

## History 382: Modern Classics of Historical Writing

Spring 2020: times to be arranged in Mears 316

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Mears 316 (X3107)

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Office hours: Monday and  
Friday from 10-11  
(HSSC atrium);  
Tuesday from 3-4  
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This course will introduce students to some of the most important themes, debates, and scholars in the field of history during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Over the course of 14 weeks, we will read important works of scholarship by Fernand Braudel, E. P. Thompson, Joan Scott, and others, examining the books and articles that helped pioneer fields like social history, gender history, and economic history. The class will follow a tutorial method, based on the system of graduate education at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, to provide students with advanced work in critical reading, analytical writing, and the cogent expression of ideas. The class will be writing intensive.

Course readings can be found in several places:

- Journal articles will be downloadable from a database accessible through the Grinnell College libraries, most often JSTOR or Project Muse. The course's syllabus and Pioneerweb page will provide links to these articles.
- In some cases, scanned chapters of books will be available in the documents section of our course Pioneerweb page.
- Books will be available on reserve at Burling Library or can be purchased from the college bookstore. If you do not purchase these books, please copy or scan the relevant pages and bring a printout to class.

These books are available for purchase and are on reserve at Burling Library:

- William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of Early New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003 [1983]).
- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995 [1975]).
- Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2017).
- Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).
- E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966 [1963]).







- Did the feedback offer at least **one critical comment and helpful suggestion** for implementation in future essays?
- Did the feedback include a **pertinent question**?

The class's tutorial format makes it especially important for both (or all three) partners to fulfil their roles as planned, which makes it more complicated than usual to grant extensions in this course. Each student may therefore have **one 48-hour extension on an essay** this semester. It will nearly always be in your interests to save this extension until you are ill, since you will not be given a second extension unless you can provide documentation of an emergency. If you do need to take an extension, it is your responsibility to email the professor and your classmate(s) as quickly as possible to arrange a new time to meet.

Your essays and your other writing this semester must of course be your own work. Your essays should be based only on the course readings—don't do further research on the issues involved in the reading of the week (unless you look at book reviews, which you should cite if you use). You are welcome to discuss the class and the readings with other students (in fact, doing so can help you to understand the material better) but you should write your papers on your own.

My goal is to create as inclusive a classroom as possible and to meet the needs of all of my students. I therefore encourage students with documented disabilities, including invisible or non-apparent disabilities such as chronic illness, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities, to discuss reasonable accommodations with me. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman, who is located on the 3rd floor of Goodnow Hall (x3089).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

**Week 1 (01/22) 12pm: Introduction (no essay due)**

**Discussion question: The history of whom? The history of where?**

Sara Maza, *Thinking about History*, pages 1-82

**Week 2 (begins 01/27):                      School**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: Braudel describes “the history of events” as “surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs.” He urges his readers to**

**observe “the underlying currents” of history instead (p. 21). How effectively does this philosophy of history help readers to understand the past in Braudel’s work?**

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper Collins, 1992 [1949]). (See below for page assignments.)

Peter Burke, “Fernand Braudel”, in *The Annales school: Critical Assessments*, ed. Stuart Clark, 6 vols (London: Routledge, 1999), vol. 3, pp. 111-123. P-Web.

The Braudel reading can be found in 3 pdf’s on Pioneerweb. (*You are not required to read all the pages in all the files!*) Instead, in Braudel 1: read 17-24, 276-82, 352-54. Braudel 2, read: table of contents, 335-66, 380. Braudel 3, read: 459-83, 500-4, 526-29, 543-44. P-Web.

### **Week 3 (begins 02/03): Race and Slavery**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: Eric Williams writes (using the racial terminology of his day) that “Here, then, is the origin of Negro slavery. The reason was economic, not racial; it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but with the cheapness of the labor... The features of the man, his hair, color, and dentifrice, his ‘subhuman’ characteristics so widely pleaded, were only the later rationalizations to justify a simple economic fact: that the colonies needed labor and resorted to negro labor because it was cheapest and best.” After reading Williams, Jordan, and Fields, do you agree? Did racism or capitalism create slavery in the Americas?**

Eric E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, [1944] 2006), [these pages from 1961 edn—we are requesting the most recent reprint] pp. 3-29, 51-57, 197-212. P-Web.

Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: Inst 110yoly p .82, 352/Ty historm anCuleatuan E. Willmsburg, Va.er,yrd th,

E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966 [1963]), 9-14, 189-212 (pay particular attention to these pages), 314-349, 711-746. **For Purchase.**

William H. Sewell Jr., "How Classes are Made: Critical Reflections on E.P. Thompson's Theory of Working-class Formation," in *E.P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Temple, 1990), pp. 50-77. P-Web.

### **Week 5 (begins 02/17): Historicizing Power**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: How does Foucault challenge standard assumptions about the history of punishment and the exercise of power? Is he convincing?**

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995 [1975]), Parts 1 and 2. **For Purchase.**

### **Week 6 (begins 02/24): Gender**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: Joan Scott argues that gender is "a primary way of signifying relationships of power. Changes in the organization of social relationships always correspond to changes in the representations of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way" (p. 1067). Judith Bennett proposes a theory of "patriarchal equilibrium" with a particular vision of how gender relations have played out in history. To what extent can their two visions of gender history be reconciled?**

Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful category of historical analysis," *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), 1053-75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1864376>

Judith M. Bennett, "Confronting Continuity," *Journal of Women's History*, 9: 3 (1997): 73-94. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jowh/summary/v009/9.3.bennett.html>

### **Week 7 (begins 03/02): The Invention of Tradition**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: One of the main effects of \_\_\_\_\_ was to challenge the public's understanding of a number of individual traditions. (It's hard to think of kilts and the British royal family the same way after reading Trevor-Roper and Cannadine, for example.) To what extent has the idea of "invented traditions" contributed to the studd 2.**

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge, 1983): Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," pp. 1-14, Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland," pp. 15-41; David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition,' c. 1820-1977," pp. 101-164. P-Web.

### **Week 8 (begins 03/09): Environmental history**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: William Cronon writes that "Our project must be to locate a nature which is within rather than without history, for only by doing so can we find human communities which are inside rather than outside nature." How well does Cronon balance the role of human agents (like colonists and Indians), natural phenomena, and other actors (like pigs and towns) in telling his story? Does he succeed in weaving these narratives together into an "ecological history" of early New England?**

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of Early New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003 [1983]). Pages 3-81 and 108-156. **For Purchase.**

### **SPRING BREAK: March 16-27**

### **Week 9 (begins 03/30): The New Cultural History**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: In "The Great Cat Massacre" Robert Darnton attempts to explicate a seemingly opaque event in Paris in 1730 by excavating the way that culturally specific symbols were evoked, used, and understood by the protagonists of the incident. To what extent do you think Darnton "got the joke" of the massacre?**

Robert Darnton, "Introduction" to *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), pp. 3-7. P-Web

Robert Darnton, "Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Severin," in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), pp. 75-104. P-Web. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289048>

Roger Chartier, "Text, Symbols and Frenchness." *The Journal of Modern History* 57:4 (1985), pp. 682-695. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1879771>

Robert Darnton, "The symbolic element in history," *Journal of Modern History* 58(1) (1986): 218-234. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1881570>



## **Week 10 (begins 04/06): Intellectual History**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: Intellectual historians examine rhetorically and philosophically complex texts in order to interpret the way people in the past. Quentin Skinner argues that we may reconstruct the force of past speech acts by contextualising them discursively. In the process we may learn how the meaning of important ideas (such as liberty) changed over time. To what extent does Dominick LaCapra agree with his approach?**

Dominick LaCapra, "Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts," in *Modern European intellectual history: Reappraisals and new perspectives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 47-85. P-web and <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.04883.0001.001>

Quentin Skinner, "Interpretation and the understanding of speech acts," in *Visions of politics: Volume 1, Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 103-27. P-Web.

## **Week 11 (begins 04/13): The History of Science**

(Student Y submits, Xory

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**Week 13 (begins 04/27): Orientalism**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: Said argues that “ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied,” while Varisco responds that “the real goal of serious scholarship should be to improve understanding of self and other, not to whine endlessly or wallow self-righteously in continual opposition.” In your opinion, does Said advance serious understanding?**

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 1-73. Three copies are on reserve.

Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (University of Washington, 2007), pp. 251-266, 290-305. P-Web.

**Week 14 (05/04): Thinking about History (no essay due)**

Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History*, pp. 83-239.