This course provide students with an introduction to how historians view the nature of their discipline. To that end, we will address several fundamental and interrelated questions throughout the term: How do historians aim to reconstruct the lives and events of the past? To what extent is the past knowable? What is the role of “truth” in the writing of history? Who writes history and for whom is it written? What constitutes an appropriate object or subject of historical inquiry? What is the relationship between the historian and the past? What is the relationship between the discipline of history and politics, or morality?

Since this course is interested primarily in epistemological concerns, its purpose is not for students to gain an extensive mastery in the historical content of any specific geographical area or time period. By the end of the course you may have a better understanding of what colonial Egypt or colonial Canada was like, for example, but it is more important you come away with a clearer idea of how different sorts of historians approach the study of the past.

Assigned Books


Evaluation

This is a reading-intensive and discussion-based seminar. While I will provide from time to time a few explanatory remarks at the beginning of class, the burden rests primarily on the group. I expect that each of you will attend class without fail (illness and emergencies aside).

Your responsibility to the class includes not only completing each day’s reading ahead of time, but an earnest effort to reflect on its significance for the larger themes of the course. To reward your commitment to these goals, class participation will comprise 40% of your final grade. At its most basic level, this component of your grade will be based on your attendance, contributions to class discussion, and attentiveness to your peers’ input.

Your participation grade will also be based on a number of informal requirements. The class will be divided into three groups to facilitate the scheduling of these assignments. On any given day, one group will be relieved of any additional expectations. The students from a second
group will each be responsible for writing a fully-formed paragraph on what they take to be the main lessons and arguments of that day’s readings. Each student will also select one quotation for the class to discuss and one discussion question (they need not be related). These contributions must be posted to Moodle by midnight on the night prior to class. The third and final group will be responsible for synthesizing the major findings, questions, etc., of that day's discussion, and writing up a set of minutes to be distributed to the group and presented briefly at the beginning of the next class meeting.

The remaining 60% of your final grade will be based on the completion of three formal writing assignments. Paper #1 (3-4 pages in length) will be an extended discussion of the major insights offered in a particular day’s set of readings, and how these texts help to illuminate some of the larger themes of the course. You may select any day’s readings with the caveat that it include at least two distinct pieces of work (rather than, say, just a set of chapters from the same monograph). The paper must be submitted within a week of the class meeting in question. It is worth 10% of your final grade. Paper #2 (4-5 pages in length) is a critical review of either the Greer, Mitchell or Stern monographs. Rather than a summary of the book’s content, the paper should focus on how the author formulates the book’s driving questions, how effectively those questions are addressed, and your assessment of the potential and limitations of the book’s theoretical approach and method. The review is due within a week of the final class meeting on the selected book. It is worth 20% of your final grade. The final 30% of your final grade will be based on a paper (6-8 pages in length) you write and present to the class on the state of the field on a topic you might wish to explore for your senior comps project. The goal of the assignment is for you to familiarize yourself with some of the major historians working on a field of interest, what sort of consensus has been reached by that academic community, what methodological and theoretical frameworks they employ, and the direction future research may take. The paper should include about a half dozen sources (articles are fine). You are required to meet with Heather Tompkins, the college’s history reference librarian, in the initial stages of your research, and to report back to me your plans for the project by the midterm break. All presentations will take place during Week 10 of the term (further details will follow). The paper is due by 11 a.m. on Saturday, March 15.

Nota bene: You are responsible for handing in each of the papers to me by the appropriate deadline. Late papers will be deducted 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late.

Course Outline  (assigned readings are to be completed by the date they appear)

***Sun, January 6:  Course & Class Introductions (we will meet from 12:30-1:30)***

Mon, January 7:  On Truth and Objectivity

Reading: Edward Hallet Carr, “The Historian and His Facts” (16 pages) [e-reserves]

Wed, January 9:  Politics, Power and History


Fri, January 11: Is Academic History Compatible with Public History?
**Explore:** [http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/enola/about/](http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/enola/about/)

Mon, January 14: Marxist Approaches to History
**Reading:** Robert L. Heilbroner, *Marxism: For and Against* (New York: Norton, 1980), 61-89 [e-reserves]

Wed, January 16: Class Consciousness
**Reading:** E.P. Thompson, “Class Consciousness” in *The Making of the English Working Class* reprinted in *The Essential E.P. Thompson*, 73-184

Fri, January 18: Law and Custom

Mon, January 21: On Discipline and Orientalism
**Reading:** Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (NY: Routledge, 2003), 1-79 (skim 109-125)

Wed, January 23: Colonizing Egypt
**Reading:** Mitchell, ix-94

Fri, January 25: Varieties of Disciplinary Experience
**Reading:** Mitchell, 95-180

Mon, January 28: The Annales School and the History of Mentalités

Wed, January 30: Race as a Category of History
Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew D. O’Hara, “Beyond Two Republics: Race and Its Interpreters in Colonial Latin America,” in Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America (book in progress) [I will email you a PDF copy]

Fri, February 1: Gender as a Category of History
Reading: Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender as a Category of History,” in Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 28-50. [e-reserves]
Wendy Anne Warren, “‘The Cause of Her Grief’: The Rape of a Slave in Early New England,” Journal of American History, 93, no. 4. [History Cooperative]

Mon, February 4: MIDTERM BREAK

Wed, February 6: History and Anthropology

Fri, February 8: Debating A “New” Cultural History
Reading: Hispanic American Historical Review 79, no. 2 (1999) [JSTOR]
Read the essays by Eric Van Young, Steve Haber, Florencia Mallon, Susan Socolow and Claudio Lomnitz (the rest of the essays are optional)

Mon, February 11: Peasant Rebellion in New Spain (Prof. Eric Van Young will lead class)
---“From the Mundane to the Messianic: The Poetics of Writing Popular Religion,” Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos 15, no. 2 (1999): 345-357. [JSTOR]
Tues, February 12: Eric Van Young Lefler Lecture: “Tales from the Dark Side: Lucas Alamán, Conservatism, and Modernization in 19th-Century Mexico” (Leighton 304 at 5 p.m.)

Wed, February 13: History as Text
Reading: Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” in Tropics of Discourse (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 81-100. [e-reserves]
Natalie Zemon Davis, Fiction in the Archives, 1-76

Fri, February 15: Fiction in the Archives
Reading: Natalie Zemon Davis, Fiction in the Archives, 77-114

Mon, February 18: Microhistory as Method
Alan Greer, Mohawk Virgin, 3-58

Wed, February 20: Hagiography as Historical Evidence
Reading: Alan Greer, Mohawk Virgin, 59-124

Fri, February 22: Staking Claim to Catherine Tekakwitha
Reading: Alan Greer, Mohawk Virgin, 125-205

Mon, February 25: Collective Memory

Wed, February 27: Chile’s Memory Box
Reading: Steve J. Stern, Remembering Pinochet’s Chile, xix-87, 226-235

Fri, February 29: Chile Revisited
Reading: Steve J. Stern, Remembering Pinochet’s Chile, 88-153

Sun, March 2: Screening of Patricio Guzman’s “Chile: Obstinate Memory” (about 60 minutes)

Mon, March 3: Student Presentations (to be assigned)
Wed, March 5: Student Presentations (to be assigned)
Fri, March 7: Student Presentations (to be assigned)
Mon, March 10: A Final Reckoning: History and its Practitioners
Sat, March 15: Final paper due in my box by 11 a.m.