

Video 4: Political Participation and the Battlegrounds of the American Revolution

Featuring Dr. James Gigantino, University of Arkansas, Department of History

In [Political Participation and the Battlegrounds of the American Revolution](#), Dr. James Gigantino explores the key theme of New Jersey as a “Battleground” by diving into the various considerations and decisions facing people at the outset of the American Revolution.

Key Concepts

- Causes of the American Revolution [01:40 - 05:29]
- Multiplicities of the Revolution [05:30 -16: 05]
- Case Study: The Revolutionary Multiplicities in New Jersey and the Question of Loyalty. [16:07 -24:54]
 1. William Livingston and Multiplicities of the American Revolution
 2. The “London Trade” and New Jersey’s Geographic Impact on Wavering Loyalty

New Jersey Student Learning Standards

Grades 6-8

6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.d: Use data and other evidence to determine the extent to which demographics influenced the debate on representation in Congress and federalism by examining the New Jersey and Virginia plans.

6.1.8.HistoryUP.3.b: Examine the roles and perspectives of various socioeconomic groups (e.g., rural farmers, urban craftsmen, northern merchants, and southern planters), African Americans, Native Americans, and women during the American Revolution, and determine how these groups were impacted by the war.

Grades 9-12

6.1.12.EconGE.1.a: Explain how economic ideas and the practices of mercantilism and capitalism conflicted during this time period.

6.1.12.EconEM.2.a: Explain how the United States economy emerged from British mercantilism.

Review Questions

1. How does Bernard Bailyn's 1967 book "The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution," challenge former perspectives on the causes of the American Revolution?
2. How do historians in the 1980s challenge Bailyn's assertion that the American Revolution was caused by ideological beliefs?
3. What is the "lens of multiplicity of revolutions"? How does this concept affect modern historians' approaches to the causation of the American Revolution?
4. How are the causes of conflict not always aligned with the motivation of those who fight as Dr. Gigantino suggests?
5. How is the traditional historical ideal of political participation in the American Revolution distorted by the "Myth of the Minuteman"? How does this change your own understanding of the American Revolution? How are traditionally marginalized communities erased from history as a result of this myth?
6. How has the historic understanding of Loyalists evolved over time in American history? How does the concept of loyalism change when considering the perspectives of the United States or Britain?
7. How is New Jersey Governor William Livingston's perspective an example of the concept of multiplicities in the American Revolution?
8. How does New Jersey's geography complicate the notion of who was a Loyalist during the American Revolution?

Activities

1. Visit the *America in Class* website to read first-person accounts from the Revolutionary period in the "[Making the Revolution: America, 1763-1791](#)". Reflecting on Dr. Gigantino's talk and the first-person narratives you read here, write your own eyewitness account of the Revolutionary War (or the time leading up to it) from the perspective of a New Jersey resident struggling to decide which side to support. Be sure to consider the "multiplicities" of the American Revolution when writing your response. Reflect on your own day to day experiences when it comes to contemporary social issues. How much does a social cause resonate with you if you think you are not personally affected by it? How does

that help influence your stance towards a particular issue?

2. Click the links below to explore six historic sites from the [Crossroads of the American Revolution's Map of New Jersey's Revolutionary History](#) and answer the questions below.

- [1759 Vought House](#)
- [Abraham Staats House](#)
- [Batsto Village](#)
- [Boxwood Hall](#)
- [Hancock House Historic Site](#)
- [Van Horne House](#)

Are there site/s that commemorate a Loyalist or were significant to the British cause? Is the description of the site's significance written objectively or does it take a side? Are there any sites on this map of New Jersey that present a "lens of multiplicity" on the American Revolution by showing support, dislike, confusion regarding Patriots and Loyalists?

Resources

America in Class. "Making the Revolution: America, 1763-1791."
<https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/war/text7/text7.htm>

Crossroads of the American Revolution. "Map of New Jersey's Revolutionary History" <https://revolutionarynj.org/map-new-jerseys-revolutionary-history/>.