



WASHINGTON COLLEGE NEWS
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February 11, 2016

Washington College Announces Seven Finalists for 2016 George Washington Prize

Chestertown, MD—To mark the holiday celebrating the country’s first president, Washington College today announced seven finalists for the prestigious George Washington Prize. The annual award recognizes the past year’s best written works on the nation’s founding era, especially those that have the potential to advance broad public understanding of early American history.

Created in 2005 by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, George Washington’s Mount Vernon, and Washington College, the \$50,000 George Washington Prize is one of the nation’s largest and most notable literary awards. Past recipients have included Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Annette Gordon-Reed and playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda.

This year’s finalists represent both the depth of new scholarship and the broad expanse of inquiry into the diversity of people and the political, geographic, economic, and social forces that shaped the American Revolution and the early republic. The books, written to engage a wide public audience, provide a “go-to” reading list for anyone interested in learning more about George Washington and his times.

With superb narrative skill, the authors immerse readers into domestic life at Mount Vernon, a bloody battle on the banks of the Monongahela River, bustling multi-ethnic settlements along the Gulf Coast, onboard ships with revolutionaries crisscrossing the Atlantic world, a depleted encampment at Valley Forge, a contentious convention in Philadelphia in 1787, and the Weehawken dueling grounds at dawn. These were places where well and little known stories of our nation’s past unfolded, revolutionary leaders were forged, and the ideas of liberty, democracy, and republicanism were tested.

The 2016 George Washington Prize finalists are:

- Mary Sarah Bilder, *Madison's Hand: Revising the Constitutional Convention* (Harvard University Press)
- Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (Random House)
- Flora Fraser, *The Washingtons: George and Martha, "Join'd by Friendship, Crown'd by Love"* (Knopf)
- Robert Middlekauff, *Washington's Revolution: The Making of America's First Leader* (Knopf)
- Janet Polasky, *Revolutions Without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (Yale University Press)
- David Preston, *Braddock's Defeat: The Battle of the Monongahela and the Road to Revolution* (Oxford University Press)
- John Sedgwick, *War of Two: Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and the Duel that Stunned the Nation* (Penguin)

Distinguished historians and writers Sean Wilentz, Libby O'Connell, and James Kirby Martin served as independent jurors who selected the finalists from a field of nearly 60 books published in the past year. The winner of the 2016 prize will be announced at a black-tie gala on Wednesday, May 25 at George Washington's Mount Vernon.

More information about the George Washington Prize is available at washcoll.edu/gwbookprize. For more information about the finalists or to arrange interviews, please contact Washington College Director of Media Relations Wendy M. Clarke, (wclarke2@washcoll.edu 410.810.7431) or George Washington Prize Coordinator Jean Wortman (jwortman2@washcoll.edu 410-810-7165).

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

MARY SARAH BILDER is Professor of Law and Michael and Helen Lee Distinguished Scholar at Boston College Law School. Her work focuses on the history of the Constitution, the history of judicial review, and colonial and founding era constitutionalism.

KATHLEEN DUVAL is a professor in the History Department at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Author of *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, DuVal has also published in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *William and Mary Quarterly*.

FLORA FRASER is author of *Beloved Emma: The Life of Emma, Lady Hamilton*; *The Unruly Queen: The Life of Queen Caroline*; *Princesses: The Six Daughters of George III*; and *Pauline Bonaparte: Venus of Empire*. Fraser is chair of the Elizabeth Longford Prize for Historical Biography. She lives in London.

ROBERT MIDDLEKAUFF is Preston Hotchkis Professor of American History, Emeritus, at the University of California, Berkeley. His books include *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728*, which won the Bancroft Prize; *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize; and *Benjamin Franklin and His Enemies*.

JANET POLASKY is Presidential Professor of History at the University of New Hampshire. She is the author of the prize-winning *Revolution in Brussels, 1787-1793*; *The Democratic Socialism of Emile Vandervelde: Between Reform and Revolution*; and *Reforming Urban Labor: Routes to the City, Roots in the Country*.

DAVID PRESTON is an award-winning historian of early America, and Professor of History at The Citadel. He is the author of *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667-1783*, which received the 2010 Albert B. Corey Prize.

JOHN SEDGWICK has been a journalist, novelist, memoirist and a biographer, publishing twelve books altogether. He is best known for his best-selling six-generation family memoir, *In My Blood*, and his acclaimed psychological novel, *The Dark House*. He has been a regular at *Newsweek*, *GQ*, *The Atlantic*, *Vanity Fair*, among many other publications.

ABOUT THE SPONSORS OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON PRIZE

Washington College was founded in 1782, the first institution of higher learning established in the new republic. George Washington was not only a principal donor to the college, but also a member of its original governing board. He received an honorary degree from the college in June 1789, two months after assuming the presidency. The college's [C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience](#), which administers the Washington Prize, is an innovative center for the study of history, culture, and politics, and fosters excellence in the art of written history through fellowships, prizes, and student programs. For more information: www.washcoll.edu.

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is a nonprofit devoted to the teaching and learning of American history. Gilder Lehrman draws on top scholars, an unparalleled collection of original historical documents, and a national network of more than 8,000 Affiliate Schools to create and provide a broad range of innovative resources to help teachers, students, scholars, and the general public learn about American history in a way that is engaging and memorable. The Institute's programs have been recognized by awards from the White House, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Organization of American Historians. For more information: www.gilderlehrman.org.

With its latest initiative, The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington, **George Washington's Mount Vernon** affirms its status as the preeminent center of learning about Washington, his life, character of leadership, and legacy. In addition to safeguarding original books and manuscripts, the Library serves as a center for leadership inspired by Washington's extraordinary example. Mount Vernon is owned and operated by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, America's oldest national preservation organization, founded in 1853. For more information: www.mountvernon.org.