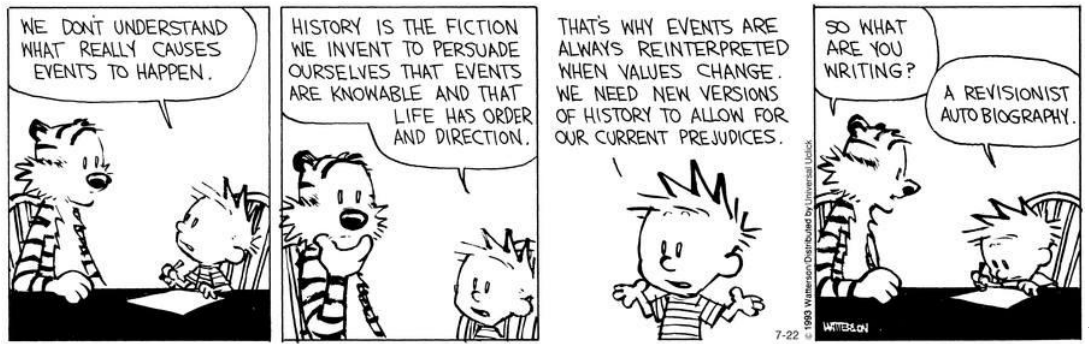


Fall 2015
MHRA 1206
W 3:30-6:20

Dr. Mark Elliott
Office: MHRA 2125
Office Hours:
TUES 2:00-4:00
or by appointment
me Elliot@uncg.edu

HIS 510: HISTORIOGRAPHY



This course examines the evolution of history writing since the first generation of professional historians in the late 19th century. Its purpose is to introduce students to the major philosophical and methodological trends that have dominated the academic field of history since its establishment. Focusing especially on the contributions of scholars over the past fifty years, readings will include influential and groundbreaking works of theory, methodology, and interpretations of the past covering such topics as: “progressive” and “consensus” history; Marxism; social history; “radical” history; the new cultural history; postmodernism; postcolonialism; gender theory; transnational history; cosmopolitanism; environmental history; public history. The selection of topics and readings in this course will change from semester to semester and do not represent *all* of the important methodologies/trends in the field of history.

As an academic endeavor, history has never enjoyed an agreed-upon method or philosophy. What is the nature and purpose of historical research? Even on this most basic of epistemological questions, historians differ in their outlook. Some historians would argue that historians should strive to analyze evidence with clinical objectivity in an effort to correct previous misrepresentations and establish historical truths. Others would insist that establishing truth is less important than the historian’s interpretations of the facts, since the questions that we ask of history are ultimately a reflection of our present values. There are historians from both of these viewpoints who explicitly seek knowledge about the past that is “usable” for the present. Yet others consider “presentism” a distorting lens to be strictly avoided, and would urge historians to reject the temptation to draw lessons or parallels to the present.

Traditionally, historians construct arguments about historical causation, and engage in elaborate debates about *why* events occurred as they did. Yet, in recent

decades, many historians have come to consider such efforts fruitless, insisting that historians ought to restrict their endeavors to providing “thick descriptions” of cultures and societies at given moments in time as the best way to understand the past. With these philosophical debates in mind, students will be encouraged to reach their own conclusions about the nature and purpose of historical research while familiarizing themselves with the major proponents of these various viewpoints.

This is a reading-intensive course. Students must be prepared to read complex works and to answer challenging questions about them. The course is designed for those who are considering entering the profession of history. For undergraduates, only upper-level students who are considering graduate study are recommended for this course. For graduate students, this course is recommended for any Master’s or PhD student interested in expanding their “historical literacy” of their academic field by gaining deeper knowledge of the people and ideas that have profoundly shaped the historical profession and its scholarship.

LEARNING GOALS:

- Students will gain familiarity with major thinkers and concepts in the academic field of history.
- Students will be able to identify and compare competing schools of thought, and to ask analytical questions about them.
- Students will improve their ability to analyze and interpret secondary sources, and to understand historical writing as a genre.
- Students will improve their ability to make historical arguments, and to assess those made by others.
- Students will develop their skills in making both formal and informal presentations to a group.

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance:

A student who is not present at the beginning of class will be marked “absent.” More than one absence will lower your final grade. Missing a total of 4 or more classes (one-third of the semester) will result in an automatic “F” for the course. No exceptions. Please use your one unpenalized absence wisely, reserving it for an emergency or serious sickness. Students are responsible for completing on time all work assigned (or due) on days in which they are absent.

Participation:

You are expected to complete each week’s reading before class so that you can participate constructively in class discussion. You must be attentive and engaged during class. Sleeping in class or leaving class early without permission will

cause you to be given a zero for participation that day. Cell phones and laptops should be turned off and stored away. No talking, twittering, texting, e-mailing or using laptops during class.

Presentations:

Graduate students will make 3 informal presentations [worth 35 points each] and undergraduate students will make 2 informal presentations to the class [worth 50 points each]. The details of the presentation assignments will be distributed in class. Students will provide one-page handouts summarizing their presentations for the class (included as part of the presentation grade).

Written Work:

There will be two papers over the course of the semester. The first paper will be due **September 11** and the second paper will be due **November 22**. There will be an in-class final exam.

Academic Integrity Policy:

All work submitted in your name must be your own original work for this class with proper citation or credit given to all sources. Each student should be familiar with the Academic Integrity Policy, and the penalties for plagiarism. Refer to this address on the UNCG website for more details:

<http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/>

Resources for Students with Disabilities:

Students with recognized disabilities should register with the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (OARS). OARS is located on the second floor of the Elliott University Center (EUC) in Suite 215 and maintains a webpage at <http://ods.uncg.edu/>. The mission of OARS is to provide, coordinate, and advocate for services which enable undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities to receive equal access to a college education and to all aspects of university life

Grading Breakdown:

100 Points: Participation in class discussion (You can earn up to 8 points per class. We meet 14 times. No constructive contributions to discussion = 0 points. Minimal participation = 3-4 points. Strong participation = 5-6 points. Outstanding participation = 7-8 points).

100 Points: Class Presentations. Undergrads will do 2 presentations worth 50 point each. Graduate students will do 3 presentations worth 35 points each.

100 Points: First Paper
100 Points: Second Paper
100 Points: Final Exam.

Final Grade Scale:

A 465-500; **A-** 450-464; **B+** 435-449; **B** 415-434; **B-** 400-414;
C+ 385-399; **C** 365-384; **C-** 350-364; **D+** 335-349; **D** 315-334; **D-**
300-314; **F** 299 or less.