

**HISTORY 705:
COLLOQUIUM IN EUROPEAN HISTORY BEFORE 1800**



Course Information:

History 705-01, Fall 2012 (80766)
Time: Thursdays 3:30-6:20
Room: MHRA 1213

Instructor Information:

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Description:

This course comprises the first half of the Graduate Colloquium in European History. Our imagined task is a huge, even impossible one: we are supposed to make sense of the methods, techniques, and approaches used by historians who study Europe from Rome to the French Revolution. Obviously we cannot do justice to every period and/or every topic, and our approach must inevitably be somewhat fragmentary. Rather than follow a haphazard

and incomplete chronology through this vast span of time, I have organized the course methodologically. In essence we are going to examine some of those methods, techniques, and approaches rather than a series of events, periods, or persons. We will accomplish this task, of course, by reading and evaluating sample works of historians who work in that given style, method, or approach. Please note that I have tried to balance the temporal focus of the works we will read: my design is that about half of our readings will come from the medieval period and half from the early modern period.

Given these goals, it is important to remember that you will be asked in this course to evaluate, analyze, and criticize the arguments, methods, and structures of important works of history. Such a task requires that you read somewhat differently from the ways in which you might approach a research paper or a simple factual assignment. You must be concerned first and foremost with identifying the author's stated (or unstated) purpose and/or agenda in writing. Close behind this will fall the argument of the author's work. One of our tasks will be to evaluate the success of this argument, so it is worth getting used to the process of reading analytically; don't get bogged down in the minutiae of the details offered by each author, for we are really unconcerned with the specifics. Rather, pay close attention to the argument, the evidence offered to support that argument, and the assumptions around which the argument (and the choice of evidence) is based. In a word, you will be learning to "gut" or "fillet" a book; it sounds inelegant, and it is, but it is a very valuable skill. It involves reading rapidly (but carefully) a large number of pages, skimming the details but keeping your eyes open for the argument, holes in reasoning, blatant (or not-so-blatant) assumptions, and so on.

Required Books

1. Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard UP, 1984) ISBN: 0674766911. \$15.
2. Robin Fleming, *Britain After Rome* (Penguin, 2011). ISBN: 978-0140148237. \$14.
3. E.P. Thompson, *The Essential E.P. Thompson* (New Press, 2001) [978-1565846227] \$23.
4. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Promised Land of Error* (Vintage Books, 1979. Reprint Georges Braziller, 2008). ISBN: 978-0807615980. \$19.
5. Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia, 1994). ISBN: 978-0812215335. \$25.
6. J.E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: the Art of Government in the Roman World* (Oxford, 2002); ISBN: 978-0199247639. \$47
7. Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 2nd edition (Polity, 2008). ISBN: 978-0745644097. \$19.95
8. Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: YUP, 1994). ISBN: 978-0300059434. \$19.60
9. Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (New Haven: YUP, 2009). ISBN: 978-0300151350. \$13.44
10. Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance*, revised edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). ISBN: 978-0801858499. \$24
11. Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton UP, 2009). ISBN: 978-0691144429. \$25
12. Craig Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire: a History of the Night in Early Modern England* (Cambridge UP, 2011). ISBN: 978-0521896436. \$25.
13. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, 2nd edition (Vintage, 1995). ISBN: 978-0679752554. \$16

Other Required Readings :

The rest of the readings on the syllabus will be prefaced by one of the following locations:

Print Reserve: this indicates physical reserve. You will need to go request the book from the Circulation desk in Jackson Library. Books may be checked out for 4-hour periods. You may photocopy the selection or read it in the library. I strongly recommend that you plan ahead - devote a couple of hours to copying a bunch of pieces at one time.

E-Reserves: I have asked the Library to photocopy the relevant article/chapter, scan it into pdf, and place it in the 'e-reserves' folder on our course's blackboard page. This designation is a bit uncertain, since it depends on how many pages the library can copy/scan. Check the e-reserves first; if the pdf is there, great! If not, then you'll

have to retrieve the physical copy from the Circulation desk.

Journal-Finder: this designation indicates a journal for which UNCG receives electronic versions. That is, you can click on the Journal Finder button on the Library's homepage and it will bring up a way to access articles from that journal in pdf form. Navigate journal finder, get the pdf, print and read it.

Blackboard: these are articles that I have already placed on our blackboard site in pdf form in the Course Readings folder.

Student Learning Outcomes

A student who successfully completes this course will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate important works of modern scholarship both orally and in writing
2. Conduct evidence-based discussions of scholarship in a professional, collegial manner
3. Locate, assess, and communicate reviews and other subjective analyses of the assigned readings
4. Define a suitable topic for further scholarly investigation
5. Utilize print and electronic resources to assemble an annotated bibliography
6. Identify and analyze a range of methodological approaches to historical writing

Teaching Methods and Course Requirements

A. Teaching Methods:

The course is taught as a seminar in which all participants critically analyze joint readings. The instructor takes a semi-socratic approach, suggesting (when needed) topics and questions for discussion, and filling in historiographical background when necessary. The point of discussion is to assess the arguments of the assigned readings and to categorize them according to one or more of the methodologies employed by historians since 1900.

B. Requirements

1. Oral Presentations: (20% total, 10% each) (Student Learning Outcomes 1, 3)

Each week one of you will open our discussion with a brief (5-10 minute) presentation that accomplishes the following three tasks:

1. Offer your (informed) opinion about what you found the argument of the book to be, whether or not you found it to be persuasive, and why or why not you found it persuasive
2. Offer a mini-biography of the author (as much as can be gleaned), paying special attention to the author's methodological and/or historiographical alignments.
3. Explain the scholarly reception of the main work for the week (as evidenced by reviews).
4. Suggest three lines of inquiry to be pursued in the subsequent discussion

Along with your presentation you should distribute a 1-page handout with whatever relevant points about the book and/or author you wish to share with us (some biographical details, potentially relevant quotations, your questions, etc.).

The actual oral part of the presentation should not feature you reading your handout. Summarize your points succinctly and clearly, and do so in a confident, professional way (eye-contact, spontaneous speech [i.e., not reading notes], etc.).

Due to the small size of the class, each student will get to make two Oral Reports.

2. Classroom Discussion (10%) (Student Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 6)

As a graduate seminar, the course demands participation from all students. I recognize that much of the material may be unfamiliar to some of you, and that you likely have not spent much time as undergraduates considering methodology; despite this reasonable points, I still expect students to take an active and frequent part in the discussion. If you find that you are not saying almost anything (one interjection per meeting, say), you are likely to receive a C for this part of the course grade. Grades in the A and B range are only awarded to students who speak regularly and participate in discussion by considering and responding to the comments of others (professor and

students). I am less concerned with *what* you say than in seeing you make a decent effort to orally analyze the reading and offer some sort of reasoned explanation for your analysis.

3. Written Work: All students must complete the following written work:

a. *Five Analytical Essays*, typed, 4-5 pages each (50% total, 10% each) (Student Learning Outcomes: 1, 6)

I provide a set of possible analytical essay topics for every week; responses are due the following week (i.e., essays related to the readings for week 3 are due in week 4). You have substantial freedom in deciding on which of the twelve topics you choose to write your essays; the only exception is that all students must write an essay on either Lendon or LeRoy Ladurie (i.e., on either the readings for week 2 or those for and 3). Beyond this requirement, however, you may arrange your own writing schedule according to your intellectual interests and/or schedule.

b. *Brief Historiographical Prospectus*, 5-8 pages in length (20%) (Student Learning Outcomes: 1, 3, 4, 5)

In lieu of a final exam or essay, students will prepare a prospectus on any aspect of pre-modern European history of which interests them. The goal of this assignment is for you to demonstrate that you can perform historiographical research by first assembling a set of secondary sources relevant to a topic and then offering some critique of that set of literature. The prospectus should include a 3-page analysis of some issue or problem raised by the scholarly literature which you have located and perused, and an annotated bibliography of 15-20 secondary sources, at least half of which should be scholarly articles. I will distribute further instructions on this assignment later in the semester, but you ought to be thinking a bit about your areas of interest. I am happy to meet with students to talk about ideas and suggest some initial bibliography.

Grade Breakdown:

Oral Presentations	20%
General Participation	10%
Five Analytical Essays	50%
Historiographical Prospectus	20%

The “Legal” stuff:

1. All students should be familiar (or make themselves familiar) with the UNCG Academic Integrity Policy: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>
2. All work should be your own.
3. Attendance is critical in this course. If you miss more than 1 class without explanation, I will take some sort of disciplinary measures.
4. All course materials must be completed to receive a grade. I am giving you substantial leeway in scheduling your own due-dates. Don't make me mad by piling them all up at the end of the semester!

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:

1. August 23: Introduction to the Course

2. August 30: Political History

Blackboard: Geoffrey Elton, *Political History: Principles and Practice* (New York, 1970), pp. 3-11, and 156-180 [the pdf includes other pages, but you can ignore them]

Blackboard: G.R. Elton, “King or Minister? The Man Behind the Henrician Revolution,” *History* 39 (1954), 216-232.

J.E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour*, entire.

Analytical Essay Topics (choose one):

1. Is Lendon's *Empire of Honour* a work of political history, or is it some other kind of history? You should

pay attention to Elton's claims, whether or not you agree with them.

2. Using Elton and Lendon as your examples, explain make an argument for or against the following proposition: "Political History is about action and events; that is, it is properly the study of the impact of the ideas and deeds of great people."

3. Would you characterize Lendon's work as one of political history or of social history? Why? Is this even a good question?

3. September 6: Social History and the Annales Movement

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Promised Land of Error* (Vintage, 1979), Entire.

Blackboard: Leonard E. Boyle, "Montaillou Revisited: *Mentalité* and Methodology," in *Pathways to Medieval Peasants*, ed. J. Raftis (Toronto: PIMS, 1981), 119-40.

Analytical Essay Topics:

1. Is *Montaillou* a successful work of history? Why or why not?

2. Analyze the method Le Roy Ladurie used in attempting to capture the essence of village life in *Montaillou*. What are its strengths and weaknesses?

4. September 13: Cultural History

Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, Entire

Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, entire

Analytical Essay Topics: choose one of the following:

1. "Culture is such a vague concept as to be useless as a category. All history is cultural history, and hence 'cultural history' is not a helpful term." Do you agree or disagree? why? [use Burke, of course]

2. Consider the following: Cultural History::interpretation, whereas Traditional History::Narrative. Is this a fair analogy? If so, why? if not, why not?

5. September 20: Marxism and Culture

E.P. Thompson, *The Essential E.P. Thompson*, pp. vii-x, 3-184, 287-495.

Analytical Essay Topics:

1. We know that Thompson, as an individual, was a so-called 'academic marxist'. In what ways, however, can his *work* be considered marxist? Or do you find it not very 'marxist'?

2. In what ways did Thompson blend 'class' and 'culture' as frameworks for academic analysis? Was he successful? Why or why not?

6. September 27: Economic History

Journal Finder: Michael McCormick, "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fueled the Carolingian Economy," *Past and Present* 177 (2002): 17-54

Paul Freedman, *Out of the East*, entire.

Analytical Essay Topics:

1. TBA

2. TBA

7. October 4: Microhistory

Blackboard: Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in Peter Burke, *New Perspectives in Historical Writing*, 2nd edition (Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2001), 93-113

Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, entire

Blackboard: Robert Finlay, "The Refashioning of Martin Guerre," *American Historical Review* 93 (1988), 553-571.

Blackboard: Natalie Zemon Davis, "On the Lame," *American Historical Review* 93 (1988), 572-603.

Film: *Return of Martin Guerre* [To be shown in Class]

Analytical Essay Topics:

1. Is it important that Davis 'got it right' about Bertrande? Why or why not?
2. "All historians inject as much of themselves into their writing as Davis did in *Martin Guerre*; the only difference is that Davis comes right out and admits her role in shaping her story." Do you agree? Why or why not?

8. October 11: Mentalities

E-Reserves: Peter Burke, "Strengths and Weaknesses of the History of Mentalities," in Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca, 1997), 162-182]. Originally appeared in *History of European Ideas* 7 (1986): 439-451.

Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, entire

Analytical Essay Topics:

1. In what ways can Muir's book be considered a history of mentalities? If not a history of mentalities, what kind of history is it?
2. Evaluate Muir's argument, paying attention to the notion of mentalities. Is it successful, or not?

9. October 18: Women and Gender

E-Reserves: Joan Scott, "Women's History" and "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," pp. 15-51 in Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, rev. ed. (Columbia UP, 1999).

Journal Finder: Dyan Elliott, "The Three Ages of Joan Scott," *American Historical Review* 113 (2008), 1390-1403.

Journal Finder: Joanne Meyerowitz, "A History of 'Gender'," *American Historical Review* 113 (2008), 1346-1356.

Journal Finder: Joan Scott, "Unanswered Questions," *American Historical Review* 113 (2008), 1422-1430.
Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, entire

Analytical Essay Topics:

1. Is gender *still* a 'useful category of historical analysis'? Why or why not? Be sure to use examples from Levin to support your point.
2. In what ways is Levin's book a work of gender history? In what ways is it not?

10. October 25: Material Culture

Blackboard: Austin Mason, "Buried Buckets: Rethinking Ritual Behavior before England's Conversion," *Haskins Society Journal* 20 (2008), 1-18.

Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, entire

Analytical Essay Topics:

1. Has archaeology and/or the study of material culture truly changed the way we think about the early medieval past? Why or why not?
2. TBA

11. November 1: no class. Instructor will be away at a conference.

12. November 8: Interpreting Texts

Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, first half and conclusion. Skim second half (on theory).

Journal Finder: Koziol, Geoffrey, "The Dangers of Polemic: is Ritual Still an Interesting Topic of Historical Study?" *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002): 367-388.

Journal Finder: A. Walsham, 'The Dangers of Ritual', *Past and Present* 178 (2003), pp. 277-87;

Journal Finder: J.L. Nelson, Review of Buc, *Dangers of Ritual*, *Speculum* 78 (2003), pp. 847-51;

Journal Finder: Philippe Buc, 'The Monster and the Critics: A Ritual Reply', *Early Medieval Europe* 15 (2007), pp. 441-52.

Journal Finder: Christina Pössel, "The Magic of Early Medieval Ritual," *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009): 111-125.

Analytical Essay Topics:

1. Do rituals have meaning outside of the text(s) in which they are described? Why or why not?
2. Whose argument is more convincing, Koziol or Buc? Why?

13. November 15: What sort of history?

Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire*, entire.

Analytical Essay Topics:

1. What type of history has Koslofsky written? or does his work transcend categorization?
2. Evaluate Koslofsky's argument. Is it successful? Why or why not?

14. November 22: No class: Thanksgiving

15. November 29: Foucault: Power, Discourse, and Structures

Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: the birth of the Prison*, entire.

Blackboard: Thomas M. Kavanagh, "Gambling, Chance and the Discourse of Power in *Ancien Régime* France," *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 37 (1994): 31-46.

Film Clips: Foucault vs. Chomsky (to be shown in class)

Analytical Essay Topics: choose one of the following:

1. Evaluate Foucault's belief that 'systems of knowledge' exert power on every society.
2. How can Foucault account for change over time, particularly with regard to 'systems of knowledge'?

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

I. Use of Reference Materials

You may come across many terms, expressions, and topics with which you are unfamiliar. Don't just let them slide by; rather, use a dictionary and/or encyclopedia to identify whatever it is you are having trouble with. Some examples, which we may encounter in our readings: epistemology, hermeneutics, papacy, guilds, vassal, fief, chivalry, humanism, inquisition, heresy, dowry, philosophe, tithe, Holy Roman Empire, misogyny, primogeniture, relic, eucharist, asceticism, etc. The reference librarians in Jackson Library will be able to assist you in finding reference works.

II. Guidelines for Critical Reading and Writing

Learning how to read, analyze, and write about historical literature in a critical way is the main objective of this course. Keep the following in mind as you read and write about the books and articles this semester:

- a. Check the date and place of publication (don't be fooled by reprints or later editions). How are these important to an understanding of the book? Consider a book on medieval Germany written by an Englishman in 1943.
- b. Read the author's introduction or preface and/or acknowledgments. Whom else does he/she know, or with whom and with what types of historical writing does he/she choose to associate his/her work? To whom is he/she indebted? Whom does he/she consider as an opponent? Does the author state his/her purpose in writing the book? No author is an island, and very few are truly original; most authors are indebted either personally to someone else or methodologically to a school or approach.
- c. Pay careful attention to the author's use of sources. To ascertain this, you will need to be aware of his/her footnotes and/or bibliography, even if you do not read every single reference (indeed, you probably shouldn't read every reference). How does the selection and use of sources inform the author's historical interpretation? Does

the author use a single source [a treatise, a chronicle, an inquest]? A single category of sources [parish records, letters, memoirs, legal sources, etc.]? Many different types of sources? Does he/she make use of literary sources? Statistical sources? Police records? Are all sources equally reliable? Would use of another kind of source altered his/her conclusions?

d. Does the author make clear what is (are) his/her thesis (or theses) in the book or article? That is to say, can you discern if an argument is being made? Or, is the book pure narrative? [be careful!, for even narratives can have agendas and/or theses] If there is no apparent argument, is this a problem? If there is an argument, does it fit into some larger historiographical debate? Or, does it fit into or alongside some major historical or ideological theory?

e. Does the author bring to his/her analysis a particular method or approach? In some weeks, you may well read works on the same subject from diametrically opposing methodological perspectives. While the tendency may be to believe that one is “right” and the other “wrong”, we will find that it is more useful to simply try to uncover, analyze, and criticize the methods being used, and to express an opinion about which method seems to offer a better, or more important, understanding of the topic in question.

f. To what sort of audience is the book or article addressed? Other scholars? A general readership? Students? How do considerations of audience affect an author’s selection and use of sources?

g. Is the work in question a monograph, based primarily on original research? Or is it a synthesis that integrates new material with older ideas? Or some combination of the two?