 2 files) and bring a hard copy to class on Nov. 16 **

Week 12 Collective Class Project Begins

M Nov 16 To be determined!

W Nov 18 TBD

Thanksgiving Break: Nov. 23-27, no classes

Week 13

M Nov 30 TBD

W Dec 1 TBD

Week 14

M Dec 7 TBD (this week: 15 minutes of a class session will be set aside for SET Course Evaluations)

W Dec 9 TBD. In-class writing: reflection on how you have developed as a researcher and how you would design a history lab course!

**** Final Project Write-up due during Exam week (exact date TBA)****