

Spring 2006 University of North Carolina - Greensboro
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Colloquium: U.S. History Since 1865

This course will introduce students to some of the major topics and debates in U.S. history since 1865. It is not an overview of major events. Instead, students will study many different genres of historical scholarship. Fields that we will explore include: cultural history, transnational history, history from the “top down” and “bottom up,” social movement history, the history of sexuality, and environmental history. Throughout the semester we will explore the following questions when analyzing books and articles: What questions does the work set out to answer? What are its arguments and methodologies? What are the strengths and limitations of the approach?

Requirements (all percentages are approximate):

Participation and Class Presentation (35%): Everyone is expected to come to class prepared to engage in a detailed discussion of the week’s reading. It is essential that you read thoroughly and make careful notes. Students will be largely responsible for facilitating the discussion. You will be graded on the depth and insight of your contributions in class as well as your ability to respond to your peers, question them, and keep the discussion focused and moving forward. Attendance in class is mandatory. Absences will hurt your grade.

Each student will make one oral presentation to the class based on an assigned book that dovetails with our common readings. Presentations will consist of three parts: a) a succinct explanation of the book’s main arguments b) a discussion of the historiographical debates that the book engages c) an exploration of how the book relates to the week’s common reading. Presenters should provide the class with a handout that provides a synopsis of the book and a list of further readings. Students are responsible for scheduling a meeting with me before their presentations to go over their ideas.

Weekly Assignments (45%): Each week you will write either discussion questions or a response paper based on the readings. Assignments must be e-mailed to me by 5pm on the Tuesday before class (late papers will be penalized). Discussion questions should highlight important issues that the readings address and illustrate that you have thoroughly read and thought deeply about them. Response papers must similarly demonstrate that you read and understood the book, engage with its main arguments, and offer a critical perspective. Do not only summarize the book. You must also provide analysis, which highlights why the author’s arguments are significant.

The week of your class presentation you may submit discussion questions instead of a response paper. You may also choose one additional week in which to write discussion questions instead of a response paper.

Syllabus Assignment (20%): Each student will choose a topic on the syllabus (under “ADDITIONAL REPORTS”) to delve into in more depth. In addition to reading the additional book listed on the syllabus (and presenting it to the class) students will read widely in the field and develop a list of readings for an advanced undergraduate/graduate historiography class. Students will hand in a 10 week syllabus (complete with schedule and course description) that lists approximately 5-6 books as well as relevant films or articles (books can be assigned over two weeks). Accompanying the syllabus will be a 6-9 page paper. The paper should explain the historiographical issues that the course will address. It must describe and defend the choice of readings and the order in which they are assigned. You may focus the course on a topic that is narrower than the one delineated in the syllabus. However, you must defend your decision in your syllabus, illustrating that you have read widely in the field. A more detailed description of this assignment will be handed out in class.

Grading:

I use the following grading scale: 93 and above A, 90-92 A-, 88-89 B+, 83-87 B, 80-82, B-, 78-79 C+, 73-77 C, 70-72 C-, 68-69 D+, 63-67 D, 60-62 D-, 59 and below F.

E-mail Policy and Blackboard:

E-mail is the best way to reach me. I always confirm receipt of messages and try to respond quickly. If you do not receive a response from me within 48 hours, you should assume that I did not receive your message and try again. If you do not receive confirmation of my receipt of your message, it means that I did not receive it and you will not be credited for any information that you communicated.

I will use e-mail to contact you, so it is imperative that you check your UNCG email account regularly. Note that I will be sending class e-mails only to UNCG accounts.

The course has a blackboard website that provides copies of the syllabus, handouts, and announcements.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of others without giving them credit. If something you write implies that you are the originator of words or ideas, they must be your own. If you use someone else’s exact words they must be enclosed in quotation marks and followed by a citation. If you put someone else’s ideas into your own words, you must give that person credit. Anyone who commits plagiarism will be penalized severely and could automatically fail the course.

Required Texts:

(available at Addams bookstore on Tate St. and UNCG Bookstore)

- Brinkely, Alan. *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War*. New York: Vintage, reprint edition, 1996.
- Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World: 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, reprint edition, 1995.
- Cohen, Lizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Critchlow, Donald T. *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Engelhardt, Tom and Edward T. Linenthal, eds. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*. New York: Henry Holt, 1996.
- Foner, Eric, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, reprint edition, 1984.
- Greene, Christina. *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Renda, Mary A. *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2001.
- Sugrue, Thomas J. *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
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Course Schedule:

January 11: Introduction to the course

January 18: How Have Historiographical Debates Evolved in Recent Years?

SPECIAL GUEST: DR. LOREN SCHWENINGER

READINGS:

“Introduction,” in Frances G. Couvares, Martha Saxton, Gerald N. Grob, and George Athan Billias, eds., *Interpretations of American History: Patterns and Perspectives: Volume Two - From Reconstruction* 7 ed (2000), e-reserve.

Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (1988). Read “Introduction: Nailing Jelly to the Wall,” Chapter 14: “Every Group Its Own Historian,” and Chapter 16: “There Was No King in Israel,” on e-reserve.

Please also try to skim chapters 13 and 15 and glance at the rest of the book, which is on reserve at Jackson Library.

ASSIGNMENT:

Write at least three discussion questions based on the readings. You should also submit one question for Dr. Schweningen about his experience as a graduate student during the 1960s and as a young scholar during the 1970s and 1980s.

January 25: How Does a Comparative Perspective Deepen Our Understanding of U.S. History?

READING:

Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (1984)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Reconstruction: Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (1984)

February 1: Does Sexuality Have a History?

READING:

George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (1995)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Sexuality: Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (1993)

February 8: What is Cultural History and Why is it Important?

READING:

Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (2001)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

U.S. Foreign Relations: Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media & U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (2001).

February 15: No class. Meet with me individually to discuss your syllabus assignments.

February 22: How Does A “Bottom Up” Perspective Transform our Understanding of Large Social Forces and Structures?

READING:

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (1990)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper

Report to class about syllabus paper

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Immigration/Ethnic Identity: George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (1993)

March 1: Why Is “Traditional” Political History Still Important?

READING:

Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (1995)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Women and Social Reform: Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (1994)

March 8: NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

March 15: How Have Scholars Conceived of the Environment as a Historical Actor?

READING:

Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (1979)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper.

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Environmental History: Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (1995)

March 22: How is Public History Political?

READING:

Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (1996)

James Horton: “History Matters: Organizing for Mutual Support,” *OAH Newsletter* 32 (November 2004), <http://www.oah.org/pubs/nl/2004nov/horton.html?emtm1104c>

ASSIGNMENT:

Write at least three discussion questions based on your reading.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

World War II: John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986)

Vietnam: Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of the War in Vietnam* (1999)

March 29: How Are Historians Complicating History from the “Top Down”?

READING:

Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (1996)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response Paper

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

Race and the Postwar Metropolis: Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (2003)

April 5: How Should We Write the History of Social Movements?

READING:

Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham North Carolina* (2005).

ASSIGNMENT:

Response Paper

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

Civil Rights: Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (1995)

Postwar Feminisms: Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (2003)

April 12: Is Biography a Useful Tool for Understanding History?

READING:

Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman’s Crusade* (2005)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response Paper

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

New Right: Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (2002)

April 19: NO CLASS – SYLLABUS ASSIGNMENT DUE

April 26: How Does Transnational History Change Our Understanding of U.S. History?

READING:

Selections from Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (2002):

Bender, "Introduction: Historians, the Nation, and the Plentitude of Narratives," pp. 1-12.

Daniel T. Rodgers, "An Age of Social Politics."

Marilyn B. Young, "The Age of Global Power."

Selections from *Journal of American History* 86:3 (1999):

David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," pp. 965-68.

Marcel van der Linden, "Transnationalizing American Labor History."

All articles are on e-reserve.

ASSIGNMENT:

Write at least three discussion questions based on your readings

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Transnational History: Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (2003)