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Contact: Emily K. Grandstaff
434.982.2932 / egrandstaff@virginia.edu

“*Tom Paine’s America* is a brilliant contribution to our understanding of the early republic. No other book now available accomplishes what Cotlar achieves through his careful, deeply insightful attention to the content of opposition papers and how it changed over time.”

—John Murrin, Princeton University, coauthor of *Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People*, sixth edition

TOM PAINE’S AMERICA

A Reinterpretation of the Evolution of American Political Thought in a Transatlantic World of Ideas

In 1789, when the Federal Constitution was ratified, “democracy” was a controversial term that very few Americans used to describe their new political system. That changed when the French Revolution—and the wave of democratic radicalism that it touched off around the Atlantic World—inspired a growing number of Americans to imagine and advocate for a wide range of political and social reforms that they proudly called “democratic.”

In **TOM PAINE’S AMERICA: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic (April 2011; UVA Press)**, Seth Cotlar writes about the impact that Paine and other revolutionary theorists had on this evolution of American political thought. Motivated by what they were learning from Paine and other contemporaries around the world, the evolving democratic opposition in America pushed their fellow citizens to consider a wide range of radical ideas regarding racial equality, economic justice, cosmopolitan conceptions of citizenship, and the construction of more literally democratic polities.

Examining American participation in the decade that produced the formative debate between Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke over the meaning of the French Revolution, the feminism of Mary Wollstonecraft, the anarchism of William Godwin, the radically populist deism of Volney, and the proto-socialism of John Thelwall and Thomas Spence, as well as the romantic and evangelical anti-Jacobism that sought to delegitimize all of this radical experimentation, Cotlar offers a fascinating window into the conflicted origins of American democracy.

Seth Cotlar is Associate Professor of History at Willamette University.

A volume in the series Jeffersonian America