

Memories and Narratives



of the American Revolution

Scott D. Wagner
scottwag@usc.edu

- USC undergraduate students will receive a \$1,500 stipend for course completion
- Non-credit course taught by a USC Van Hunnik Department of History Ph.D. Candidate
- Tutorials will meet twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays from June 2 – June 25
- Enrollment is limited to 5 students. See application process below.

Next year, the United States will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The commemoration is likely to be more contentious than most, and not just because of the present political climate. The Revolution was the beginning of the United States, the beginning of the nation as a people and an idea. This course will interrogate that founding moment, asking questions like: Which elements of the Revolution have been elevated in the national consciousness? Which ones have been brushed aside? How have these narratives been handed down to us today, and to what extent have they been shaped by contemporary politics?

Over the course of four weeks, students will analyze how the first two generations of independent Americans crafted the popular narratives of the Revolution. They will interrogate sources including Frederick Douglass's oration "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" and pension applications from Revolutionary War widows like Sarah Cushman. Students will also consider how historians of the twentieth and twenty-first century have debated the Revolution and how their interpretations have shaped popular understandings of the period. As part of the tutorial, students will develop their own proposals for an exhibition commemorating the anniversary, allowing them to gain practical experience in public history and curation. Students who take this tutorial will have a better understanding of how anniversaries become flashpoints of contention and how interpretations of our past reflect and shape our present.

To apply, please send a CV/resume and letter expressing your interest in the course to emsi@usc.edu by Friday, April 18.