



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

PURSUING TRUTH · DEFENDING LIBERTY SINCE 1844

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Hillsdale College Holds Center for Constructive Alternatives Seminar on 1776

The seminar considered the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution, and recent controversies over the significance of 1776.

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College hosted its third Center for Constructive Alternatives seminar of the 2025-2026 academic year March 1-4. The seminar, titled 1776, considered the central ideas and arguments that led America to declare independence, economic and military aspects of the American Revolution, and recent controversies over the meaning and importance of 1776.

Gordon S. Wood, author of “Power and Liberty: Constitutionalism in the American Revolution,” spoke on “1619 and 1776.”

“We find slavery inconceivable, and what you’ve got to do as a historian or historically minded is get back to a period and to a society where slavery was taken for granted, and it’s just so hard to do, but if you start with that, then you realize what happened in the Revolution was extraordinary. For the first time in history, a group of states — and they were the northern states, where slavery was not substantial but was legally established — outlawed it, eliminated slavery legally. That’s the first example in the history of the world,” Wood said. “So what’s extraordinary about the Revolution is that the Revolution made slavery a problem for the first time in history.”

Matthew Spalding, author of “The Making of the American Mind: The Story of Our Declaration of Independence” spoke on “The Story of Our Declaration of Independence.”

“It is that patriotism — one that unites particular loyalties and universal truths — that creates the bonds of affection. America’s founding fathers understood this,” Spalding said. “They saw

education as something that formed attachments to the country, inspiring and then teaching students to be good citizens. And the temporal scripture, the epic poetry of America, the thing that inspires and informs us is the Declaration of Independence.”

Kevin Slack, author of “Benjamin Franklin, Natural Right, and the Art of Virtue,” spoke on “Sermons of the Revolutionary Era.”

“The election day sermons began to synthesize sources from philosophy and theology to educate a coherent political theory — what Thomas Jefferson called the common sense of the Revolution,” Slack said. “In appealing to both the laws of nature and nature’s God, the Americans provided a resolution to the problem of the conflicting authorities of church and state.”

Walter R. Borneman, author of “American Spring: Lexington, Concord, and the Road to Revolution,” spoke on “Lexington and Concord: The First Battles of the Revolution;” John Steele Gordon, author of “An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power,” spoke on “The Economics of the Revolution;” and Mark Edward Lender, co-author of “Fatal Sunday: George Washington, the Monmouth Campaign, and the Politics of Battle,” spoke on “Keys to Victory in the Revolution.”

Hillsdale’s Center for Constructive Alternatives sponsors one of the largest college lecture series in America. CCA seminars are held four times each year, and students are required to complete at least one during their undergraduate years. Over 1,500 speakers have participated since 1972, including President Ronald Reagan, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, historian Stephen Ambrose, filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich, economist Walter Williams, and businessman Steve Forbes.

For photos from the CCA seminar, click [here](#). For video recordings of the lectures, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 7.5 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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