

HISTORY AS A FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE

Prof. Eva Sheppard Wolf

Office Location: SCI 267

Office Hours: M/W 3:15-4:00; F 1:10-2:00, and by appointment

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This course is a graduate level survey of recent developments in the research and writing of History as practiced by professional historians. Time limitations require that the course be selective rather than comprehensive, and students should bear in mind that the course will raise many questions that cannot be answered during a particular class meeting or possibly even during the semester.

Course Goals/ Projected Learning Outcomes. In this course students should:

- Improve ability to read a history book at the graduate level.
 - Identify the book's objective or purpose.
 - Identify the book's thesis and how it relates to the purpose.
 - Identify the organizational structure and sub-theses of the book, and how the book's structure and sub-theses relate to the general thesis.
 - Identify the sources the author used and how those sources affect the book's organization and argument.
 - Identify the genre of History the book represents.
 - Identify the intellectual premises or theories upon which the book is based.
- Develop an understanding of how History, the scholarly subject practiced by professional historians, differs from history, or the past.
- Develop an understanding of recent trends in the practice of History by professional historians.
 - Identify the main trends in the writing of History over the past century or so.
 - Explain what the recent developments in History have been.
 - Explain how those recent developments depart from or reiterate past approaches.
- Improve ability to participate in analytical discussions. See the detailed comments on this topic below on page 5.
- Improve ability to deliver a presentation. See the detailed comments on this topic below on page 6.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Seven book reviews, out of nine (with asterisks below)	35%
One Historiography essay	20%
One oral presentation	20%
Participation in discussions	25%

Course Books:

- *1. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge, 1988.
- *2. R.R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution*. Princeton, orig. 1941.
- *3. E. P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*. Penguin or Vintage, 1963, 1968.
4. Callum Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*. Longman, 2005.
- *5. Thomas Laquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Harvard, 1990.
6. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, 2000.
- *7. Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A revisionist History of Foot-binding*. California, 2005.
- *8. Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean*. UNC Press, 2004.
- *9. Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands*. UNC Press, 2007.
- *10. Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- *11. Jan Vansina, *How Societies Are Born: Governance in West Central Africa Before 1600*. University of Virginia Press, 2004.

Schedule

Aug. 28: Introductory Meeting

What's this class about? What is (H)istory? How do we do it?

Sept. 2: History, Historiography, and Objectivity, I

Novick, *That Noble Dream*, parts I and II

Presentation:

Leopold von Ranke, prefaces to histories of France and England (E-reserve; the case-sensitive password is "baseball")

R.G. Collingwood, "Positivism," in *The Idea of History* (E-reserve)

Sept. 9: History, Historiography, and Objectivity, II/Intellectual History

Novick, *That Noble Dream*, parts III and IV

Presentation:

Forum: "Peter Novick's That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the Future of the Historical Profession," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 3.

(Jun., 1991), pp. 675-703. (JSTOR)

Sept. 16: Political History, Narrative History

R.R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled*

Presentation:

Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," in *The Content of the Form*. (E-reserve)

Sept. 23: Social History/Marxist History

Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*

Presentation(s):

Marc W. Steinberg, "The Re-Making of the English Working Class?" in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (Apr., 1991), pp. 173-97. (JSTOR)

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Two Histories of Capital," in *Provincializing Europe*

Sept. 30: Postmodernism

Presentations:

Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, chaps. 1-8, conclusion.

Appleby et al, *Telling the Truth About History*, Introduction and chap. 7 (E-reserve).

Gabrielle Spiegel, "The Task of the Historian" *AHR* 114(2009):1, 1-15.

Oct. 7: Cultural History/Gender

Thomas Laquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*.

Presentation:

Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5. (Dec., 1986), pp. 1053-1075. (JSTOR).

Oct. 14: Feminism and History/Gender

Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Foot-binding*

Presentation(s):

Laura Lee Downs, "Gender and history in a post-structuralist world," and "Conclusion," *Writing Gender History* (E-reserve)

Forum: Revisiting "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 5 (Dec., 2008), pp. 1344-1430. (E-Reserve or library copy)

Oct. 21: Borderlands

Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*

Presentation:

Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3. (Jun., 1999), pp. 814-841. (JSTOR)

Responses to Adelman and Aron article, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3. (October., 1999), pp. 1221-1239. (JSTOR)

Oct. 28: Atlantic History

Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*

Presentation:

David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World*, (E-reserve)

Jeremy Adelman, "An Age of Imperial Revolutions," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 2 (April, 2008), 319-340. (E-reserve).

Nov. 4: Archaeology and History/Classical History

Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman*

Presentation(s):

Thomas R. Trautmann and Carla M. Sinopoli, "In the Beginning Was the Word: Excavating the Relations between History and Archaeology in South Asia," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 45, No. 4, (2002), pp. 492-523. (JSTOR)

Richard Biernacki, "Language and the Shift from Signs to Practices in Cultural Inquiry," *History and Theory*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Oct., 2000), pp. 289-310. (JSTOR)

Nov. 11: NO CLASS—VETERANS DAY.

Nov. 18: Postcolonialism and Subaltern Studies

Presentations:

Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, Intro., chaps. 1, 4, 6, 7.

Frederick Cooper, selections from *Colonialism in Question*, (E-reserve)

Nov. 25: NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec. 2: Is it History?

Jan Vansina, *How Societies Are Born: Governance in West Central Africa Before 1600*

Presentation:

Joseph C. Miller, "History and Africa/Africa and History," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 1. (Feb., 1999), pp. 1-32. (JSTOR)

Dec. 9: Presentations on final papers.

Be prepared to give a 5 minute précis of your final paper.

Dec. 16: Papers Due. If you would like me to return your paper to you by mail, bring an appropriately sized, self-addressed, properly stamped envelope.

Evaluation

Thorough and critical reading of assigned materials is an essential first step for successful work in this course. Students should also come to class prepared to discuss larger issues of the discipline of history raised in the assignments. Students are urged to read all the articles scheduled for seminar presentations in order to be prepared to discuss issues raised in the articles. Questions and comments should be posed in a spirit of constructive criticism, i.e. analytical in substance and supportive and collegial in style.

All work will be evaluated on the basis of the effectiveness of the structure, style, analysis, and use of sources. Presentations will be evaluated additionally on the effectiveness and clarity of the presentation. Guidelines for the book reviews are detailed below, and grading templates for the book reviews and presentations will be distributed separately.

Participation in seminar discussions is mandatory, not optional, and will be evaluated according to criteria listed below. Students should be prepared to play active roles in both initiating and guiding discussion during class meetings.

Unexcused or excessive missed classes or unfinished readings will result in significant penalization.

Assignments: Classroom Discussions

Regular class attendance and active participation in discussions is a requirement in this course. The quality of your class participation is obviously important, and the ideal would be frequent, high quality, participation. We will always be guided by the questions of critical reading and analysis mentioned above and outlined below, and the following points tend to characterize effective participation.

1. Are the points made substantive and relevant to the discussion? Are they linked to the comments of others?
2. Do comments show that the participant has been listening?
3. Do comments clarify and highlight the important aspects of earlier comments and lead to a clearer statement of the concepts being covered?
4. Is the participant willing to interact with other class members?
5. Do comments show evidence of analysis?
6. Do comments add to our understanding?
7. Does the participant distinguish between facts, opinions, beliefs, and between positive and normative analysis?
8. Is there a willingness to test new ideas?

Constructive class participation is an essential part of this seminar. I will monitor discussion during each class period. If I come to believe that a particular student is not participating as actively as I think he or she should, then I will make a point of calling on the student in hopes of eliciting a more satisfactory level of class involvement.

When we discuss assigned books, we shall organize our work in relation to the seven-point guide given under 'Book reviews' below. At the very beginning of the course be sure to read these materials carefully and be prepared to answer the questions in relation to the book under discussion.

Assignment: Presentations

The purpose of this assignment is two-fold: to provide a way to explore more deeply the week's readings, and to provide a means by which you can practice your skills as a lecturer. You will be graded both on the content and presentation of your talk.

Each presentation will focus on the week's collateral reading, which amplifies in some way the week's main reading. While every student is required to read the collateral readings, one or possibly two students will be required to analyze the readings in depth.

In your twenty-minute presentation, answer the following questions explicitly. A bit of a research may be required to answer these questions.

- a. Who is the author? (How) does the author's identity help us understand the text?
- b. What is the purpose of the article?
- c. In what journal or place is this article published? What does that tell us about its purpose or audience?
- d. What is the thesis of the article and how is the thesis developed?
- e. What can we learn about the topic of the class meeting from this article?
- f. What insights about trends in History can be gained from this article?

Rehearse your presentation. Rehearsal will allow you to improve your delivery and will help you see where you need to modify your presentation. Rehearsal will also help you keep eye contact with the audience. It is vital that you do not read your report. It will help your audience tremendously if you signpost—tell them what you will tell them, and then tell them what you have told them. Be prepared for questions from the class and from the instructor. Think ahead about the kinds of questions that relate your work to the theme of the class meeting and to the course generally. Finally, remember that both the class and the instructor are on your side; stay calm, relax, and don't rush through your presentation.

Assignments: Book Reviews

The purpose of this assignment is to help you better understand the week's reading, and to help you practice your reviewing and writing skills.

Your reviews should be **no longer than 750 words** in length, typed and double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and 12-point font. Include a word count at the end of the review. A review that does not meet these requirements will be returned without a grade for revision. All reviews must be turned in at the beginning of the class period on which they are due. Except in cases of documented illness, late reviews will be discounted one full grade for each day they are late up to 3 days. Reviews turned in on Monday or later will be given half-credit.

Begin your review with the author, title, and facts of publication, using a standard bibliographical form, e.g.:

Phythian-Adams, Charles. *Local History and Folklore: A New Framework*. London: Bedford Square Press, 1975.

Here are seven questions the answers to which *must* form the substance of your review, but you need not address these questions in the order in which they are presented.

1. What is the author's purpose in writing the book?
2. What is the author's thesis?
3. How does the author organize his or her material? What is the logic behind the topics of the chapters and how do the chapters go together to make a book? You should be aware that there is almost always a “fit” between the thesis of the book and its organizational logic. Each points to the other. Thus, if you are in doubt about the thesis, pay attention to the organizational logic, and vice versa. In your review *include an explicit statement about the fit between the book's organization, its thesis and its purpose.*
4. What theories guide the author's work? Sometimes you will have to dig out the answer to this question. Do *not* give a laundry-list of theories. Discuss leading and secondary ones, explicit and implicit ones. This section can include a brief summary of the book, as well as the material describing theories. But make sure that the summary is tied into the primary issue of theories.
5. What sources does the author use to develop the thesis of the book and why are they used? Do *not* give a laundry-list of sources. Discuss types of sources used, types not used, and the reasons for turning to some kinds of sources rather than others. *Include an explicit statement about the pertinence of types of sources in light of the author's thesis and theory.*
6. How well is the author's purpose accomplished? In this section you have an opportunity to make an original, critical evaluation of the book. You will want to address the issues of what is well done, poorly done, and originally done.
7. Here you must relate the book to the subject of the course. How does it fit in with the issues raised and discussed in the course to the date of writing?

Be sure to cite exact pages in your review and to number the pages of your review. Use nothing smaller than a “12” (pica) font. Keep a one-inch margin on the top, bottom and right side of the paper and a one and a half inch margin on the left side.

Assignment: Historiography Essay

The purpose of this assignment is to provide students an opportunity to synthesize the various readings on the discipline of history in a format similar to that used in professional journal articles. You will write a 20 page (double spaced, times new roman 12) essay on “New Perspectives in History.” In writing your essay, you should draw primarily on the required course reading and on the collateral reading listed in the syllabus, but should also consult additional readings.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a form of cheating or fraud; it occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgment, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as his or her own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an "F" grade. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the University Judicial Affairs Officer for further action.

Grading Rubrics

For Book Reviews:

1. Fulfills the Assignment:
 - a. How well does the review describe the author's purpose in writing the book?
 - b. How well does the review convey the book author's thesis?
 - c. How well does the review explain the book's organization and how that organization relates to the thesis?
 - d. How well does the review explain what theories or presumptions guide the book?
 - e. How well does the review describe the book's sources and explain how the sources relate to the book's argument?
 - f. How well does the review evaluate the book's effectiveness?
 - g. How well does the review relate the book to course material and discussions?
2. Structure and Argument
 - a. How well do the paragraphs of the review fit logically together in the order presented?
 - b. How well does the review make a point?
 - c. To what extent is the review compelling and interesting?
3. Style
 - a. To what extent is the prose grammatical?
 - b. To what extent is the prose easy to read?
 - c. How well does the essay use compelling language?

For Presentations:

1. Fulfills the Assignment
 - a. How well does the presentation identify the author of the article?
 - b. How well does the presentation explain the purpose of the article?
 - c. How well does the presentation inform us about the journal or place in which this article was published and the relevance of publication data to the article?
 - d. How well does the presentation explain the article's thesis?
 - e. How well does the presentation add to our understanding of the topic of the class meeting?
 - f. How well does the presentation lend insight into what trends in History can be gained from this article?
2. Structure and Content
 - a. Can the listener understand what the structure of the presentation is?
 - b. How well does the structure of the presentation help the presenter communicate her or his points?
 - c. How well does the listener know what point(s) the presenter is trying to make?
 - d. Are those points informative? Persuasive?
 - e. Is the presentation about the right length?
3. Style
 - a. Is the presenter's voice clear? Can we hear her or him?
 - b. Does the presenter speak at a pace that makes listening easy?
 - c. Does the presenter avoid copious "ums" and "uhs" and other verbal tics?
 - d. How well does the speaker address the audience (not just reading and keeping her or his eyes on the page)?