

History 702
Colloquium: U.S. History Since 1865

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T 7-10
McIver 222

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to some of the major interpretive schools in the recent writing of U.S. history since 1865. It is not an overview of major events. Instead, students will explore some of the genres of historical scholarship that are making a significant impact on the historical profession. Fields that we will explore include: cultural history, transnational history, history from the “top down” and “bottom up,” social movement history, the history of sexuality, legal history, and environmental history. Throughout the semester we will explore the following questions when analyzing books and articles: What questions does the work set out to answer? What are its arguments and methodologies? What are the strengths and limitations of the approach? How does it integrate race, class, and gender analysis?

Requirements:

Participation and Class Presentation (40%): Everyone is expected to come to class prepared to engage in a detailed discussion of the week’s reading. It is essential that you read thoroughly and make careful notes. You will be graded on the depth and insight of your contributions in class. Students will be largely responsible for facilitating the discussion. You will be evaluated on your ability to respond to your peers, question them, and keep the discussion focused and moving forward. Attendance in class is mandatory. Absences will hurt your grade.

Each student will make one oral presentation to the class based on an assigned book that dovetails with our common readings. Presentations should be approximately 10 minutes long and will consist of three parts: a) a succinct explanation of the book’s main arguments b) an exploration of how the book relates to the week’s reading c) a discussion of the historiographical debates with which the book engages. Presenters should provide the class with a handout that provides a synopsis of the book and a list of further readings. Students are responsible for scheduling a meeting with me before their presentations to go over their ideas.

Weekly Assignments (40%): Each week you will write either discussion questions or a response paper based on the readings. Assignments must be e-mailed to me by 9am on the Monday before class (late papers will be penalized). Discussion questions should highlight important issues that the readings address and illustrate that you have thoroughly read and thought deeply about them. Response papers must similarly demonstrate that you read and understood the book, engage with

its main arguments, and offer a critical perspective. Do not merely summarize the book. You must also provide analysis, which highlights why the author's arguments are significant.

Syllabus Assignment (20%): Each student will choose a topic on the syllabus (under "ADDITIONAL REPORTS") to delve into in more depth. In addition to reading the additional book listed on the syllabus (and presenting it to the class) students will read widely in the field and develop a list of readings for an advanced undergraduate/graduate historiography class. Students will hand in a 10 week syllabus (complete with schedule and course description) that lists approximately 5 books as well as relevant films or articles (books can be assigned over two weeks). Accompanying the syllabus will be a 4-6 page paper. The paper should explain the historiographical issues that the course will address. It must describe and defend the choice of readings and the order in which they are assigned. You may focus the course on a topic that is narrower than the one delineated in the syllabus. However, you must defend your decision in your syllabus, illustrating that you have read widely in the field. A more detailed description of this assignment will be handed out in class.

Grading:

I use the following grading scale: 93 and above A, 90-92 A-, 88-89 B+, 83-87 B, 80-82, B-, 78-79 C+, 73-77 C, 70-72 C-, 68-69 D+, 63-67 D, 60-62 D-, 59 and below F.

E-mail Policy and Blackboard:

E-mail is the best way to reach me. I always confirm receipt of messages and try to respond quickly. If you do not receive a response from me within 48 hours, you should assume that I did not receive your message and try again. If you do not receive confirmation of my receipt of your message, it means that I did not receive it and you will not be credited for any information that you communicated.

I will use e-mail to contact you, so it is imperative that you check your UNCG email account regularly. Note that I will be sending class e-mails only to UNCG accounts.

The course will have a blackboard website, which will have copies of the syllabus, handouts, and announcements.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of others without giving them credit. If something you write implies that you are the originator of words or ideas, they must be your own. If you use someone else's exact words they must be enclosed in quotation marks and be followed by a citation. If you put someone else's ideas into your own words, you must give that person credit. Anyone who commits plagiarism will be penalized severely and could automatically fail the course.

Required Texts:**(available at Addams bookstore on Tate St. and UNCG Bookstore)**

- Cohen, Lizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Engelhardt, Tom and Edward T. Linenthal, eds. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*. New York: Henry Holt, 1996.
- Foner, Eric. *A Short History of Reconstruction 1863-1877*. NY: Harper and Row, 1990.
- Gilmore, Glenda. *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1996.
- Horowitz, Daniel. *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism*. Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1998.
- Meyerowitz, Joanne J. *How Sex Changed: The History of Transsexuality in the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Ngai, Mae. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Payne Charles. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Renda, Mary A. *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2001.
- Sugrue, Thomas J. *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Course Schedule:**January 11: Introduction to the course****January 18: How Have Historiographical Debates Evolved in Recent Years?**

SPECIAL GUEST: DR. LOREN SCHWENINGER

READINGS:

“Introduction,” in Frances G. Couvares, Martha Saxton, Gerald N. Grob, and George Athan Billias, eds., *Interpretations of American History: Patterns and Perspectives: Volume Two - From Reconstruction* 7 ed (2000), e-reserve.

Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (1988). Read “Introduction: Nailing Jelly to the Wall,” Chapter 14: “Every Group Its Own Historian,” and Chapter 16: “There Was No King in Israel,” on e-reserve.

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Please also try to skim chapters 13 and 15 and glance at the rest of the book, which is on reserve at Jackson Library.

ASSIGNMENT:

Write at least three discussion questions based on the readings. Please also submit one question for Dr. Schwenger about his experience as a graduate student during the 1960s and as a young scholar during the 1970s and 1980s.

January 25: What are the Benefits and Limitations of Historical Synthesis?

SPECIAL GUEST: DR. PETER CARMICHAEL

READING:

Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (1984)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Reconstruction: Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (2001)

February 1: How Does History Look Different When Told From a Previously Obscured Perspective?

READING:

Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (1996)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

1. Jim Crow: Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (1998)
2. Women and Social Reform: Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (1994)

February 8: What is Cultural History and Why is it Important?

READING:

Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (2001)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper.

Syllabus paper update in class.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

Cultural Perspectives on U.S. Foreign Relations: Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media & U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (2001).

February 15: What is the Relationship Between History and the Law?

READING:

Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2004)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response Paper.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

Immigration/Ethnic Identity: George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (1993)

February 22: How Does A “Bottom Up” Perspective Transform our Understanding of U.S. History?

READING:

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (1990)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper.

One to two page update on your syllabus assignment. Please note the books and articles that you have located, how much you have read, your ideas about the syllabus, and the challenges that you face.

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

New Deal: Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (1995)

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March 1: How Have Scholars Conceived of the Environment as a Historical Actor?

READING:

Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (1979)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response paper.

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Environmental History: Stephen J. Pyne, *Year of the Fire: The Story of the Great Fires of 1910* (2001)

March 8: No class - spring break!

March 15: How is Public History Political?

SPECIAL GUEST: DR. KATHLEEN FRANZ!

READING:

Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (1996)

See also the recent column by OAH president James Horton: "History Matters: Organizing for Mutual Support," *OAH Newsletter* 32 (November 2004).

<http://www.oah.org/pubs/nl/2004nov/horton.html?emtm1104c>

ASSIGNMENT:

Write at least three discussion questions based on your reading.

Syllabus paper update in class.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

World War II: John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986)

Vietnam: Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of the War in Vietnam* (1999)

March 22: Is Biography a Useful Tool for Understanding History?

READING:

Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (1998)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response Paper. Please make this paper a “think piece” on the telling of history through biography. Demonstrate that you have read and understood the main arguments of the book and discuss its strengths and/or weaknesses as a tool for learning about the history of this time period. Explore what we gain by studying history through biography and what we lose.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

1. McCarthyism: Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (1998)
2. Postwar Feminisms: Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (2003)

March 29: How Are Historians Complicating History from the “Top Down”?

READINGS:

Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (1996)

ASSIGNMENT:

Response Papers

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

1. Race and the Postwar Metropolis: Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (2003)
2. New Right: Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (2002)

April 5: No Class - Syllabus Assignment Due (in my mailbox by 4pm)

April 12: How Does a Historical Perspective Shed New Light on the Construction of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality?

READING:

Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: The History of Transsexuality in the United States* (2002)

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ASSIGNMENT:
Response Paper

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Sexuality: George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (1995)

April 19: How Should We Write the History of Social Movements?

READING:

Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (1995)

ASSIGNMENT:
Response Paper

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Civil Rights: Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (2001)

April 26

Topic: How Does Transnational History Change Our Understanding of U.S. History?

READING:

Selections from Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (2002):
Bender, "Introduction: Historians, the Nation, and the Plentitude of Narratives," pp. 1-12.
Daniel T. Rodgers, "An Age of Social Politics."
Marilyn B. Young, "The Age of Global Power."

Selections from *Journal of American History* 86:3 (1999):

David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," pp. 965-68.
Marcel van der Linden, "Transnationalizing American Labor History."

All articles are on e-reserve.

ASSIGNMENT:

Write at least three discussion questions based on your readings.

ADDITIONAL REPORT:

Transnational History: Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (2003)