Reading Guide  
Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History*  
Bennion Teachers’ Workshop 2018 Pre-Work

In preparation for the Bennion Teachers’ Workshop, you are required to **carefully read and annotate the Introduction, Chapter 2, and Chapter 6 (the conclusion)** of Klooster’s Revolutions in the Atlantic World.  
**You should also SKIM chapter 3.**

We will discuss this reading on the first day of the workshop. Please bring your book and be prepared to engage in a discussion of the work.

I would not suggest reading the chapters in chronological order. Instead, I suggest the following order:  
1. Introduction  
2. Chapter 6 (Conclusion on Comparing the Revolutions)  
3. Chapter 2 (American Rev)  
4. Skim Chapter 3 (French Rev)  

The reading guide will follow the suggested reading order. You are not required to fill out this reading guide, but I strongly encourage you to at least read it and think about it as you read.

Note: Klooster challenges much of what historians have previously argued regarding the American Revolution, providing a more nuanced and complicated view of the conflict. I ask you to approach this with an open mind, building upon your previous knowledge of the 18th century. Klooster’s introduction dives head first into European and Atlantic history. Do not fret if you do not have a solid background in some of these concepts. The key is to see that these revolutions did not happen in a vacuum. The American, French, and Haitian Revolutions were global events that depended upon international politics and interactions. Klooster examines how wars on the European mainland had serious consequences for British and French North America. Similarly, he locates the French Revolution within the context of larger European imperial conflicts. I do not expect you to be a master of all these events. But, you should recognize how intertwined this period was, questioning how and why that was so.

**As you read, think carefully about what question(s) you will ask Klooster when you meet him. Perhaps it’s something about his methodology, his research, or his argument. You will have the unique opportunity of getting to speak with him face-to-face.**

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**Introduction:**

- Most historians, like Klooster, argue that there was not just one single Enlightenment, but that the Enlightenment provided a framework to critique existing forms of political, social, and economic hierarchy. It looked different in every area that the “Republic of Letters” touched, but in general it was focused on: Innovation/Progress; Skepticism; and experiments with representative government.

- Does Klooster believe that the Enlightenment was the direct cause of revolutions? Or does he think it inspired revolution? There is a slight nuance between those ideas. Reflect on which one you think Klooster agrees with.

- Why do you think he stared this chapter with Voltaire’s funeral? How does this relate back to his main argument?
We like to think of revolutions as happening “from below,” meaning from the masses (those illiterate or semi-literate members of society who lacked significant power), but the Enlightenment was not a movement for those people. Does that change how you think of the revolutionary era? Why or why not?

Klooster lays out four objectives or aspects his work will touch upon. In your own words, summarize these four objectives. I have provided some simple starting points. As you read the other chapters, keep these ideas in mind.

1. Reform.
2. Not inevitable.
3. Civil Wars
4. Not a march towards democracy

What is privilege? How does it play a major role in this era?

What role does the Seven Years’ War play in the Age of Revolutions (both for France and for Britain)? He begins a discussion of the Seven Years’ War by discussing “The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748).” This ended a war on the European Continent between France, Britain, and Austria, but it can be seen as the precursor to the Seven Years’ War in North America. This is one way that Klooster demonstrates how European politics and war had much larger implications on the people of North America than we have previously recognized.

You might have heard about the Seven Years’ War as “The French and Indian War.” How does Klooster’s image of this war alter or enhance your knowledge of this conflict?

War seems to play a huge role in driving revolution. Why?
Chapter 6: The Revolutions Compared

➢ Klooster immediately revisits his four points from the introduction. How does he expand upon his ideas from the introduction here?

➢ Why is it so important that we recognize that these revolutions were not inevitable? What sources does Klooster draw upon to argue this? And why is that such a fundamental aspect of a comparative study?

➢ How did individuals - not just leaders but normal, every day people; slaves; women - all play important roles in these revolutions?

➢ Why did democracy not immediately flourish? And why was it not the intended outcome?

➢ Why does Klooster disagree with some historians that the Enlightenment “created” revolutions? How does he see the role of Enlightenment in the Age of Revolutions?

➢ Why do you think Haiti had such long and intense aftershocks?

Chapter 2: Civil War in the British Empire: The American Revolution

➢ As you read this chapter, pay special attention to the various acts and events that lead to the American War for Independence. You might find it helpful to create a basic timeline for yourself and/or make additional notes in the timeline provided in your Patriots and Loyalists Reacting to the Past Game.

➢ Klooster titles this chapter “Civil War in the British Empire.” As you read this chapter, think carefully about how viewing the American Revolution initially as a civil war versus a true rebellion changes the way you think about the goals and outcomes of the American War for Independence. Was this originally a civil war that devolved into a rebellion? Or was it always a rebellion with independence in mind?

➢ “The emptiness of mainland British America produced a relatively egalitarian society” - why and how?
What role did England’s Glorious Revolution have in promoting experiments with representative government? (If you need background knowledge about the Glorious Revolution visit: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/civil_war_revolution/glorious_revolution_01.shtml)

“The average free male in colonial British North America was not just fiercely independent; he and his family were also well-off.” Klooster seems to suggest that because of American colonists’ lucrative economy, this made it ripe for a revolution, or at least, a civil war. Do you agree or disagree?

Why did the Seven Years’ War lead to “suspicion between British subjects on either side of the ocean?”

Explain the significance of the Stamp Act.

Klooster argues that American nonimportation (or boycott) was largely a failure, yet served an important role in politicizing colonists and uniting them. In what was was it a failure? How does this compare to the traditional narrative in American History textbooks? (See American Yawp, for example: http://www.americanyawp.com/text/05-the-american-revolution/)

Why was the Boston Tea Party a turning moment for American Colonists and the British?

What was the purpose of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia? What were the specifics of the Declaration of Rights in 1774? Do you get the sense that they wanted independence or something else?

How were the “associations” that sprung up after the Declaration of Rights indicative of self-governance flourishing in British North America?

How did Americans define liberty and British tyranny in pamphlet literature, including, but not limited to, Thomas Paine’s Common Sense?

In what ways was the revolution an attempt to extend British privilege to North American British subjects?

In what ways was the American Revolution a global war? (Keep in mind 1/3 of the British Army were German mercenaries)
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➢ What do you think about the argument that we can’t break colonists neatly into categories of Patriots and Loyalists? That the “great majority” of colonists were in between these two, depending on context?

Chapter 3: The War on Privilege and Dissension
Please SKIM this chapter prior to the start of the Bennion Workshop. After the conclusion of our week together, you will be required to read this chapter in-depth and use it for your final project.

➢ For this chapter, think carefully about the ways in which the French Revolution built upon or dissented from the American Revolution.

➢ How were French ideas regarding privilege v rights different from the British (and American) contexts?
➢ What seemed to be the key cause of the French Revolution? Was this different from the American Revolution?
➢ Was the French Revolution as Global in scope as the American Revolution Was?

Chapter 4: Haiti - Post-Workshop Required Reading (will provided reading guide in June)

Chapter 5 - Do not have to read.
Additional Voluntary Reading
The following are readings you may find helpful if you don’t have a solid background in American or European history. By no means mandatory, these readings may prove helpful for your final projects and/or preparation for the workshop. I will not expect anyone will have read these prior to the workshop, but wanted to give them to you far in advance.

American Revolution:
❖ Gilder Lehrman’s “American Revolution” resources: [http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/essays/american-revolution-1763%E2%80%931783](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/essays/american-revolution-1763%E2%80%931783)

French Revolution:

Haitian Revolution
❖ Haiti and the Atlantic World, [https://haitidoi.com/](https://haitidoi.com/)

“How Haitian Declaration of Independence,” 1804