

**History 100: How History Works**  
**Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 9:00-9:50**  
Fall 2021

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Office hours: Tues. 10-11;  
Wed. 2-4; or by  
appointment (outside  
when possible)

***Course description***

Like all sections of History 100: The Introduction to Historical Inquiry, this class has two main goals: to provide an introduction to the discipline of history (discussing how historians interpret the past and how history differs from other academic fields) and then to illustrate how the historical craft works through more specific subject matter. The class will therefore work on two different levels, helping students understand both a series of historical events and the methods used by scholars to analyze and interpret those events.

Most history classes focus on one particular time and place in the human past, but this course provides an introduction to issues of historical causation, argumentation, and evidence by pursuing a series of questions, big and small, illustrating how historical thinking can change how we see the world. Is there really a difference between “history” and “prehistory”? When are fairy tales and folklore useful historical sources? Was the Roman emperor Caligula actually crazy, and how can we know for sure? How is being a historian like being a spy, and how can scholars understand the opinions and worldview of people who lived under brutal dictatorships or in cultures alien from our own? By pursuing questions like these, students will learn both about the forces that have shaped the past and about the ways that historians understand the world around them.

***Course readings***

The following books are on reserve at Burling Library and are available for purchase at the Grinnell College Bookstore:

John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*

Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*

Amy Stanley, *Stranger in the Shogun's City: A Japanese Woman and Her World*

Other readings (marked “[Pioneerweb]” below) will be available on the course’s Blackboard site.

***Learning Goals***

This course has two broad objectives: to help students to understand the way historians analyze the past and to enable students to express their ideas more effectively. More specifically:

### *Historical Analysis Goals*

By the end of the course, students will have refined their ability to:

- interpret a primary source (historical document) by analyzing its structure, audience, goals, and biases;
- identify and critique the argument of a secondary source (a book or article by a present-day historian), while situating that source within a larger historical debate or literature.
- evaluate and synthesize the ideas in a body of historical writings;
- explain the manner in which historical analysis of the past often differs from analyses by other types of scholars.

### *Writing and Discussion Goals*

By the end of the semester, students will have improved their ability to:

- craft a clear, specific, and nuanced thesis statement in response to a historical question;
- construct a well-organized, evidence-rich, and cohesive paper in defense of a central argument.
- present their ideas orally in class, using evidence to support their ideas or to add nuance to the larger discussion.

Keep these goals in mind throughout the semester. Class discussions will be based on the analysis of primary sources and secondary sources; writing assignments will be graded based on your ability to develop a nuanced thesis and to defend that thesis in a well-organized paper.

### *Assignments and grading*

Your grade in this class will be based on the following requirements. Note that you must hand in every written assignment in order to pass the class, and that if your grades improve steadily over the course of the semester, I will take that into consideration in deciding your final grade:

**Film analysis (15%).** A 2-page analysis of the film *A Midwife's Tale*, due on Friday, September 10, at 5:00 PM by email. A revised version of this paper will then be due on Friday, September 17, at 5:00 PM.

**Short paper (15%).** A 3-page analysis on the history of things that aren't people, due on Monday, October 4, at 10:00 PM (by email.) A revised version is due on Monday, October 11, at 10:00 PM.

**Oral history analysis (20%).** A 4-to-5-page analysis of the oral history interviews of the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System (available online), which looks at life under Stalin; this paper will be due at 5:00 PM on Friday, November 19; a revised version will be due on Friday, December 3, at 5:00 PM.

**Annotated bibliography with introduction (20%).** Your final assignment of the semester will be to write a research guide to a topic that interests you. There will be several preliminary due dates, with the final project due on December 17.

**Class participation (30%).** The most important requirement for this course is active and informed participation in classroom discussions: since this is not primarily a lecture course, the course's success depends on the involvement of all its members. In general, I'll be looking for evidence that you've done the reading, that you're thinking about the themes and issues covered by the class, and that you're making a good-faith effort to improve the classroom experience for everyone enrolled in the course. Remember that there are many ways to make a useful contribution:

- answering one of my questions or bringing up a detail from the readings;
- finding evidence for your ideas (or a classmate's) by directly quoting a course text or pointing to a specific detail (with a reference) from the reading;
- making connections between the day's readings and earlier discussions;
- responding directly to your classmates;
- synthesizing comments made by your classmates (or the professor);
- asking informed questions of the class, the professor, or both;
- making comments that not only summarize the reading, but analyze it.

Here are some general observations about class participation:

- Class participation is the largest part of your grade for several reasons, but the most important one is this: I believe that being able to delve into an intelligent, nuanced, civil, and respectful discussion with your peers is one of the most important skills a liberal arts education can give you. Moreover, having everyone participate—in one way or another—makes the experience better for everyone.
- Remember that there are many ways to participate in class discussions. The strongest participants in discussion will often make comments that analyze the readings (rather than merely recapping them), but I expect that active participants in discussion will play different roles at different times. For example, here are some different rhetorical moves you might make in class:
  - Answer a question posed by me or a classmate
  - Ask a question for the class to consider
  - Summarize a reading or part of a reading
  - Provide evidence or an example for a point someone else has made
  - Disagree (respectfully!) with a previous comment from class
  - Agree with a previous comment from class while adding an example
  - Connect two comments made by different discussion participants
  - Connect the day's reading to an earlier reading
- In general, any form of participation that shows engagement with the material and helps the class to understand the course's subject matter is fair game. Remember, too, that class participation depends not only on speaking, but on listening—both to me and to your classmates. Be respectful, listen carefully, and be ready to respond to your classmates and not just to me.
- *All else being equal, it will help you to provide evidence for your arguments when you speak in class.* Ground your participation in the text: be ready to quote the readings or to point out specific passages that you find useful, significant, or relevant.

- You should therefore come to class with copies of the day’s reading and with your notes on what you’ve read. (You are welcome to bring the readings either in hard copies or on a computer, but you should remember that it is often easier to mark significant passages in a paper copy of the readings.) In particular, I recommend that you make note of quotations and details in the readings that you find especially compelling.
- Although I hope that all students will take part in the discussion (ideally speaking at least once per class session on average), remember that the thoughtfulness of your comments is generally more important than the quantity of your remarks.
  - I also realize that some students will always be more talkative or more reserved than others. I’m happy to talk to you at any time about ways you might become more involved, and I think it’s part of my job to make sure the classroom atmosphere is conducive to a broad, inclusive discussion.
  - Students sometimes ask if talking to me in office hours can substitute for participation in class. My answer: not entirely. Talking to me in class can show engagement with the material, so if you’ve been quiet in class, it can help me understand how you’ve related to course materials. (If you’ve been active in class, I’m also happy to talk to you, but coming to office hours won’t improve your grade.) On the other hand, I value class participation in part because discussion helps all your classmates to understand the course material and to have a good class experience, so coming to office hours is never a perfect substitute for class discussion.
- Class participation depends on attendance. I’ll therefore keep track of your attendance throughout the semester; in normal times, I would lower your participation grade if you missed class more than three times and (in general) give a participation grade of F or zero to students who missed more than six times. My main suggestion for COVID times: please keep in touch with me if you’re missing class! I am prepared to be more lenient than usual, especially in cases where students remain in contact with me about how things are going.
- If you will be missing a class, you can make sure your absence does not affect your grade by sending me a 300-or-so word email on the day’s reading. Under normal circumstances, this email will be due within 24 hours of the class period where the reading was due; it should analyze the day’s reading using the approach discussed in our primary and secondary source handouts or answer a question I posed by email to the class.
- Finally, I will generally give each student a brief “participation update” each time I send you feedback on a written assignment. I also encourage you to check in with me at any point if you have questions about the class or about how you can become more involved in the discussion.

### ***Writing resources***

Remember that as a Grinnell student, you have access to a number of resources that may be useful for you as you work on writing assignments:

- I am of course happy to meet with you to discuss your writing, either at my regular office hours or at an independently scheduled appointment.

- I recommend that all students consider taking advantage of Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center, which supports students working on papers, projects, presentations, and applications. You can schedule a session with one of the Center's professional instructors and get feedback as you interpret readings, talk through your ideas, analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, or plan presentations. Center instructors do not proofread papers, but they can show you how to edit your own work effectively. You can make an appointment at this link: <http://mywco.com/grinnell>.
- We are fortunate to have two peer writing mentors working with our tutorial: Zoë Yunger ([yungerzo@grinnell.edu](mailto:yungerzo@grinnell.edu)) and Oliver Palmer ([palmerol@grinnell.edu](mailto:palmerol@grinnell.edu)). Writing mentors are experienced writers and trained writing consultants who have demonstrated an enthusiasm for thinking and learning about the writing process as well as a commitment to helping their fellow Grinnellians. They will work with you on drafts of your papers in the weeks ahead. The Writing Mentors program is based on the principles, supported by current research in writing instruction, that 1) writers of all skill levels can improve their writing by revising in response to thoughtful comments, and 2) collaboration among student peers is a particularly effective mode of learning.

### ***Extension policy***

In general, each student in the class can have one 48-hour extension on a writing assignment over the course of the semester. To claim this extension, send me a brief email asking for extra time before the assignment's deadline. I will grant this extension automatically, so there is no need for you to explain why you need more time. Keep in mind, however, that once you've been given an extension on an assignment, I will generally not give you an extension on another except in the case of a documented emergency. Note, too, that you can have one extension of up to 48 hours; you cannot break your extension into two 24-hour extensions, for example. In the absence of an extension, late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day.

### ***Office Hours***

I strongly encourage students to come talk to me during my office hours, so we can discuss course readings, assignments, the study of history, or related issues. This semester I will be available to meet with on Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:00 and on Wednesdays from 2:00 to 4:00, either in my office (ARH 3226) or (weather permitting) outside.

These are drop-in hours; you are welcome to come by without an appointment (and, in fact, I will leave these hours free for drop-ins.) You are also welcome to email me to arrange a different time to meet. I will most likely cancel my regular office hours a couple weeks each semester (say, during registration week) and instead offer meetings by appointment only. I can always find time to meet with you!

Students are welcome to meet with me to discuss any questions they might have about this course, the study of history, or other academic issues at Grinnell. If you're having trouble with a written assignment, I particularly encourage you to come: If you get stuck writing a thesis statement or can't figure out what you want to say in a paper, it's often better to meet with someone about it than to try to just push yourself to get something done. I'm also happy to

discuss course readings in more detail, to answer questions, to talk about the history major, or to discuss any academic questions that might concern you.

### ***Academic accommodations***

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman. Students should then notify me within the first few days of classes so that we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course and coordinate your accommodations.

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS**

### **Unit One: What is History?**

Friday, August 27: Introduction to the Course

Monday, August 30: What is History?

Reading: John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 1-14  
Annette Gordon-Reed, "Origin Stories: Africans in Texas" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 1: Sources, Facts, and Interpretations

Reading: Arnold, pp. 15-79  
Assignment: email me 4 important quotations from Arnold that you feel capture his approach to history (deadline: Tuesday, August 31, at 10 PM)

Friday, September 3: Is the Past a Foreign Country?

Reading: Robert Darnton, "Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue St. Severin" [Pioneerweb]

Monday, September 6: How to Read a Source

Reading: Arnold, 80-109  
short primary sources [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 8: A Midwife's Tale

Viewing: watch the film *A Midwife's Tale*, available at the following URL:  
[https://fod.infobase.com/p\\_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=44085](https://fod.infobase.com/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=44085)

Friday, September 10: A Midwife's Tale, continued

Reading: Reading: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

<http://dohistory.org> (browse a little)

Arnold, pp. 110-125

**Assignment: two-page analysis of *A Midwife's Tale* is due by 5:00 PM**

Monday, September 13: History and Video Games

Reading: Andrew Denning, "Deep Play? Video Games and the Historical Imaginary"  
[Pioneerweb]  
*American Historical Review* video game reviews [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 15: History and Memorialization

Reading: Keisha Blain, "Destroying Confederate Monuments isn't 'Erasing' History. It's Learning From It" [Pioneerweb]  
Simon Schama, "History is Better Served by Putting the Men in Stone in Museums" [Pioneerweb]  
Steve Coll, "Things to Think About When Taking Down Statues" [Pioneerweb]

### **Unit Two: Do Rocks, Trees, and Elephants Have a History?**

Friday, September 17: When Did History Start?

Reading: Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]  
Ian Hesketh, "The Idea of Big History" [Pioneerweb]  
Ted Steinberg, "Rocks and History" [Pioneerweb]

**Assignment: Revised version of *Midwife's Tale* paper is due by 5:00 PM**

Monday, September 20: The Grand Forces of History

Reading: Jared Diamond, "The Evolution of Guns and Germs" [Pioneerweb]  
J.R. McNeill, "The World According to Jared Diamond" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 22: The History of Elephants and Forests

Reading: Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants*, xix-xxviii, 1-40 [Pioneerweb]

Friday, September 24: Do Squirrels Have a History?

Reading: Etienne Benson, "The Urbanization of the Eastern Gray Squirrel in the United States" [Pioneerweb]

### **Unit Three: What Can We Learn from Fairy Tales, the Oral Tradition, and Family History?**

Monday, September 27: Once Upon a Time...

Reading: selection of fairy tales from Perrault and Afanas'ev [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 29: Folklore and French Peasant Life

Reading: Robert Darnton, "Peasants Tell Tales" [Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 1: Slavery, Sex, and Politics in Early America

Reading: James Thomson Callender, "The President, Again" [Pioneerweb]  
Madison Hemings, "Recollections of Madison Hemings" [Pioneerweb]  
Venetria Patton and Ronald Jemal Stevens, "Competing Truths in the Thomas Jefferson-Sally Hemings Paternity Dispute" [Pioneerweb]

Monday, October 4: The Hemings Story

Reading: Dumas Malone on Jefferson and Hemings [Pioneerweb]  
Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]  
Browse the Monticello website's account of the Sally Hemings case

**Assignment: three-page paper is due at 10:00 PM (by email)**

Wednesday, October 6: The Hemings Family in History

Reading: Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 8: Murder in Poland

Reading: Jan Gross, *Neighbors*, xv-xxii, 1-65

Monday, October 11: Neighbors?

Reading: Gross, *Neighbors*, 66-124

**Assignment: revised version of three-page paper is due at 10:00 PM (by email)**

#### **UNIT FOUR: Telling Ancient Lives**

Wednesday, October 13: The Early Life of an Enemy of Rome

Reading: Adrienne Mayor, *The Poison King: The Life and Legend of Mithradates, Rome's Deadliest Foe*, pp. 1-72 [Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 15: The Poison King

Reading: Mayor, *The Poison King*, 236-261 and 347-370 [Pioneerweb]

**FALL BREAK: October 16-24**



Monday, October 25: Is Ancient Biography Even Possible?

Reading: Mary Beard, "Cleopatra: The Myth" [Pioneerweb]  
Mary Beard, "Nero's Colosseum?" [Pioneerweb]  
Mary Beard, "Hadrian and His Villa" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, October 27: Rome's Mad Emperor?

Reading: Suetonius, "Life of Caligula," excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 29: A More Calculating Caligula?

Reading: Aloys Winterling, *Caligula: A Biography*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]  
**Assignment: send me a one-page proposal for an annotated bibliography**

Monday, November 1: Roman Imperial Politics

Reading: Winterling, *Caligula*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]  
Mary Beard, "Caligula's Satire?" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, November 3: Other Roman Lives

Reading: Robert Knapp, *Invisible Romans*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

### **UNIT FIVE: Modern Lives under Dictatorship**

Friday, November 5: Joseph Stalin

Reading: Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: In the Court of the Red Tsar*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Monday, November 8: Stalin's Place in Soviet History

Reading: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, pp. 235-289 [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, November 10: What was it like to live under Stalin?

Reading: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 1-39, 67-88 [Pioneerweb]

Friday, November 12: Surveillance under Stalin

Reading: Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 164-194 [Pioneerweb]  
Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia*, pp. 1-19 [Pioneerweb]

**Assignment: send me three sources for your bibliography, in bibliographic formatting**

Monday, November 15: Stalin and the Cult of Personality

Reading: Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]  
Sarah Davies, “Stalin and the Making of the Leader Cult” [Pioneerweb] Sarah  
Davies, “The Leader Cult in Official Discourse” [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, November 17: The Terror

Reading: Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Friday, November 19: **NO CLASS**

Assignment: **5-page Harvard Project Paper is due at 5:00 PM**

### **UNIT SIX: Everyday life and Surveillance in Britain**

Monday, November 22: British Life in the 1930s

Reading: Thirties Britain: An Overview [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, November 24: The Birth of a New Science?

Reading: *Mass-Observation* by Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson  
“Mass-Observation: A Nation-Wide Intelligence Service”

Friday, November 26: **NO CLASS (Thanksgiving!)**

Monday, November 29: Mass-Observation and Polling?

Readings: J. Michael Hogan, “The Road Not Taken in Opinion Research: Mass-Observation  
in Great Britain, 1937-1940” [Pioneerweb]  
Look at the Mass-Observation website

Wednesday, December 1: Spying on Construction workers

Reading: Report from Mass-Observation on “Demolition in London, 1941” [Pioneerweb]

Friday, December 3: Understanding Emotion in War-Time

Reading: Mass-Observation documents on humor and morale  
**Assignment: revised version of Harvard Project paper is due at 5:00 PM**

**Unit Seven: Summing Things Up**  
**The Story of a Woman in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Japan**

Monday, December 6:           Telling the Story of a Japanese Woman

Reading:       Amy Stanley, *Stranger in the Shogun's City: A Japanese Woman and Her World*,  
pp. xvii-xxvi, 1-86

Wednesday, December 8:    Life in Edo Japan

Reading:       Stanley, *Stranger in the Shogun's City*, pp. 87-161

Friday, December 10:        The Art of History

Reading:       Stanley, *Stranger in the Shogun's City*, pp. 162-252

**Assignment: send me a list of 10 sources for your bibliography, with two annotations**

Thursday, December 17:     **annotated bibliography is due!**