

Sage or Infidel: Thomas Jefferson's Life and Legacy

This class will review the life and decision making of Thomas Jefferson (1743 – 1826), who gained enduring fame as a champion of freedom for his philosophical writings, was the first Secretary of State, second Vice President and third President of the United States. Recent research on issues inadequately addressed in previous biographies will include matters of slavery, Native Americans, pirates, suffrage and gender, world affairs, the industrial revolution, economics, etc. Understanding the details of Jefferson's life is important, but details are like a dictionary compared to a novel. We will strive to understand the context of his life, the social and cultural environment in which Jefferson lived, grew, survived and thrived.

Suggested pre-course reading: Wikipedia or Britannica pages on Jefferson or *American Sphinx* (Ellis) or *Thomas Jefferson* (Meacham) or *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (Brodie) or equivalent background material.

Introduction to the class: will provide an overview to the class, some background videos & reading material – if one is so inclined, and the primary objectives for the class.

Lectures 1-11: lectures and supplementary material will be distributed by email; all lectures will be provided one week prior to the class meeting. Supplementary material may not be so lucky, but every effort will be made to make it available prior to the relevant class.

Supplementary material: (a) additions to my original set of lectures will be provided on various topics, such as colonial Virginia politics, the Aaron Burr trial, the Barbary Pirates, the founding of the University of Virginia, etc. (b) A few essays by prominent Jefferson scholars will also be made available, along with links to several free books & videos.

Discussions: we will walk through the lectures, stopping as need be, for questions and feedback from the class. Each lecture has 40 to 50 slides with numerous break points for brief discussions.

- The class is requested to suggest additional material, web sites, etc. that would be of interest to their classmates.
- Any errors in the lectures should be brought to my attention.