

History 212-09 (WI), Fall 2006
The United States Since 1865

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T, Th, 9:30-10:45

HHRA 1211

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This course examines key developments in the history of the United States since 1865, and introduces you to various methods of research and explanation that historians use when they do good history. Since this is a writing intensive course, I have chosen to drop the traditional survey format that uses a textbook and a series of comprehensive lectures, and instead focus on a series of case studies and investigations. Though you will learn much about the political, cultural, and social development of the United States since 1865, you'll do so through an intense examination of particular events and their contexts. We are more concerned here with understanding how historians research and write good history from a variety of sources than we are with drilling facts and dates into your heads. History, like other forms of knowledge, requires learning how to think: relating evidence and interpretation into forms of explanation that make sense and that *matter* to us. History matters because it can help us understand who we are (the inevitable result of how we've been *made* over time and the choices we *make*). History helps us understand too that how we understand ourselves might be incomplete or flawed.

Good history renders events, decisions, and large social and political changes in vivid descriptive language and clear analytical frameworks of explanation. In this class you will examine a number of good examples, write about them, and try your hand a bit at doing good history yourselves.

Fully understanding and explaining significant events and trends above all requires attention to human agency and to the larger contexts that make human action understandable. "Context" is the crucial word here, because there are many ways in which we can paint the landscape around the portrait. Our main text, Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, demonstrates this repeatedly. So do the two literary and autobiographical texts, *Triangle: The Fire that Changed America* and *Blood Done Sign My Name*. I don't think you will ever learn to write well unless you learn to *read* well, so we will be talking about how well or poorly written are these works by scholars (secondary sources). You will also practice writing about people's experiences and decisions in light of what they themselves left behind as a record of their lives (primary sources).

Required Readings

James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *After The Fact: the Art of Historical Detection*, volume 2, 4th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000).

David Von Drehle, *Triangle: The Fire That Changed America* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Books, 2003).

Timothy B. Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004).

PDF files available for download on the Blackboard web site for this class (in Course Documents or under reserves).

Assignments and Evaluation

1. Participation 20%
2. In-class informal writing assignments -- 10% (in lieu of midterm and final)
3. Four 4-5 pp. papers -- 40%
4. One 8 pp. final paper, a substantially rewritten revision of one of the previous 4 -- 30%

Reading and Preparation: For this class to work, everyone must consistently prepare and be willing to share your insights verbally.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. *You must email me in advance if you will miss class, or, in case of emergency, within 24 hours after class.* I can excuse absences only on the grounds of personal or family illness or serious emergency (*not* conflicting work schedules, appointments, oversleep, or extracurricular activity). More than three unexcused absences and your final grade will go down 2 points for every day missed. Three *consecutive* unexcused absences constitute grounds for withdrawing you from the course.

Participation (20%): Several elements can constitute good participation. You can earn points for posing good and pertinent questions and offering relevant Evidence when we have clear issues under discussion. Try to stay on topic and respond to the questions we have before us. Raise questions as to the relationship between interpretation and evidence. Balance listening and talking. Second, if you are relatively quiet in class, you can raise questions or make comments on the Blackboard discussion board. I will post questions and announcements in this location as well. Though postings from you are not required on a weekly basis, good entries on Blackboard will definitely inform class discussion and raise your participation grade, especially if you don't consider yourself a "talker."

In-class informal writing assignments -- 10% (in lieu of midterm and final): Think of these as just like the essay questions and identifications you get in any lower-level course midterm or final, only shorter. The good thing here is that you don't have to cram; but you do have to prepare on a weekly basis. These I will use as a basis for class discussion as well. No big surprises, if you do the reading!

Short Papers (40%): In these 4-5 page essays, you will select a focused question and craft an essay that does not merely describe, but *explains* something about that week's readings that *matters* to you. (These will be due the Tuesday following the week when we discuss them, and will be penalized if late). Davidson and Lytle are continually posing problematic questions and are trying

to answer them with focused analysis and wider explication of contexts. On Blackboard I will try to list as many suggestions as possible. Some may occur to you in class or appear on the Discussion Board. I will circulate a sign up sheet, and you just need to choose to write an essay every three weeks, two before break and two after. **These essays should bring a new perspective or new evidence to the problem.** Sixty percent of the paper can deal with the assigned readings, but you must supplement your discussion with one or more of the following sources. Especially with the final rewrite paper, you will be evaluated on the basis of how widely you sample the following kinds of sources and how deeply you analyze them:

1. **Another scholar's** argument, evidence, and point of view. These are provided at the end of each chapter of *After the Fact* under "Additional Reading." You can also do a search of the library's card catalog and other scholarly article search engines. Under no conditions will I accept the words of a textbook writer or a writer of Internet copy who is not a historical scholar (we have Ph.D.'s, we study this stuff all our lives, and if we publish online, we usually do so in scholarly journals or on educational web sites with the suffix .edu. In other words, if I find any reference or unattributed text from something like wikipedia or about.com, I will hand the paper immediately back to you.
2. **Primary documents:** these are letters, speeches, petitions, diaries, census records, photographs, whatever comes "from the horse's mouth," produced by the historical actors that we are examining. Example: Harry Truman's diary as he reflects on dropping the bomb.
3. **Newspaper coverage:** also a primary source created at the time, but by a journalist, by definition an observer once removed from the action. They have biases and points of view that are in themselves interesting and revealing sometimes.
4. **Oral histories:** these also we consider primary documents, but they share a characteristic with secondary sources in that they can be quite removed in time from the actual decisions or events. Nevertheless they are the more or less reliable records of people's memories (the best example are the WPA ex-slave narratives from chapter 7 of the text).

I will post sources I think are especially fruitful under Course Documents. But part of your grade will be determined by how imaginatively you use the "Additional Reading" essays and the search engines available through the library. ASK ME for suggestions; ASK A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN for help using various search engines.

Final Expanded and Rewritten Research Paper (30%): In these essays, you will be rewarded for initiative and imagination in discovering just those sources that shed bright new light on the issues defined in the original paper that you choose to revise. Use a mixture of primary and secondary sources to substantially rewrite your original essay. (Include the original essay with my comments on it in your final submission). We are getting into research here, which means developing some skills using our superb research library, perhaps the greatest under-utilized asset in the whole university. Handouts, course documents on Blackboard, and in-class demonstrations will make these accessible to you. But you can get going already because I made a portal with many tools on it:

Jackson Library Course Page (for Research): Library -> Subject Guides -> History -> 340.
http://library.uncg.edu/depts/ref/bibs/his/his340_us_since_1945.asp

Note on Internet research: When using the marvelous Internet, the general rule is to avoid non-scholarly writing and to find the most reliable sources of primary documents: official government statistics and documentary sources are followed by .gov; university professors often publish primary documents in web sites ending in .edu. Many organizations can be trusted to put up reliable primary sources under .org. You should avoid commercial web sites --.com -- and especially the "paper mills" that churn out bogus "research" papers for you. These are easy as pie to discover, and the university now has sophisticated software to catch this kind of plagiarism.

Academic Honor Code: I remind you that the URL for the University's Academic integrity policy is <http://saf.dept.uncg.edu/studiscp/Honor.html>. If you have not read it, please do so thoroughly. See Rampolla, *Guide to Research*, chapter 6, on Blackboard under "reserves" for more information on plagiarism. Our own library, Dartmouth College and Georgetown University each have superb websites on the nuances of plagiarism. Beware of copying without citing sources; this is a special danger with respect to the Internet. If you "cut and paste" even one sentence -- even if you rearrange some words -- and do not use quotation marks appropriately *and* cite the source, you are plagiarizing, cheating and cheapening the value of honest work written by your peers. People accused of plagiarism are entitled to an Honor Board hearing after, or instead of, a conference with the professor. Recall that university expulsion is automatic for repeat offenders with a documented record of plagiarism. About every semester I get one person who says "but that's the way we did it in high school." Ignorance of the rules is no excuse. Use guidelines for citation posted on Blackboard from the University of California at Berkeley library. If you intend to be a history major, definitely purchase the entire Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Fifth Edition (Bedford St. Martins, 2007).

Schedule of Readings and Discussions

[Subject to some amendment and elaboration
See Blackboard and subsequent handouts]

[N.B.: when a week is designated, generally you can assume that the second bunch of readings will occupy us on Thursday. At least a week ahead of time, check Discussion Board for questions more clearly delineated by me, especially questions applying to the *After the Fact* chapters].

8/15: Introduction

8/17: Rights Talk: The U.S. Constitution and the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights

[A useful exercise in putting our thinking caps back on after summer vacation].

1) Download and print for class discussion: "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," adopted and proclaimed December 10, 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations:
<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

- 2) Read the Bill of Rights, Amendments 1-10 of the U.S. Constitution, anywhere on line. See also the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments.

http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html

Questions for Discussion

What rights of American citizenship do you value? What do you already know of their history? How does the U.S. Bill of Rights compare to the range of human rights outlined in the UN Declaration? What are the relevant contexts that explain them? Which is the most controversial of the rights discussed in the UN declaration, and which the least controversial in the United States?

8/22-8/24: Emancipation and Reconstruction

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, ch. 7, "The View from the Bottom Rail: Oral history and the Freedpeople." 147-175.

- 1) "To My Old Master, Colonel P.H. Anderson," August 7, 1865, from Leon F. Litwak, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. 333-334, by Jourdon Anderson.
- 2) *Black Voices from Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), by John David Smith, pp. 62-65, 70-75, 82-84, 92-97. (Part deals with the role of the federal Freedmen's Bureau in drawing up contracts between ex-slaves and ex-slaveholders for labor after most ex-slaves were denied their own lands).
- 3) Sample a couple of ex-slave narratives from the Library of Congress digital archive "Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers Project, 1936-1938"
<http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>

[And see "Additional Reading" for a plethora of printed sources if you want to do a paper].

Questions for Discussion and Writing: What ideas about freedom did the emancipated freedpeople have? What did ex-slaves' descriptions of slavery reveal about their understandings of freedom and dignity? How reliable are these oral histories and what rules can we invent to distinguish reliable reporting from deception? How central to their ideals of freedom was the right to own and work some of their former masters' lands, which, given the social conditions of the South, essentially would free them from having to work for their former masters?

8/29-8/31: "Indian Rights" and Native American Dispossession

Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), brief selections on the Dawes Act.

David Wallace Adams, "Schooling the Hopi: Federal Indian Policy Writ Small, 1887-1917," in Leonard Dinnerstein and Kenneth T. Jackson, eds, *American Vistas: 1877 to the Present* (New York: Oxford, 1991), pp. 27-44.

Carl Schurtz, Committee on Indian Affairs, Thomas Morgan, Luther Standing Bear, "Viewpoints 1-4 on Indian Assimilation," from William Dudley, ed., *Native Americans: Opposing Viewpoints* (Greenhaven, 1998).

John Stands-in-Timber, Ella C. Deloria, "Recall the Early Days of Reservation Farming, 1877-1900" in Clyde Milner, ed., *Major Problems in the History of the American West* (New York: Heath, 1989), pp. 400-404.

Questions for Discussion and Writing: In the eyes of the Supreme Court, Native Americans were members of "domestic dependent nations," not citizens. The white "Indian reformers" of the 1880s had a particular view of what it would take to save the Indians from extinction and make them citizens with "rights." What kind of skills and values and habits did they hope to inculcate? Did the Native Americans and their advocates have notions of native rights that conflicted with the white reformers' policies of land distribution and education? How did reservation farmers fare under the new plan to "Americanize" them?

9/5-9/7: Immigration and Urbanization

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, ch. 8, "The Mirror with a Memory: Photographic Evidence and the Urban Scene." 178-199.

Spend a couple hours reading Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, selected chapters available online from Yale University: <http://www.yale.edu/amstud/inforev/riis/title.html> (click on contents). Bring in examples and excerpts to demonstrate your points.

Questions for Discussion and Writing: As an immigrant who climbed out of poverty, Riis uses a curious mixture of hereditary, cultural, and environmental explanations for poverty and urban squalor. 1) Compare how he describes and explains different ethnic groups (Chinese, Jews, blacks in ch 13.), their challenges and strengths and weaknesses and "worthiness." 2) Riis has clear ideas about the deserving and undeserving poor. The latter he often calls "paupers," because they are presumably poor due to a lack of work ethic or dependency on charity. Who is deserving, who degraded, who capable of rehabilitation, who beyond reform? Compare especially chapters 17, 18, 20, 21. In a book designed to arouse the conscience of the sentimental middle class, for example, children come in for especially sympathetic treatment. Or do they?

9/12: "Rats in Your Ravioli": Progressive Regulatory Government

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, ch. 9, "USDA Government Inspected: The Jungle of Political History." 201-227

[Papers could logically investigate *The Jungle* or newspaper coverage of the meatpacking scandals].

9/14: Middle-Class and Working-Class Women Argue for the Ballot

Victoria Bissell Brown, "Jane Addams, Progressivism, and Woman Suffrage: An Introduction to 'Why Women Should Vote' (and Text by Jane Addams)." In *One Woman, One Vote*, pp. 179-202 (read Addams first)

Selected Documents from *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage*, eds. Anne Firor Scott and Andrew MacKay Scott. Print out only pages 18-26 of the PDF file, only the speeches of: **Susan Fitzgerald, 114-115, Caroline Lowe and Leonora O'Reilly, 122-128.**

"A Woman's Place is in Politics," from *The South in the History of the Nation*, eds. Link and Wheeler, pp. 113-118. Speeches by **Madeline McDowell Breckenridge** and **Adella Hunt Logan**.

Questions for Discussion and Writing: Do you see a difference in how middle class reformers like Jane Addams and Susan Fitzgerald, working class spokeswomen such as Leonora O'Reilly and Carolyn Lowe spoke of women's rights and duties in the public sphere? How do the two educated Southern women (black and white) in selection 3 compare with these others? Adela Hunt Logan was African American—how did this shape her view of women's rights? Are they speaking mainly as mothers or as citizens? [Don't just summarize – focus and analyze, using several voices as evidence].

9/19: How the Other Half Worked, Played, and Remembered

Von Drehle, *Triangle*, chs. 1-4.

9/21: Catastrophe and Controversy

Von Drehle, *Triangle*, chs. 5-7, pp. 116-184.

9/26: Liberal Reform and Class Power

Von Drehle, *Triangle*, chs. Seven-epilogue, pp. 184-268.

9/28: New York Times Coverage of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire and Factory Reform

Spend a couple of hours with the *New York Times* online investigating coverage of one or more aspects of this dramatic story of working-class women's activism, the tragedy, the middle class reformers who challenge Tammany Hall.

10/3-10/5: The Rights and "Character" of Newcomers: Nativism and Immigration Restriction

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, ch. 10, "Sacco and Vanzetti: The Case of History Versus Law." 229-253.

"Selected Arguments" from *Immigration: Opposing Viewpoints* (Greenhaven, 1992), by Edward A. Ross, A. Piatt Andrew, Henry Cabot Lodge, T.J. Brennan, Roy L. Garis and Edith Terry Bremer, pp. 128-135, 138-145, 210-213, 220-223, 243-257.

Questions for Discussion and Writing: The arguments for, and against, immigration restriction up to and including the 1924 quota act, involved assumptions about the racial "character" of the "new" immigrants arriving since 1880, as well as ideas regarding the ability of American institutions to assimilate them. What fears and convictions lay at the core of arguments for restricting immigration, and how did defenders of immigrants try to address them? (Make sure your discussion ranges over time and includes the last two readings from the 1920s).

FALL BREAK

[See Blackboard for further guidance and assigned readings].

10/17-10/19: The Great Depression

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, ch. 11. "Dust Bowl Odyssey: A Collective History of a Migration." 256-281.

Studs Terkel, *Hard Times*, selections.

Robert McElvaine, *Down and out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man*, selections.

10/24-10/26: World War II and Cold War America

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, ch. 12, "The Decision to Drop the Bomb: The Uses of Models in History." 284-309.

Readings TBA

10/31-11/2: The Fabulous 50s?

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, ch. 13, "From Rosie to Lucy: The Mass Media and Images of Women in the 1950s." 312-336.

Readings and suggested papers TBA

11/7: White Supremacy and Racial Liberalism

Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name*, chapters 1-5.

11/9: Civil Injustice and Black Power

Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name*, chapters 6-9.

11/14: White Backlash and the Terms of Interracial Democracy

Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name*, chapters 10-epilogue.

11/16: The Real Martin Luther King, Jr.

Selections from the professor's book and Martin Luther King Jr. speeches

11/21: Executive Power and National Security

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, ch. 14, "Breaking into Watergate: Plumbing a Presidency through Audiotapes." 339-361.

11/28-11/30: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, ch. 15, "Where Trouble Comes: History and Myth in the Films of Vietnam." 364-393.

[Paper suggestion: Go see one or more of the films and develop your own analysis].

FINAL PAPER is due Thursday, December 7, noon in my office or on the adjacent folder holder.