History 382: Modern Classics of Historical Writing
Spring 2022: times to be arranged in HSSC A3226

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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.

Course texts

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]).

Class format: Tutorials

This course will use a meeting format based on the "tutorial system" from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom. At the class's first session, each student will be

assigned to a tutorial group of either two or three students. For the rest of the semester, each tutorial group will meet with the professor once each week for a one-hour session. Both students will complete the reading assignment of the week. The first student will also write a 3-to-4-page essay on those readings, responding to a pre-arranged essay question; the second student will prepare a brief response, according to a standard format. The students will switch roles the following week and alternate thereafter. (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 the semester, students will have the chance to revise one of their papers in response to the feedback they have received from the professor and their tutorial partner.

Course Objectives

This course will help students to fine-tune and improve 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.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade in this class will be based on the following requirements:

<u>Attendance and participation 15%:</u>
Attendance in this class is especially important given its tutorial format, so I will keep attendance records throughout the semester. Students may miss one class without penalty *on a day when they are not writing an essay*: in this case, email the professor and your partner as soon as possible. Depending on the timing, the essay-writer may meet with the professor for a one-student tutorial session or may join another tutorial group for the day.

As noted below, I will drop your lowest essay mark when calculating grades. In practice, this means that you can submit only five essays (rather than six) and miss one class session when you would normally be the essay-writer, provided that you are willing to have your other five essays count toward your final grade. In this case, please notify the professor and your tutorial partner 24 hours before the paper is due, so your partner can join another tutorial group.

More than one absence will reduce your grade for attendance and participation, and (in the absence of an emergency) three or more unexcused absences will result in overall failure in the course. If you know of an issue that might affect attendance or participation in the class (such as religious observance, athletics, or family and work obligations), please notify the professor early in the semester so that arrangements can be made. Absences due to a positive COVID test will, of course, be considered excused absences—no one's grade will be hurt because they contract the coronavirus. Given the challenges of the coronavirus, please be in touch with me if any problems arise this term. I'm happy to work with you to make sure you're able to succeed in the class

You will be expected to participate actively in class discussions, which will not only help you to master the course material and improve your speaking and listening skills, but will improve the class experience for everyone. Please bring the course readings and your notes to class with you each week.

Here are five questions to keep in mind each week:

1. What is X? (Where X= the topic for the class, e.g. "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?

These questions are all related to a last question (arguably the most important):

5. What was the main scholarly contribution made by each historian you are reading about? That is, what was the state of the literature before they wrote the work we're reading, and how did that work change the field of history?

In addition to the assigned 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 12-point Times New Roman, double-spacing) and *one revised essay* (12-point Times New Roman, double-spacing) this semester in response to the essay questions listed in this syllabus. Each essay must have footnotes and a bibliography. 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. (I will drop your lowest grade when determining your overall score for this section of assessment, which, as noted above, means in practice that you can complete five essays instead of six). **You will submit your essay to your tutorial partner and to me 24 hours before your tutorial**; submit your paper by email in Microsoft Word or another easily accessible format (but not pdf, since I will be providing my comments electronically.)

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 generally forfeit **1/3 of a grade point every two hours** after the deadline has passed (e.g. If the essay was an "A-" 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 "B" and so on). Again, though, the most important thing to keep in mind is the importance of being in touch with me if issues arise, especially given the challenges of the pandemic.

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.

(You can select any essay you want, as long as it did not earn an A.) It will be due during the exam period.

Your essays will be graded using several criteria:

- Does it have a clear, specific, and nuanced **thesis statement**?
- Does the thesis **respond directly** to the essay prompt and **accurately convey** the ideas in the reading?
- Does the essay give a **reasonable overall sense of the works it describes?**
- Is this essay organized as a **clear and logical defense of the thesis**, without tangents or irrelevant material?
- Is the writing **clear**?
- Does the paper **use evidence** from the readings to back up its argument?
- Does the paper use follow **the conventions of English grammar and usage**, with appropriate footnotes and bibliography?

Feedback on peers' essays (5x5=25%):
In weeks when you are not writing an essay, you will provide feedback to your tutorial partner on his or her paper. This feedback will take the following form:

1. Give the professor and the student an annotated copy of the essay. You should correct spelling and grammar, suggest alternative phrasings, and 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 type and print out for your partner and professor:

    - Briefly describe what your tutorial partner argued in the essay
    - Note one thing that they did successfully
    - Does the paper do an accurate and effective job of describing the ideas of the historians you read this week?
    - Note one thing that they did that could have been made clearer, more convincing, or more effective in some other way, along with a suggestion for what they should do next time.

3. Write down **two questions** about the class session's reading material. At least one of those queries 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 the paper's prose?
- Did the feedback **identify** the argument of the essay?
- Did the feedback offer at least **one positive comment**?

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

Extension Policy

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 early as you can to arrange a new time to meet.

Plagiarism

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.

Academic accommodations

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, Jae Hirschman, who is located in Steiner Hall (x3089).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (week of January 24) 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 January 31): *Annales* 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 Philipp 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 February 7): 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: 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.

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 February 14): 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 (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 February 21): 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. **Available online.**

Week 6 (begins February 28): 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 March 7): The Invention of Tradition

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

Essay question: One of the main effects of *The Invention of Tradition* 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 study of history more broadly, not merely by casting light on individual cases but by helping us understand the past on a more systematic level?

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 March 14): Environmental history

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

Essay question: 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 19 to April 3

Week 9 (begins April 4): 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 April 11): Intellectual History

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

Essay question: In the readings for this week, Skinner and LaCapra each present a manifesto for how scholars should write intellectual history, touching on themes like the interpretation of language and the nature and role of context. What approach does each man propose? To what extent are the two approaches compatible with each other?

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 April 18): The History of Science

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

Essay question: "If we pretend to be a stranger to experimental culture, we can seek to appropriate one great advantage the stranger has over the member in explaining the beliefs and practices of a specific culture: the stranger is in a position to *know* that there are alternatives to those beliefs and practices." How does Shapin and Schaffer's idea of "playing the stranger" change readers' understanding of the Hobbes/Boyle debate, including the role of concerns over the social and political order in the debate?

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

Week 12 (begins April 25): The History of Reading

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

Essay question: Jonathan Rose seeks to "enter the minds of ordinary readers in history, to discover what they read and how they read it." How successful are his attempts to reconstruct the literary tastes and autodidact culture of British workers, when it comes to the reception of modernism and other literary works?

Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale, 2001), xi-xiii, 1-57, 116-145, 393-438. P-Web.

Christopher Hilliard, "Modernism and the Common Writer," *The Historical Journal* 48:3 (3005), 769-787. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/4091722]

Week 13 (begins May 2): 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 (week of May 9): Thinking about History (no essay due)

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