

J. Pablo Silva

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Class Meetings: We will determine these times at our first meeting

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 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

This course will use a meeting format based on the “tutorial” or “supervision” system from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom. 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 tutorial partners. Each week you will attend a one-hour tutorial with your partners and the instructor. *Each* student will do the set reading. *One or two* of the students will be assigned to write a 3-4 page essay in response to a set question. They will send their papers to the professor and tutorial partners *24 hours* before the scheduled class. The other students are required to provide written feedback on the content and style of the essay, and email copies to the tutorial. For the next meeting the roles of writer and commentator will switch. (In tutorial groups with three students, in one session Student A will write a paper and students B and C will respond, and in the following session 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 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. 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.

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, military service, or family and work obligations), please notify the professor early in the semester so that arrangements can be made. Of course, absences due to

infectious disease or other illness will be considered excused absences. Please, do not come to class if you are ill; just let me know as soon as you can. In general, 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 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 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 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 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 PDF.

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). Again, though, the most important thing to keep in mind is the importance of being in touch with me if issues arise.

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. The grade on the revised paper will represent the sixth grade after your lowest grade is dropped.

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 work or 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%):

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 partners 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 at least one thing that they did successfully
 - c) Evaluate whether the paper does an accurate and effective job of describing the ideas of the historians you read this week
 - d) Note one thing that they did that did not make sense/puzzled you/was not 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 class session's reading material. 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. I would recommend saving this for if/when you fall ill. If you do need to take an extension, please 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 partners 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. 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 Baldree, who is located in Steiner Hall (x3089).

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 libraries, most often JSTOR or Project Muse. The course's syllabus and Pioneerweb page will provide links to these articles.
- 2) In some cases, scanned chapters of books will be available in the documents section of our course Pioneerweb page.
- 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, please make a copy and bring a copy 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]).

Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1983).

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995 [1975]).

Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago, 2013 [1962]).

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 Lie* (Princeton: Princeton, 2017 [1986]).

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

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (22 January): Introduction (no essay due)

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

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

Session 2 (29 January): *Annales* School

(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]).

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.

Suggested:

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

Week 3 (5 February): Race and Slavery

(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 (12 February): E.P. Thompson and History From Below

(X submit, Y reviews)

Essay question: Thompson rejects previous explanations for the emergence of 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.**

Suggested:

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 (19 February): Historicizing Power

(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 & 2. **For Purchase.**

Week 6 (26 February): Microhistory

(X submits, Y reviews)

Essay question: TBA

Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1983). **For Purchase.**

Week 7 (4 March): Gender

(Y Submits, X 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 8 (11 March): The Invention of Tradition

(X submits, Y 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 9 (1 April): Environmental History

(Y Submits, X 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.**

Week 10 (8 April): The New Cultural History

(X submits, Y 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 11 (15 April): The History of Reading

(Y Submits, X 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 (2005), 769-787. [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4091722>]

Week 12 (22 April): The History of Science I

(Y Submits, X reviews)

Essay question: TBA

Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago, 2013 [1962]). **For Purchase.**

Week 13 (29 April): The History of Science II

(Y Submits, X reviews)

Essay question: Shapin and Schaffer claim that, “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.

Week 14 (6 May): Thinking about History (no essay due)

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