

# History 601: U.S. Historiography

University of Delaware  
David Suisman  
Office: Munroe 118  
Email: dsuisman@udel.edu  
Office hours: Monday 2.30-3.30,  
Wednesday 12-1, and by appointment

Department of History  
Fall 2008  
Monday 3.35-6.35pm  
Gore 316

The goal of this course is to introduce you to the major interpretive issues in the advanced study of US history. Over the course of the semester we will read a wide scope of influential texts in order to explore questions of how the study of history is conducted and what can, and cannot, be expected from it.

The course is divided into two parts. In the first six weeks, we will consider some of the critical theoretical questions that all historians face: what is history? what are its most important variables? what is the appropriate scale of historical inquiry? do historians write narratives? In the final eight weeks, we will survey the development of the American historical profession since the late nineteenth century, with special attention to how prevailing historical interpretations have changed over time and with special consideration to the rich flowering of historical scholarship of last thirty years. In both sections, we will be alert to what issues lurk below the surface of the text, what goes unsaid or is only implied, and what assumptions underpin the both the writing of the text and its conclusions. Throughout the course, careful scrutiny of evidence and sources will be central to our work and will help us analyze a range of theoretical, methodological, and interpretive concerns. In the end, it is hoped that the course will familiarize you with critical questions in the field and help you develop skills you will need as advanced historians.

## **Readings**

The following books are required and are available through the UD Bookstore. (Provided you have the most recent edition of the books—a few have been revised—it doesn't matter where you buy the books, however.) They are all also available on reserve at Morris Library.

- E. H. Carr, *What Is History?*
- Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*
- Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*
- Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*
- Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*
- John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*

- John Mack Farragher, ed., *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and Other Essays*
- Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*
- W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*
- Richard Hofstadter, *Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR*
- William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*
- Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*
- Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*
- William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*
- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*
- George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*
- Eric Foner, *Story of American Freedom*

In addition, you will also be asked to read numerous articles and selected book chapters. These are indicated in the course schedule below. Those appended "JSTOR" and "HISTORY COOPERATIVE" can be accessed through the website of the UD Library, by clicking the appropriate link in Delcat. From off-campus locations, you will probably need to proxify. Information on proxifying at [www.udel.edu/topics/connect/webproxy/](http://www.udel.edu/topics/connect/webproxy/)

Those appended "(ER)" are available electronically, via electronic reserve, which can be accessed through Delcat:

1. Go to Delcat at [delcat.udel.edu](http://delcat.udel.edu)
2. Click on Search Course Reserves on the blue banner at top.
3. Search for our course.
4. You will need a course-specific password to open the documents. The password is **4675**. It is valid only during the Fall semester 2008.

### **Requirements and Assignments**

1. You will be expected to attend all class sessions and to participate actively. This will require you to have completed all reading assignments and to have thought about them before class.
2. You will be asked to lead discussion twice during the semester, in collaboration with another student in the course. You can sign up during the first class meeting. It is preferred that you collaborate with two different people. In preparation for the class you will lead, please craft four to eight discussion questions you feel would be stimulating and appropriate, and email these to the instructor and everyone else in the class at least twenty-four hours before the class meets.

3. A short book review (500 words), due Oct. 6. Write this as you would if reviewing it for the *American Historical Review*, the *Journal of American History*, or a specialized journal in your field. You may select from among the books any of the books on the syllabus we have read up to this date. For a general summary of what such a book review should consist of, see Steven Stowe, "Thinking about Reviews," *J. of Amer. Hist.* 78 (Sept. 1991), 591-5 or the guidelines for the *Amer. Hist. Review* at <http://www.indiana.edu/~ahr/guidebkrv.html>

4. Review essay (6-8 pages), due Nov. 3. You may choose any book on the syllabus from the readings from Sept. 29 on.

5. Historiographic essay on some problem, issue, or question in US history (15-20 pages), due Dec. 10, forty-eight hours after the final meeting of the class.

Your grade for the course will be calculated according to the following approximate percentages: participation (20%); short review (15%); review essay (25%); historiographic essay (40%)

## Course calendar

### PART I: SOME QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

#### Sept. 8 - Introduction

#### Sept. 15 – What is history?

- i. E. H. Carr, *What Is History?*
- ii. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*
- iii. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*

Optional additional reading: R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*

#### Sept. 22 – The problem of scale I: macrohistory and world history

- i. Fernand Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences: The *longue durée*," in *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, ed. Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt (New York: The New Press), 115-54 – (ER)
- ii. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, preface to the first edition (1949) in *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, ed. Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt (New York: The New Press), 82-88 – (ER)
- iii. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* — selections: table of contents vols. 1-2; pp. 231-46 (from "The Mediterranean as a Physical Unit"); 260-67 (from "The Role of the Environment"); 276-84 (from "Land Routes and Sea Routes"); 295-300 (from

- “Shipping: Tonnages and Changing Circumstances”); 355-94 (from “Distance, the First Enemy”) – (ER)
- iv. Bernard Bailyn, “Braudel’s Geohistory—A Reconsideration,” in *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, 350-54 – (ER)
  - v. J. H. Hexter, “Fernand Braudel and the *Monde Braudellien*...” in *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, 355-66 – (ER)
  - vi. Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, 1-126

Sept. 29 – The problem of scale II: microhistory

- i. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*
- ii. John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*

Oct. 6 – Marx’s shadow

- i. Karl Marx – From Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 133-42 (from *The Holy Family*); 146-51 and 172-5 (from *The German Ideology*); 204-5 (from *Wage Labour and Capital*); 436-42 (from *Capital*, vol. 1 and 3); and 473-83 (from *The Communist Manifesto*) – (ER)
- ii. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, preface – (ER)
- iii. Eric Hobsbawm, “On History from Below,” in *On History* (New York: New Press, 1998) – (ER)
- iv. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford UP, 1970), 1-10 – (ER)
- v. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1970), 55-74 – (ER)
- vi. Barbara J. Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America,” *New Left Review* 181 (May/June 1990), 95-118 – (ER)
- vii. Barbara J. Fields, Barbara J. Fields, “Of Rogues and Geldings,” *American Historical Review* vol. 108, no. 5 (2003), 1397-1405 – HISTORY COOPERATIVE

Oct. 13 – The question of narrative

- i. Bernard Bailyn, “The Challenge of Modern Historiography,” *AHR* 87 (1982), 1-24 - JSTOR
- ii. Hayden White, “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987), 26-58 - (ER)
- iii. Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978), 81-100 - (ER)
- iv. Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History*, chap. 6 - (ER)
- v. Sarah Maza, “Stories in History: Cultural Narratives in Recent Works in European History,” *AHR* 101 (Dec. 1996), 1493-1515 - JSTOR

## PART II – THE CHALLENGE OF U.S. HISTORIOGRAPHY

## Oct. 20 – The Progressive Historians

- i. John Mack Farragher, ed., *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and Other Essays*
- ii. Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*

## Oct. 27 – American Crucible: Reconstruction

- i. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*
- ii. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), xix-xxvii - (ER)

## Nov. 3 – Critics of Consensus

- iii. Richard Hofstadter, *Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR*
- iv. William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*
- v. C. Wright Mills, “On Intellectual Craftsmanship,” in *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford UP, 1959), 195-226 - (ER)

## Nov. 10 – Slavery and the “New” American History

Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*

## Nov. 17 – The Politics of Culture

- i. Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*
- ii. *AHR* Forum on cultural history: *AHR* 97 (Dec. 1992), 1369-1430 – including Lawrence Levine, “The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences”; Robin D. G. Kelley, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Folk’”; Natalie Zemon Davis, “Toward Mixtures and Margins”; T. J. Jackson Lears, “Making Fun of Popular Culture”; Lawrence Levine, “Levine Responds” – JSTOR
- iii. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia UP), 41-71 – (ER)

## Nov. 24 – The landscape of history

William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*

## Dec. 1 – Rethinking sex and gender

- i. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1, An Introduction*
- ii. Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *AHR* 91 (Dec. 1986): 1053—1075
- iii. Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Knopf, 1986) - page numbers TBA
- iv. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, intro, 1-4, 10, 12

Dec. 8 – Rethinking national histories

- i. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*
- ii. Eric Hobsbawm, introduction, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 1-14 – (ER)
- iii. Eric Foner, *Story of American Freedom*