

## **HIS 382-01: Modern Classics of Historical Writing**

**J. Pablo Silva**

([silvajp@grinnell.edu](mailto:silvajp@grinnell.edu), Mears Cottage 216, office hrs MWF @ 11 and by appt.)



**Class Meetings: Depends on your pairing, but always in Mears 216**

### **Course description**

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.

### **Class format: Tutorials**

Top graduate programs in the United States and undergraduates at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are taught using method known as the “tutorial” or “supervision” system. The method involves a series of weekly meetings between no more than three students and a professor. At each meeting, a student presents her or his essay on a pre-assigned topic. The essay becomes a spring-board for an intensive discussion of the set texts. The tutorial method has been described as the most effective pedagogical method for accelerated learning by advanced and able students in the humanities and social sciences. In particular, it improves students’ prose and their cogency and speed in composing analytical writings.

At the beginning of semester, you will be assigned a tutorial partner. Each week you will attend a one hour tutorial with your partner and the instructor. *Both* students will do the set reading. *One* of the two students will be assigned to write a 3-4 page essay in response to a set question. She or he will send her or his paper to the professor and tutorial partner *24 hours* before the scheduled class. The other student is required to provide written feedback on the content and style of the essay, and bring two copies to the tutorial. The next week the roles of writer and commentator will switch. (In tutorial groups with three students, in one week Student A will write a paper and students B and C will respond, and in the following week Students B and C will each write a paper and Student A will respond to one of those papers.) At the end of semester students may select *one* essay they have written and revise it to implement the feedback they have received from their partner and professor.

### Course Objectives

This course will help students to fine-tune and increase their skills in the following areas:

- Identifying, summarizing, and critiquing the arguments in classic works of historical writing, and examining debates between scholars;
- Producing a brief analytical paper in response to a historical question;
- Analyzing peers' writing and helping them with constructive feedback;
- Discussing their ideas cogently and persuasively in class discussions.

### Assessment

Assignments in this course are constructed to help you develop and demonstrate your mastery of course objectives. They will make the following contribution to your overall grade:

#### Attendance and participation 15%:

Attendance is compulsory and critical because students are working in pairs. The instructor will keep records of attendance throughout semester. Students may take **one flexi-day** over the course of the semester without penalty on a day *when they are not the essay writer*. You must inform your partner and professor of your intended absence. You are not required to submit feedback on that day. I recommend saving your flexi-day in case you fall ill during semester.

In addition, when calculating grades, I will drop your lowest essay mark. In practice this means that you may miss submitting one essay and the relevant class when you are the essay writer, as long as you are willing to have all your remaining grades count towards assessment. If you elect to activate this option, it is crucial that you notify both your professor and tutorial partner 24 hours or more before your scheduled meeting so that your partner is able to join another group that week.

Additional missed classes will adversely affect your grade unless you *supply written evidence of significant illness or misadventure*. If you know that regular sporting, cultural, military, familial, or religious obligations are likely to intrude on class time, you must come and see me with your schedule during the first week of semester.

More than one absence will result in the reduction of your attendance and participation grade. In addition, **three or more unexplained absences will result in overall failure in the course.**

You are expected to participate *actively* in class discussions and activities. Not only will this help you to digest course content and develop speaking skills, but it will make class more enjoyable. To participate actively you will need to prepare for each class by doing the set reading. Annotate it or make notes as you go. I have tried to contain it to a manageable amount for each class.

There are four questions that will shape discussion in each class meeting. When you are reading, it will be helpful to keep them in mind.

1. What is X? (Where X= the topic for the class eg “Race,” “Gender,” “Cultural history”)
2. Who is the historian? (What was their life and/or career like? What historical method or school are they associated with?) Google them.
3. Who or what are they writing against?
4. What do the historians you are reading agree about? Even more importantly, what do they disagree about?

In addition to the set reading, you may find answers to these questions in book reviews in reputable historical journals (search the book title in JSTOR and Project Muse) and online (especially useful for biographical information about authors).

#### Essays (6x10=60%):

You will be required to submit *six essays* (3-4 pages 12pt Times New Roman, double-spacing) and *one revised essay* (12pt Times New Roman, double-spacing) this semester in response to essay questions. Each essay must have footnotes and a bibliography (see the **course Style Guide** for formatting advice). The bibliography is not included in the page count. This means that after the first week you will be writing an essay every second week. We will drop your lowest grade when determining your overall score for this section of assessment. You must submit your essay to your tutorial partner and the professor 24 hours before your tutorial.

As a successful tutorial will depend on timely submission of your essay, the penalties for a late essay will be higher than in other history classes. You will forfeit **1/3 of a grade point every two hours** after the deadline has passed (e.g. If the essay was a “B” and you submit it two hours late, you will receive a “B-”; if you submit the same essay four hours late, you will receive a “C+” and so on).

In addition, at the end of semester you should select *one* of your previous essays and revise it to implement the feedback you have received in class from your professor and tutorial partner. It will be due during the exam period. The grade on the revised paper will represent the sixth grade after your lowest grade is dropped.

Your essays will be evaluated by your professor (for your grade) using the following rubric:

Relevance of response to set question	Argument: Clear, Specific Thesis; and a logical defence of it.	Organization of material: Cohesive, without tangents.	Expression: clarity of prose, spelling, and grammar	Adherence to Style Guide	Evidence: Critical and accurate discussion of the texts
---------------------------------------	--	---	---	--------------------------	---

Feedback on peers' essays (5x5=25%):

Providing others with feedback on their academic writing will help you develop evaluative skills and it will also help you improve your own prose. Additionally, it should help your tutorial partner write better essays. Providing feedback will involve:

1. Annotating the body of the essay. Correct spelling and grammar. Suggest alternative phrasings. Commend sentences and paragraphs that are well written. **Photocopy or print your annotations, bring them to your tutorial, and give copies to both your partner and professor. (You are welcome to write them by hand on a printed-out paper, or to write comments electronically using the commenting feature of Word.)**
2. Providing additional comments, which you should also copy for your partner and professor. This means:
  - a) Describe what your tutorial partner argued in the essay
  - b) Note one thing that they did successfully
  - c) Does the paper do an accurate and effective job of describing the ideas of the historians you read this week?
  - d) Note one thing that they did that didn't make sense/puzzled you/wasn't successful and a suggestion for what they should do next time.

e.g. "This essay argued that Europeans' understanding of race only solidified after the institution of slavery in the Caribbean. It identified an important difference between Historian A's and Historian B's uses of historical evidence as extracted from sixteenth-century African travel-writing to make this case. Nevertheless, I found it hard to follow on first reading because the analysis was buried in body paragraphs. Next time, start each paragraph of your essay with a topic sentence so that your reader can follow the direction of your argument more easily."

3. Write down **two questions** about the historical material of the class. At least one of them should be a direct question to your partner about her or his essay. The other(s) could be general questions about the historical writing we will be examining.

Your feedback will be evaluated according to the following Yes/No rubric. Each "Yes" will get you one point out of a possible five for the assignment.

- Did the feedback make **accurate** corrections with respect to spelling and grammar?

- Did the feedback **describe** the argument of the essay?
- Did the feedback offer at least **one positive comment**?
- Did the feedback offer at least **one critical comment and helpful suggestion** for implementation in future essays?
- Did the feedback include **pertinent questions**?

### **Extensions:**

As successful tutorials will depend on both partners (or all three) fulfilling their roles in a timely fashion, there will be fewer extensions granted than in other Grinnell classes. Each student may have **one 48 hour extension on an essay** this semester. We would recommend saving this for if/when you fall ill. You must inform your partner and supervisor as soon as you realize that you will not be able to complete your assignment on time. This 48 hour period may not be broken into shorter extensions on multiple assignments. The essay-writer who is taking the extension is responsible for rescheduling the session at a time which is agreeable to her or his tutorial partner and professor.

Otherwise, any request for an extension must be accompanied by **documented evidence** of significant illness or misadventure. SHACS does not provide certificates unless students are seriously ill.

### **Plagiarism**

All essays and feedback for this course must be entirely your own work. Written work should be produced using only those sources assigned in class unless it is explicitly stated that additional research is required. Please feel free to discuss the class and your reading with others—in fact *do discuss the class and your reading with others* since this will improve your understanding of the material—but you should compose your assignments alone.

I take plagiarism very seriously. It is an act of intellectual dishonesty which shows a lack of respect for your peers, other historians, and this College. You should read Grinnell’s formal definition of plagiarism before submitting any written work for this course. In addition, I have included a document on Plagiarism in the “Assignments” section of our course website which identifies four types of plagiarism and defines the term “common knowledge” for HIST 382-01.

### **Students with disabilities**

Any student with a disability who seeks academic adjustments or accommodations should contact the Dean for Student Academic Support and Advising, Joyce Stern ([sternjm@grinnell.edu](mailto:sternjm@grinnell.edu), x.3702, Rosenfield Center). Students should also contact me during the first two weeks of class to request adjustments and/or accommodations. All discussions will remain as confidential as possible.

### **Set Texts**

The readings from this class will be available in three places:

- 1) Journal articles will usually be downloadable from the internet or from an electronic database subscribed to by Grinnell College and identified after the citation.
- 2) Scanned chapters will usually be placed on P-Web or E-reserve.
- 3) Books will be available on Reserve at Burling Library and may be purchased from the campus bookstore or online. Second-hand or rental copies are fine but please acquire the listed editions. If you do not intend to purchase books, it will be your responsibility to scan the relevant pages of the books and bring them with you to your supervision.

Robert Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2009).

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* (New York: Vintage, 1995 [1975]).

Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, [1979]).

Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Lie* (Princeton: Princeton, 2017 [1986]).

E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966 [1963]).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1 (01/25) 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 02/01): Annales School**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: Fernand Braudel described “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). What are these**

**“currents”? How does Braudel emphasize their significance? What are the potential advantages and/or disadvantages to historians of adopting Braudel’s “philosophy of history”?**

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper Collins, 1992 [1949]). There are 3 PDF files online. 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.

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 02/08): 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?**

Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. i-xiv, 1-40, 573-82. P-Web.

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.

Barbara Fields, “Ideology and Race in American History,” in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*. Ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson. New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 143-177. P-Web.

#### **Week 4 (Begins 02/15): E.P. Thompson and History From Below**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: In Thompson's view, how was the English working class created? What are the advantages and disadvantages of his approach to the "making" of the English working class?**

E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966 [1963]), 9-14, 189-212, 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. E-reserve.

#### **Week 5 (Begins 02/22): Historicizing Power**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: What does the history of the transition from public punishment to individual imprisonment reveal about the history of power?**

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

#### **Week 6 (Begins 02/29): Gender**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: Joan Scott argued that gender is "a primary way of signifying relationship 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 03/07): The Invention of Tradition**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: Eric Hobsbawm suggests that although the “invention of tradition” has taken place in societies throughout history, it is more frequent in the modern era. Is the theory of “invented traditions” proposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger more useful in helping us understand “traditions” or the time period in which they were “invented”?**

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 03/14): Microhistory**

(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 does Cronon balance the role of human agents (like colonists and Indians), natural phenomena, and other actors in producing 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**

## **Week 9 (Begins 04/04): The New Cultural History**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: In “The Great Cat Massacre” Robert Darnton attempted 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.

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 (04/11): The Power of Comparative History**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: How does a comparative perspective transform our understanding of the Industrial Revolution in England?**

Robert Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2009), pp. 1-155. **For Purchase.**

### **Week 11 (Begins 04/18): Intellectual History**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: Intellectual historians examine rhetorically and philosophically complex texts in order to interpret the way people *thought* 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 12 (Begins 04/25): The History of Science**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

### **Essay question: TBD**

Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Lie* (Princeton: Princeton, 2017 [1986]), 3-224.

## **Week 13 (Begins 04/02): 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 use an analysis of power to advance an understanding of self and other?**

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 1-72, 113-122, 166-200, 255-283. Three copies are on reserve.

Recommended:

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

## **Week 14 (05/09): Thinking about History (no essay due)**

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