

The American Revolution: The Stories Behind the Story

Readings before the 2nd class (April 13)

1. Nancy L. Rhodden and Ian K. Steele, editors, *The Human Condition in the American Revolution*, 2000, Excerpts from Chapter 5, William Prendergast and the Revolution in the Hudson River Valley: Poor Men Were Always Oppressed by the Rich, Thomas Humphrey.
(The is a bit long and dense, but it's really interesting and illustrates the complexity of the Revolutionary period. For tenant farmer William Pendergrast, the Revolutionary War was certainly not about exalted ideas.)
2. Opinion: The Most Elusive Founder, Whose Pamphlet Fired up a Revolution, Jeffrey Rosen.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/interactive/2026/thomas-paine-common-sense-heretic/>

Questions to Think About:

- What did Edmund Burke mean by the term “salutary neglect?” What does Carl Degler say about it?
- The American historian Barbara Tuchman called the British approach to governing the American mainland colonies “folly” because of ineptness. If true, what were the implications?
- How united were the colonies. Was this a civil war?
- Why were the Articles of Confederation written to be so weak?
- Why did the Confederation Congress, when it edited the *Declaration of Independence*, make no comments on the famous 2nd paragraph – only on the “charges” Jefferson lodged at George III?