

Professor Thomas Jackson

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Office Hours: W. 1-2:30 via Zoom, or T, TH, 5-5:45 --Schedule Zoom or office: [Via Calendar](#) Office: MHRA 2141

[Required Covid Syllabus Language](#)

T, Th, 12:30-1:45, SOEB 102

No Office Phone, But History Dept.: 334-5992

History 316 Fall 2022: "Interpreting American History"

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already given and transmitted from the past."

--Karl Marx

"Only now is the child finally divested of all that he has been. His origins are become remote as is his destiny and not again in all the world's turning will there be terrains so wild and barbarous to try whether the stuff of creation may be shaped to man's will or whether his own heart is not another kind of clay."

-- Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian* (1985)

This course is required for students seeking secondary social studies licensure and is open to students seeking licensure in the middle grade.

Course Philosophy and Rationale:

Understanding *historiography* and practicing *historical analysis* can benefit your future *pedagogy*. (Past actors *made* history, scholars *interpret and reconstruct* history, and we *do* history in this class, in hopes that you and your future students will *interpret and make* better history).

1. Historical Writing, Historiography, Understanding "Secondary Sources". The class grapples with a range of changing and competing interpretations of the past, principally among trained historians and skilled non-fiction researchers who revise old stories:

When we discover new evidence.

When we develop new theories or apply theories from other disciplines like archeology or sociology.

When we ask new questions reflecting new concerns, possibilities, or perils of the present day.

When we focus on people previously considered unimportant by writers in dominant cultures.

Remember: Understanding how historians revise past accounts is called historiography.

2. Historical Analysis of Original, or "Primary" Sources. All *interpretations come from historical thinking about original primary sources*. The first primary sources we encounter in life are stories from our parents, siblings, or communities. **Every era reveals** competing or contradictory stories and explanations among **historical actors**. These accounts reflect cultural or political conflicts; their language can be very revealing of past actors' values and perceptions of others. We can also learn much from their "silences." Those of us who systematically study and teach history **rely upon these sources, but we** extend these understandings much further and wider. We theorize, we contextualize, we periodize, we reconstruct coherent narratives from what often can look like chaos. *Interpreting and contextualizing primary accounts is called **historical analysis**.*

3. Doing and Teaching History, or Pedagogy. Reading historians' contrasting accounts, analyzing and contextualizing sources produced by historical actors – these support a third purpose of the course, **which is to help you teach your future students the fine art and rigorous science of interpreting the past, of doing history.**

4. Further Reflections. Past actors – ordinary folks and powerful elites alike – *made* history and lived within their own stories, narratives and myths about how they fit in time in relation to their ancestors and forbearers, even as they looked with hopes and fears into a dim future. We call their stories "**collective memory**," a term that also describes today's popular cultural stories of the past. The stories we get from early teachers, from family, from community and church, from media and politicians, all these have productively been labeled the "cultural curriculum." Historians have to work with this curriculum as well as against it. **Understanding past lives in**

their contexts is called “taking historical perspective.” Past actors’ dimly discerned future has become our own poorly understood past. Inevitably however we ask questions of the past that serve our concerns and understandings of the present. *What distinguishes memory from self-serving storytelling or ideology? What distinguishes both from disciplined historical thinking?* We will return again and again to these questions.

Nations and nationalism have been history’s greatest story mills. So have international movements and ideologies like communism or free market capitalism. This class focuses on the peoples and territories who became the United States, so we will attend closely to **national myths and histories, to ideas of American national identity, and to contests over just who should be included in the circle of “We the People.”**

Course Content: A summary of various “modules” and recurring themes (corresponding to assignments and case studies):

How can *archaeology and ecology* change our understanding of European settlement and Indian displacement in the 16th and 17th centuries?

How can *intellectual history* -- reading drafts of the Declaration of Independence -- provide a window into contradictions and hidden events in the American Revolution?

How can *oral history* give insight into the experiences of formerly enslaved people who left no written records? How much was their memory shaped by hindsight and the passage of time, and their stories shaped by relations of power between interviewer and interviewee?

How can analysis of *visual culture*, especially photography and film, open up appreciation of experience otherwise not visible to the public? How did pictures galvanize audiences to support social change?

How can *social historians* interpret quantitative census **data** to interpret the multicultural peopling of America and the mythic migrations that became core stories of our culture, such as the great Okie migration?

How can a *new theory* refocus attention on underappreciated regions, people, or causes? What difference does it make to think of the West as a **frontier of expanding democracy**, or alternatively as a **zone of conquest**, or as a multi-national “**middle ground**” of exchange between European and indigenous peoples?

How can “*psychohistory*,” the application of contemporary understanding of psychological disorders, help us understand controversial people, such as the accusers of witches in Salem in 1692, or the anti-slavery martyr John Brown in 1859?

How did *famous murder cases* (such as the Sacco-Vanzetti trials of the 1920s) become lightning rods for conflicting ideas and mass anxieties about what America should be?

How can differing *models of decision-making* help us re-interpret events like the passage of the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, or the decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan? Some models focus on individual rational actors, others focus on political or organizational behavior.

Student Learning Objectives [With Appropriate Key Words]

Upon successful completion of this course, students will demonstrate **skills of historical analysis and interpretation** including:

- **Combine evidence and theory to explain broad patterns of change** – social, economic, cultural, and political – and identify **key watersheds**, transformations, or ruptures. **Key Words:** change, continuity, revolution, watersheds, structure.
- **Analyze and evaluate debates among historians who change their interpretations and questions** in light of new evidence, new questions, new social movements, new theories, and new issues of concern to everyone. Compare these versions of the past to widely shared cultural beliefs (the “cultural curriculum”). **Key Words:** Historiography; cultural curriculum; ideology; evidence and interpretation.
- **Interpret, compare, corroborate, and contextualize competing primary sources.** Extract evidence and make inferences based on contextual knowledge. Evaluate strength and weaknesses of different kinds of evidence – oral history, photographs, cartoons, diaries, speeches, journalism, films and television programs. **Key Words:** Historical Analysis; inferences, contextualization, corroboration, inconsistency, “reading the silences.”

- **Identify and evaluate popular, dominant, and dissenting historical narratives within our culture** and explain why they changed over time. **Key Words: Memory and Ideology.**
- **Analyze and explain cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation;** distinguish among and evaluate the relative weights of different causes in any given historical explanation.
- Develop **a repertoire of teachable history**, an approach to democratic pedagogy, **and a more inclusive understanding** of past actors. **Key Words: Inclusion, democratic pedagogy.**

Canvas and the Google Drive: Canvas is the learning system where you will find all assignments and rubrics and links to sources. They will also have clear links to some **Google Drive folders with optional readings and some sign up sheets and study aids.** Always check Canvas for the *authoritative and complete* assignments. You will have plenty of advance warning if any change is merited.

Technology Requirements and Support:

To save you money and to diversify the base of class materials, all readings are digitized in .pdf or other online web-site format. **In the past, devices have posed problems when students have struggled to find quotes or evidence, or when they used them in distracting ways (surfing, email).** I don't prohibit useful devices in class, but I ask you to make them truly useful for the class. If you use devices exclusively, learn how to quickly access them and annotate pdfs and take notes. **Paper is better for many students,** and I will make it available if it becomes clear the class needs a course reader. I encourage you to buy a used copy of the main textbook (bookstore or cheaper, online through Amazon's linked vendors, 5e as well as 6e, see below).

Writing Assignments: All assignments must be submitted on Canvas using either .rtf, .docx, or .pdf format, so I can more easily comment in text, either in Canvas or by downloading and uploading again. Your weekly posts do not require full citations other than page references, but use full citations in endnote style when writing the 2 formal papers. Learn these rules. See Rampolla's *Student Guide*, chs. 6-7, which will remain at the top of Canvas syllabus page. Papers should be double spaced unless otherwise indicated, **1" or .75" margins** and no more either 11 or 12 pt. font, **Times New Roman or equivalent.** (Block quotes, used sparingly, should be single spaced). This yields an average of 250-300 words per page.

Feedback and assessment: I use voice dictation software to comment directly on student papers, in addition to any comments or rubrics that you find on Canvas. Formal papers submitted as .pdf or .doc or .rtf files *must* be named as I need to download, comment, and upload these: **Last Name_HIS391_Date_Subject** (like "Slave Narratives"). Don't just title them "History Paper."

Reach me: tjackson@uncg.edu is my University email. That is the best way to get in touch with me. Either email me directly or do so through Canvas. They all go to that address. **Accounts:** You must use your UNCG email account and have an active account to gain access to Canvas and the Library databases. Please do not ask for permission through @gmail.com or other account. **Email:** Please address questions to me via email regarding assignments, appointments, mishaps. **Subject line: "HIS 316 question."** If you don't hear back from me in 24 hours (weekends excepted), please try me again. If you must hear sooner, use Subject Line: **"URGENT His 316 problem."**

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious offense of the academic code and is treated as such by faculty. Familiarize yourself with the responsibilities of the instructor and the options I have with respect to Academic Integrity: <http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integritypolicy/> **Turnitin** is a software program attached to Canvas to clue you and your professor into possible plagiarism.

Attendance: Regular, punctual attendance is required. More than four absences for any reason will adversely affect your grade. **Accommodations:** Prolonged illness or personal and family emergencies and setbacks – let me know very generally you are in this camp and I'll work with you. Don't bother to ask a break for conflicting work schedules or early vacation plans. Sports team players have their own process. Appropriate accommodations should be registered with SOAR (See Canvas for particulars about Accessibility and Accommodations).

Learning Resources for Students, Support, Accommodations (See the online syllabus for many resources)

Required Reading:

Davidson, James West and Mark Hamilton Lytle. *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, 6th ed. (or 5th, cheaper to purchase). New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010. **All assigned digitized chapters are linked in .pdf form through Canvas Assignment pages. I encourage you to purchase through the bookstore or online.** [UNCG First Day Complete students may now receive this text as I switched from “recommended” to “required.” If you are not in this program you are not “required” to purchase from the bookstore].

Materials Not Included In The Above Textbook : If enough of you request it, I can supply a paper course reader from Copy King, right off campus. Supplemental and optional primary sources, scholarly articles and links to websites related to doing and teaching history will be posted on Canvas. There will be direct links or clear bibliographic information you will use for swift library retrieval and download.

Strategic Reading with a Purpose: Expect to read about 60-70 pages per week — allow quiet time for careful preparation and focused analysis. The quality of your learning rises or falls on students’ common fund of insight and individuals’ willingness to share, agree, and disagree. **Please make that commitment to reading, preparing, and collaborating on answering weekly questions.** **N.B.:** The University states that a 3 credit hour course will involve 6 hours of preparation outside of class. **How to Read:** Use the **guiding questions** in Canvas and at the end of textbook chapters. Frequently read the end first! Employ your skills of **previewing, reading, highlighting, note taking**, and of course, **writing**. Good writing consists of accurate **paraphrase, summary, and selective quotation**. Then in more formal writing you aim for **grammatical sentences, coherent paragraphs** (each with a controlling idea), and **essay coherence** (frequently evident in good **transitions** between paragraphs). *Listen to me when I tell you that you should read conclusions first to get the big picture and understand the outlines of the thesis.*

Graded Requirements (Summary)

1. **Participation (20%).** Oral participation and group credits from your peers.
2. **Individual Analysis and Group Discussion Reports — Each Student Writes Once Every 2 Weeks on Canvas – 400-500 words.** Post to the appropriate assignment page. Post to only one assignment page in two weeks. Decide amongst yourselves. Write 6 and Your Best 5 Count (25%).
3. **Class Preparation Quizzes 15%**
4. **Mid Term Paper. 20%.**
5. **Final Paper (20%).** Primary Source Analysis, Guided by Scholarship and Your Individual Curiosity
6. **Optional Extra Credit:** Recommended Reading and Reports to Class, 1-3 points on top of final grade. [Sign up once.](#)

An important note on the function and logistics of groups. Every four weeks or so, I will re-scramble the five-person sub-groups in the class, and each cluster of students will sit in such a way that you can all face each other (two rows, on one side of the room usually works). Each class will reserve at least 15 minutes for the groups to discuss and debate questions. Your group will decide in advance among yourselves, using the Canvas collaboration tools, (principally Google Docs). Decide **who will be the leader for each of four days**, and **who will be the fifth “sweep” who brings the most important insights together at the end of two weeks.**

Graded Requirements (Detailed)

1. Participation and Preparation (20%)

Preparation, active speaking, cooperation, and respectful debate in class are essential. I lecture and I pose questions, orchestrate small group and general class discussion. Earn credit in one of two ways:

1. General class discussion (I take notes on who speaks, but students wishing to make sure I credit them for speaking may write down a very brief note of the contribution you made on small slips, with the name and date).
2. Credits from your group mates on their written summaries of the questions your group discussed. All you need to do on these private assignment pages is say "Jose helped out most by showing that x and y could also be true, based on z ." You are going to be teachers. You can allocate credits to your most helpful peers.

Value quality more than quantity; long-winded or off-topic comments will not be rewarded. *Clarity, pertinence, evidence and conciseness* are the keywords here. I visit small group discussions, help with extra credit presentations, synthesize and counterpoise your statements, and I spur you to deeper reflection. **Since all of you plan to be teachers, I am not thinking anybody will be too shy to speak!** The more each of you prepares, the more all of you will learn from the elevated level of class discussion. I've seen it happen! Thanks in advance!! [Note: Some of the most brilliant students will hold back. I will work with you to bring out your voice].

2. Reports on Class Topics and Group Discussions – 400-500 words – (25%) -- Each Student Must Write 6 of these, and the Best 5 will Count – 1 every 2 weeks regardless of format. Word counts will be enforced on either end, so write enough but not too much.

This requirement can generate the most confusion, so ask me until it is clear. But understand much of it also depends on your serious engagement with your peers and sense of reciprocal obligation. I will post the best example I get in the first couple of weeks (with permission).

There are 25 classes where one (only one) person of your 5-person group will lead and write. That "Leader" will plant seeds of insights before class and post the "leading insights" to my assignment page before class (at this point it may be under word count). Then on the same assignment page you will post a "re-submission" after class (within one day) That post will harvest added insights from the group and the class. **Nota Bene:** *Groups should use the Collaborations tool in Canvas, usually creating a Google Doc that the group may share to pool notes, thoughts, agreements, disagreements, ideas, evidence, and better evidence.*

The purpose: These posts inform, supplement, and record the best points of oral discussion. If done well in cooperation, you will end the semester with a substantial body of reflections, arguments, and evidence, that will aid you going forward when you teach.

Once more, **Individuals and Group Roles:** for each class one person in your group will be designated leader (before class) and summarizer (after class), posting on the same assignment page. Again, the leader will post a **preliminary** set of reflections and discussion points **before each class**. Then within one day they will post a **resubmission** that reflects the group discussion and deeper thinking, ideas and evidence.

After two weeks, when one of you has not written, that fifth person will write a synthetic "sweep" summary of your most important shared insights. Share these with the group and submit on Friday after the two week rotation. When you sweep, label yourself "Sweep."¹

¹ I am in a hiking club. We always have at least one "lead" and one "sweep" who has the crucial role of making sure everyone makes it. The sweep is the last person in the group who motivates the tired and dispirited. And

Make sure it is substantial, and not a comment on a small piece of the puzzle. Everyone will write about an interpretation that they favor, and why, in terms of concepts that make sense to them and the evidence that supports interpretation. At their best, group members will expand upon, give other supportive examples, challenge an interpretation with other evidence. Those who write after the class period will reflect both your views and those of your peers. (Example: "I argued that witchcraft accusations emerged from x, and y, because of z and q. But LaQuan presented x and y evidence for s interpretation.") Use "I" and "we" if you wish. Your statements must of course reflect evidence-based reasoning rather than self-referential statements of about your general approval or outrage.

The topics? Note how historians changed their interpretations of the past. Or you will evaluate, contrast, contextualize the "voices" of past actors. Generic examples: What was the most interesting piece of evidence or line of new inquiry a scholar employed to cast the past in a new light? Why did F.J. Turner's own student come to the opposite conclusion about frontier democracy, was one right, or did each have a piece of the truth? Or again, "contrast the perspectives of past actors on the same events." Such as when we look at contrasting oral histories from freedpeople who survived into the 1930s.

Be selective, not exhaustive, but be substantial! [NB: I will let you know if you are being too granular and missing aspects of the big picture, OR if you seem to be just generalizing without reference to the actual topics, people, and events].

3. Preparation Quizzes—3 questions online before each class. 15%

Frankly, the biggest problem with many UNCG classes is not your smarts, but the share of students who show up to class unprepared. I appreciate how full your lives are and how challenging it can be to juggle academic, social, family, and life obligations. These quizzes are my way of knowing who is coming prepared to each class, and how much you are "getting" from the written material -- what might need explanation or reinforcement. These will be graded on a curve, based on percentages and aggregated points over the semester. The Canvas software does not give partial credit, so if you get two out of three, it does not mean you failed in any way.

4. Mid-term Paper. Due October 13, a day without class, after Fall Break. 1250-1750 words, 5-7 pp. 20%

A formal paper, with properly formatted endnotes, not footnotes, and no bibliography. Based on 50% assigned readings, 50% discovered sources. (See above for format rules). The extra resources can be sources either referenced in class or in the optional readings for assignments. **You should favor primary sources, but different topics lend themselves to different combinations of sources.** These should not be the result of Google searches or thirdhand educational sites, like some UK high school. You want scholarship or original primary sources. The class will see many mini-tutorials on source discovery. **I am very happy to brainstorm with you in advance! Actually one of the most fun parts of the job. I will post some suggestions.** *Under no circumstances, will I accept papers tangentially related to the issues of any given day, in order to completely remove the temptation of recycling work previously done.*

5. Final Paper -- Due December 8, 3:30 PM (exam time). Submit on Canvas, 1250-1750 words, 5-7 pp. 20% Same as mid-term. Suggestions will be posted on Canvas.

Your final paper, due the day of the final exam after classes, will put into practice some of the interpretation skills you have refined in this class. You will report briefly on your preliminary findings on the last day.

6. Extra Credit Option, 1-3 points on final grade, depending on how well you structure argument and evidence. Each day lists required readings and options for deeper inquiry. [Sign up once.](#) Almost all days will

the lead . . . knows where to go. These roles rotate. Groups are responsible for maintaining logistics and collaboration.

present the opportunity for one student to investigate more deeply and report to the class, for 10 minutes max, including Q and A, on either:

1. A significant work of scholarship of article or chapter length.
2. A "Past and Present" controversy conducted by historians in the nation's newspapers, magazines, and online media.
3. A significant primary source that sheds important light on the issues of their day, quite apart from our present frames of reference.

This cannot +be something that you write about for either the midterm or final. That is, no "double dipping" on extra readings for those and this.

Grading Scale:

A (93.3 and above), A- (90-93.2); B+ (87-90), B (83-86), B- (80-82); C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72); D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62); F (less than 60, unacceptable work).

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES ***ALWAYS CHECK CANVAS FOR READINGS, LINKS, AND QUESTIONS***

8/16: Introductions

8/18: Demography and Ecology in the "Columbian Exchange"

8/23: Surviving Colonial Jamestown: Tobacco, Disease, Conflict and Mortality

8/25: Enslavement and Expansion in the Colonial Chesapeake

8/29: New England – Conflict and Transformation – Sorting and Interpreting Causation in the Salem Witch Craze

8/31: Independence -- Ideas and Actions in the American Revolution

9/6: Recovering Enslavement and Emancipation from Below, Through Oral History--Interviews, Their Social Context, and "Splits" in Collective Memory

9/8: Enslavement in the Court and Legislative Records--The UNCG Race and Slavery Petitions Project

9/13: Westward Expansion – Jacksonian Democracy? Jacksonian Aristocracy? Jacksonian Dispossession?

9/15: "Middle Ground" to "Zone of Conquest" – Cherokee Acculturation and Cherokee Removal

9/20: Anti-Slavery and Sectional Crisis--John Brown, Sanity, and Revolutionary Violence in Context

9/22: Lincoln, Reconstruction, and Black Political Agency

9/27: The Immigrant City and the Middle Class Conscience--Jacob Riis and His Audiences

9/29: Between Victorian and Progressive: Jacob Riis' Immigrant Nativism

10/4: Progressive Symbolism and the Political Process--Upton Sinclair, TR, and Congress Take on the Meat Trusts

10/6: Upton Sinclair: Socialism and Reform in Meat Packing

10/11: Fall Break

10/13: Mid-term paper is due. No class.

10/18: Sacco and Vanzetti: Americanization and Nativism in the "Tribal Twenties"

10/20: New World Order--The Sacco-Vanzetti "Affair" in World Politics

10/25: The Dust Bowl and the Great California Migrations

10/27: Dorothea Lange and John Steinbeck: Artists and Documentarians

11/1: Presidential Authority and Military Bureaucracy: The Atomic Bomb Debate

11/3: Did Father Know Best? Women and Popular Culture: TV, Magazines, The Power of the Media

11/8: The Greensboro Sit Ins: Change and Continuity -- Why Greensboro? Why 1960?

11/10: Black Revolution and the March on Washington Coalition

11/15: Vietnam and American Memory in Film and Oral History

11/17: Incident at Son My: The Load of Responsibility

11/22: Final Paper Commitment, No Class

11/24: Thanksgiving break

11/29: Last day— Student Reports on Findings, or What the Rest of Us Don't Know Yet!

12/8: 3:30 PM, Final Paper is due on Canvas