History 667: Problems in Cultural History

University of Delaware
Department of History
David Suisman
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Office: Munroe 118
Email: dsuisman@udel.edu
Munroe 203

In the last three decades “the new cultural history” has moved to the center of the historical discipline, presenting a host of new possibilities as well as new challenges. It has brought pressure to bear on older historical methodologies and opened up exciting new avenues of research and analysis. And it has stimulated heated controversy among historians about its methods and results.

This seminar will explore cultural history from a variety of angles, considering it in both its “old” and “new” varieties, and with special attention to the relationship between its Americanist and Europeanist iterations.

Books

The following books are available through the UD Bookstore. They are all also available on reserve at Morris Library.


Other readings will be available via Sakai, JSTOR, or History Cooperative. These are indicated on the syllabus *S, J,* and *HC,* respectively.

**Requirements and Assignments**

1. **Attendance and Participation.** 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. (40%)

2. **Discussion Questions.** Twice during the semester you will be asked to prepare discussion questions for the class. There is no fixed or expected number, but something in the range of six to eight questions might be appropriate. Please circulate these questions via email not less than twenty-four hours before class. The first time you do this, you will collaborate with a partner; the second time you will be on your own.

3. **Critical Response papers.** You will be asked to write six two-page critical response paper. In these papers it is expected that you will react and comment on the week’s readings, i.e., not merely summarize them or recapitulate their arguments. You should be thinking about the major issues (historiographical, methodological, theoretical) that the week’s readings raise and how they relate to major themes of the course. These papers are *ungraded* but required. ¶ You can choose which weeks you would like to submit your response papers. The only stipulation is that three papers must be completed before spring break, and three must come after spring break.

4. **Mid-term Paper.** This paper shall be a critical analysis of one week’s readings (of your choosing) in the first half of the course, framed in terms of that week’s designated topic. In order not to sacrifice depth for breadth, you may limit your focus to three readings if a given week’s assignment includes more than that. Six to eight pages. Due: Tuesday, Mar. 23. (20%)

5. **Historiographic essay.** Your final paper for the course shall be a historiographic essay, either on a given topic or on a major cultural theorist (Hall, Bakhtin, Gramsci, Adorno, etc.). Topics should be approved by the instructor. Length: 3,500-5,000 words, i.e. 14-20 pages. One-page description of topic with preliminary bibliography: due Tuesday, April 20, in class. Final paper: due Monday, May 24, 10 a.m. (40%)
Course calendar

Abbreviations: Sakai (S); JStor (J); Project Muse (M); whole book (B)

2/9/10
Week 1: Introduction / Foundations
Required:
• Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 87-93

Supplemental:

2/16/10
Week 2: The Old Cultural History
Required:

Supplemental:
• E. H Gombrich, “In Search of Cultural History,” in *Ideals and Idols*:
Essays on Values in History and in Art (EP Dutton, 1979), 24-59.

- Johan Huizinga, “The Task of Cultural History,” in Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, trans. James S. Holmes and Hans van Marle (Meridian, 1959), 17-76.
- Caroline F. Ware, The Cultural Approach to History (1940; Gordon Press, 1974)

2/23/10

Week 3: American Studies

Required:

- Warren Susman, Culture as History (Pantheon, 1984).

Supplemental:


3/2/10

Week 4: Anthropology, Crowds, Ritual

Required:


Supplemental:


3/9/10

**Week 5: Geertz and the Historians**

**Required:**


**Supplemental:**


3/16/10
Week 6: Taste and Power
Required:

Supplemental:

3/23/10
Week 7: The Mass Culture Debates – The Frankfurt School and Beyond
Required:
Supplemental:


3/30/10
Week 8: Spring Break

4/6/10
Week 9: In the Shadow of Foucault
Required:


Supplemental:


4/13/10
Week 10: Cultural Studies
Required:

- Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular’,” in *Cultural Theory*


Supplemental:

4/20/10
Week 11: Culture and Empire
Required:

Supplemental:

4/27/10
Week 12: Postcolonialism
Required:
- Hazel Carby, “Proletarian or Revolutionary Literature: C. L. R. James and the Politics of the Trinidadian Renaissance,” South Atlantic Quarterly 87

**Supplemental:**

• Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 1965).
• Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press, 1967).
• Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Routledge, 1995).

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**5/4/10**  
**Week 13: Performance**  
**Required:**


**Supplemental:**


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**5/11/10**  
**Week 14: Sense and Sentiment**  
**Required:**

• Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social*
Imagination (Harvard University Press, 1988).


Supplemental:


• Alain Corbin, Time, Desire and Horror: Towards a History of the Senses (Polity, 1995).

• David Suisman, "Introduction: Thinking Historically about Sound and Sense," in Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, ed. David Suisman and Susan Strasser (University of Penn Press, 2010)

• Sidney Mintz, Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History (Viking, 1985).

• Emily Thompson, The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933 (MIT Press, 2004).


5/18/10

Week 15: Whither Cultural History

Required:


* To access these articles, search for American Historical Review in Delcat and click through to the Univ. of Chicago Press website
Supplemental: