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History 702 02 (Spring 2017) Graduate Colloquium in US History, 1865- Present

This course surveys major developments in history writing covering a century and a half since the Civil War, examining sub-fields of political, social, cultural, intellectual, and environmental history (with one ethnography at the end of the contemporary city that is methodologically stunning).

Conflicts over rights and citizenship, struggles for racial and economic equality, debates and decisions about political economy and the balance of economic power among business, labor, consumer, and other interest groups, the role of government in society and the role of the US in the world, stories of individual determination, overcoming, and loss, – these are the subjects of conversations we'll have this semester.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss some of the major themes of United States history since 1865.
2. Analyze how historians have described the history of various topics of United States history since 1865, and revised their narratives and explanations.
3. Demonstrate a variety of ways in which historians and social scientists have taken their knowledge to larger publics and addressed public issues of civil rights, democracy, war, economic opportunity and entitlement, gender equality, labor rights, racial justice, and the changing structures of American power.

Main Required Readings (In Bookstore and On-line Sellers):

- Foner, Eric, and Joshua Brown. *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction*. New York: Vintage, 2006. WIDELY AVAILABLE. (This is the shorter up to date popular version of *Reconstruction* for a wider audience of readers, which you may also purchase instead).
- Lears, T. J. Jackson. *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.
- Gerstle, Gary. *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present*, Princeton, 2015. Ebook also available.
- Andrews, Thomas G. *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Boyle, Kevin. *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*. Holt, 2005.
- Katznelson, Ira. *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time*, Norton, 2013.
- Jackson, Thomas F. *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice*. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- Orleck, Annelise. *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.
- Appy, Christian G. *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity*, 2015.

- Phillips-Fein, Kim. *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.
- Jenkins, Philip. *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Crown, 2016. The paperback is coming out in March. What a powerful work of ethnography

Hint: You forget the vast majority of what you read, but you must read it to remember anything! Take thoughtful analytical notes that will make sense to you later! I do this a lot in the margins and then just flag the pages in books I own. Consult book reviews and historiographical essays to help clue you into what might be important to evaluate in a work. Choosing what to record, copy, or cite is a skill learned over years. I have often fallen back into outlining books, whereas a more strategic approach is to pose questions after reading the Introduction and Conclusion, and then try to line up references and notes that answer those questions. Research has shown that people remember facts, dates, personalities and concepts that *matter* to larger questions they deem important. What are the main concepts behind this narrative and explanation? How do individuals embody or symbolize or make their mark on larger movements and trends? Is there something here I would want to put in a lecture or capture in a public exhibit? Is there a note or a quote here that might end up in something I would want to write? What is the author's basic approach to historical explanation or education? What is the key interpretive storyline? Are there analytical concepts that open up worlds of knowledge and interpretation? What do the titles really mean? What is the *Arc of Justice* in the twentieth century city? Who is *Killing for Coal* in Colorado, America, the world? Who is seeking the *Rebirth of a Nation*, and how—and how many ways can be named and illustrated? How are *Liberty and Coercion* inextricably bound up with each other in the structure of American government and social relations?

Structure of our classes and conversations:

The core of this course are the hours we spend in dialogue. Conversations should move among three overlapping levels. Graduate students should be building a base of knowledge and notes that will serve you in comprehensive exams and in your careers as scholars, teachers, or public historians. So obviously you should be thinking on several levels simultaneously as your professional identity takes shape.

I will steer conversation to each if the class doesn't fully explore these dimensions:

1) Historical change, explanation, and content knowledge. How has this work added to your knowledge of this period and the fundamental questions of American history? How does it shed light on major issues and developments in the political, social, and cultural history of the United States? How would you explain the book's main insights to an undergraduate more interested in history than historiography? How do these insights shed light on current issues and choices?

2) Historiography. Can this work help you understand how professional historical writing and argumentation has changed over time? What intervention into the ongoing conversations among scholarly historians does it make? How does it periodize or characterize an era, illuminate a neglected arena of public life, or make connections between disparate phenomena that haven't been customarily related? Because a number of these works are synthetic and intended to cross over professional and "trade publication" status, the author might not prominently state their contribution. But you can usually find it in footnotes, related articles, or book reviews. Use all of these.

3) Genre, Method and Models for Doing History and Becoming a Historian. Are there basic concepts, research strategies, ways of relating different historical changes as revealed in the book's sources and structure, that are particularly useful or interesting to you as you go forward with your professional identity and your sense of what it is possible to do in the discipline? Are there implications for broader publics of non-specialists, citizens, activists, policy people, literary nonfiction lovers and writers?

Logistics:

Each class will have two “historiographers” who help the rest of us situate this work in the “ongoing conversations” and periodic “revisions” of basic narratives, analyses, ways of explaining change, and ways of drawing connections between arenas of public life that are often treated in isolation. Each historiographer will give a 10 minute report that references work that preceded and followed scholarship that we are reading. They will inform the class of what stands out in the book as either novel entirely, or typical of a “school” or trend in historical writing and explanation. (I will gently cut your presentation short if it goes over 11 minutes). Historiographers will consult at least one of the essays under “historiography” cited here and updated in Canvas (where I will post more extensive references). They also will dig into the author’s footnotes and at least two or three book reviews to help us understand how to place this work in an evolving field. Sometimes authors will flat out tell you (Jackson and Desmond do this). But historiographers should not just rely upon them! ALWAYS check the canvas page for that week, for questions and refined lists of suggested writings. Use search engines or browse the professor’s huge digital archive in Google Drive entitled “Historio/Comps” (see Canvas link at top of electronic syllabus). *Reviews in American History* is the gold standard for reviews, but *Journal of American History* and H-NET also have valuable reviews. In addition to the 4-5 page essay, historiographers will distribute a 1 pp. MAX digest of main points and quotes and citations to other works.

Each class will also have one “humanities in action” reporter who will be responsible for finding out about how our historians address the public: through public history, participation in exhibits or popularized history or film, or most interesting, opinion editorials (the History News Network’s archive is a great resource). These reports will be maximum 10 minutes and minimum 5 minutes. No handouts needed but recorded interviews, *OAH Magazine of History* articles and teaching modules, and other forms of communicating history that reach broader publics can be shared with the class.

Guidelines for Thinking and Talking:

Just to remind you how things go well. Let’s critically appreciate a work before zeroing in its shortcomings of the things we wish it had done but didn’t. Listen respectfully and respond to specific people. Don’t keep looking at the professor to win points; sustain the dialogue within a circle. Work up the courage to speak, be willing to openly disagree without being disagreeable, or to concur without parroting. Keep those electronic devices, especially cellphones, stowed. Don’t use laptops in a way that pulls your’s or others’ attention out of the room into cyberspace. Be sensitive to the tone of a discussion as well as its surface content. If you find viewpoints described by historians as abhorrent, don’t abandon your values and present moral compasses, but try to take historical perspective—even with white supremacists, who came up in certain cultures, raised with set stories about conflicted pasts—historical perspective involves imagining people as three dimensional people with difficult pasts and uncertain futures. Their uncertain future is our imperfectly knowable past. By the same token, appreciate that historical consciousness involves deeper knowledge of human behavior and a way to imagine alternative futures within the realm of the humanly plausible.

Graded Requirements:

Class Participation, 35%. Criteria for evaluating verbal participation: 1. Comments should be pertinent to the analytical question before the class. 2. Analytical claims should be backed up by evidence and examples. 3. Quality rather than quantity governs, i.e. just talking doesn’t translate into credit. I will gently cut your remarks short if it seems like you are monopolizing. 4. Comments are best situated in response to other people’s points in a way that reveals careful listening. 5. Criticisms of the work are balanced with critical appreciation. 6. Respectful disagreement is valued and encouraged, as is concurrence. If you concur, give a supportive example. Each of your three presentations to the class will count and receive constructive feedback.

Short papers on historiography and “humanities in action.” 25% Each should be 4-5 pp. There are three, and sign ups are coming soon.

Class Blogs, Discussion Boards, Comments (weekly) 20%. Informal 1--2 pages (300-500 words). As with everything, these are reflective and evaluative, not simply descriptive or comprehensive. Don't write about everything, but don't simply pick some small insight or surprising revelation from one chapter. Go with a theme or thread that is sustained in the book. *You don't have to have finished all the reading to crystalize your thoughts in writing. Write these and then finish if you, like me, prepare right up to the start of a class.* Start to answer one or two of the overarching questions that I pose in the weekly Canvas assignment page. Please be succinct. Make sure you find a chance in class to verbally share your main observations. THEN after class, go back and respond to one other person's blog entry, especially with thoughts on something that might not have come up during class (I'll try to synthesize these in “wrap up” emails after the class). *If you miss class for whatever reason, these are still, no, especially required of you.*

Final Synthetic essay 20%. 10-12 pp. Due the hour of the Final exam. You'll take a thread of inquiry and trace it over the course. *These will be delimited and crafted in 30 minute conferences with me, held whenever you want, but most usefully within 3 weeks of the end of the semester.* Examples: African Americans and immigrants struggles for inclusion into citizenship, in the political and economic dimensions of citizenship. Economic freedom and economic justice in political contests. Ideologies that shaped policies and political decisions at home and abroad—meanings of freedom, or protections and promotions of certain conceptions of “rights”, or ways of dealing with foreign peoples abroad and at home. Social movements and institutional power—challenging and working within organizations. Coalitions of left and right that have re-contoured the ground of American social life and politics. These may reflect questions and interests you bring into the class.

Resources:

Aside from Jackson Library's many subscriptions and search engines, you may request my access to HaithiTrust.org through the Library of Congress, and any of the University of Virginia's research databases not available to graduate students here. Just bring your laptop and I can log you into these accounts for a session. Also, check two places for a rich array of readings: The Google Docs Folder titled “Historio/Comps” to which Canvas gives you access for the semester; and a Zotero Group titled “Historiography UNCG” that Kyra Turnage helped me build last semester.

Attendance:

Attendance is required. Absence will have an adverse effect on your participation grade. Email me in advance if you must miss class and your excuse falls within the range of UNCG exemptions: sickness, serious family emergency, unsafe travel conditions, nuclear war.

Course policy on sustainability: Campus-wide policies are being adopted that require students, staff and faculty to act in ecologically conscious ways while at UNCG. No grade here, just the grade the biosphere gives us all! Here are a few links to sustainability information at UNCG, including a recycling guide.

<http://sustain.uncg.edu/> <http://www.uncg.edu/student.groups/uncgreen/index.htm>
<http://www.uncg.edu/rcy/index.htm>

UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>

Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy will be handled in accordance with UNCG procedures, which are quite strict in the case of graduate students. Nuff said.

Grading Scale: A+: 98-100; A: 93-97; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; 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: 59 and lower; N/C: 0 (as in No Credit in cases of failure to produce any work, and oh yes, in cases of plagiarism).

Rev. Jackson Preaches: "If you never risk saying something 'stupid,' you will never learn to say anything smart." -- Rev. Jackson

Schedule of Meetings and Assignments
(Check Canvas for fuller assignments, with suggestions for supplementary reading,
Historiography reports, and guiding questions as you read).

1/18: Introductions

What is your favorite historical study and why? Who do you imagine your most important audience(s) will be in your career? Where do you hope to make a mark? What questions about past and present have motivated you the most?

1/25: Reconstruction from Several Angles of View

Foner, Eric, and Joshua Brown. *Forever Free*

West, Elliott. "Reconstructing Race." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2003): 6–26. Get the main ideas here, about periodization and relating the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Western expansion.

Pick ONE Chapter, ANY Chapter from Foner's lectures that preceded *Reconstruction*: Foner, Eric. *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy*. Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984. Links to digitized chapters are on Canvas: I. is on Comparative Emancipations. III. is on how political power shaped labor conflicts in two places.

Though a trade publication, *Forever Free* contains Foner's main theses from his larger study, with an updated emphasis on black political agency that was but one of several contributions of the larger work, *Reconstruction* (1988). Joshua Brown's analysis of visual culture is succinct and represents his distinctive approach evident in his other work.

Historiography:

Francis G. Couvares, "Reconstruction: How Large Its Scope?" in *Interpretations of American History Volume 2*, ed. Francis G. Couvares (Boston, 2009), pp. 25-35.

Rothman, Adam. "Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction." Chap. 4 In *American History Now*, edited by Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr. 75-95. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011.

Robinson, Armistead L., "Beyond the Realm of Social Consensus: New Meanings for Reconstruction in American History," *JAH* 68 (September, 1981): 276-97.

Carter, Dan T. "Politics and Power: Emancipation in Comparative Perspective." Edited by Eric Foner. *Reviews in American History* 12, no. 3 (1984): 393–97.

2/1: Empire and Nationalism – A Search for Order or National “Regeneration”?

Lears, T. J. Jackson. *Rebirth of a Nation*

Historiography:

Couvares, Francis G., Martha Saxton, Gerald N. Grob, and George Athan Billias. "The Triumph of Capitalism: Efficiency or Class War?" In *Interpretations of American History Volume 2*, edited by Francis G. Couvares. 55-72. Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2009.

2/8: Labor and Environment in the Progressive Era

Andrews, *Killing for Coal*

2/15: Revolutions in American Power: From the Liberal State to the Leviathan State?

Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion*

2/22: Black Migration, Law, the KKK, and the Contested City in the 1920s

Boyle, *Arc of Justice*

3/1: Immigration, Immigrants, Citizenship, and the State

Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*

3/8: The Achievements and Limits of the “New Deal Order” – Regional and Constitutional Structures and Social Policy in Depression and War

Katznelson, *Fear Itself*

SPRING BREAK

3/22: Strategy, Tactics, Coalitions, and Leadership in the Long Black Freedom Movement

Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights*

3/29: Popular Praxis and the Great Society Revolution in Participatory Democracy: The Case of Welfare Rights

Orleck, *Storming Caesar’s Palace*

4/4: Vietnam: Trauma, Memory, and Forgetting

Appy, *American Reckoning*

4/12: Moral Panics: The Politics of Fear in the 1970s and 1980s

Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*

4/19: Business in the Rise of Conservative Politics

Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*

In addition to historiography reports, each student will read a response to Phillips-Fein in a recent round table forum, and discuss the many constituencies that coalesced and split as Conservatives vied for dominance in national politics.

4/26: Ethnography, the Scholar-Advocate, and the Return of Class to Poverty Research

Desmond, *Evicted*