

COLLOQUIUM IN AMERICAN HISTORY 1865- PRESENT

History 702-02

THURS 3:30-6:20

MHRA 3209

Spring 2019

Dr. Mark Elliott

Office: MHRA 2125

Office Hours: Tues 2-4

DESCRIPTION:

This course is reading intensive and its purpose is twofold. First, it introduces graduate students to some of the major historiographical debates and latest trends in scholarship for this period. Rather than cover a “greatest hits” of historical writing, this class highlights a few of the more recent developments in American historiography. Secondly, this course is designed to facilitate the development of academic skills that are crucial for historians. Reading a book for its thesis or argument is an essential skill. Students must also be able to understand the historiographical debates with which each book engages and evaluate its contributions to those debates. Finally, students should develop their own positions within the major debates that shape the field by asking whether they agree or disagree with the authors’ conclusions and why.

Each class meeting is organized around the discussion of one book as the main reading for the week, and supplementary articles. Each of the main books has been carefully chosen to represent an important contribution to scholarship on a topic of broad interest among scholars and to introduce students to a particular approach to writing history. Political, social, cultural, economic, and intellectual history approaches are represented; regional, national and transnational approaches are sampled; categories of analysis and perspectives on the past that include labor and class, built and natural environments, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and other important themes are explored.

For each main reading, students must be able to identify its thesis, to critically evaluate its logic and methodology, and to assess its historiographic contribution. To assist in the process of placing a book in dialogue with the historiography, students will also read short companion articles and make presentations from the supplementary reading lists. Students will share book reviews and summaries with each other and work collectively to broaden their base of knowledge. All students will be expected to treat opposing viewpoints fairly without distortion or oversimplification and engage in historiographic debates with professionalism.

GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

--Reading secondary sources efficiently, with an ability to identify main arguments, critically evaluate methodology, and assess historiographic contributions.

--Participating with professionalism in sophisticated academic debates and intellectual exchanges.

--Delivering informative and useful oral presentations to peers.

--Formal writing in specific genres of the profession, including book reviews and historiographic essays.

--Establish a foundation for scholarly expertise on post-1865 American historiography.

--Preparation for qualifying exams on American history post-1865.

PARTICIPATION:

Attendance is mandatory. One missed class will not affect your grade, other than lost participation points (see below). Each class missed after the first one will lower your final grade by 20 points. You are expected to complete each week's reading before class so that you can participate constructively in a class discussion. Your participation grade will be based on the overall *quality* of your contributions to the class—not the quantity of contributions you make—and the professionalism with which you conduct yourself in scholarly discussion and debate.

PRESENTATIONS:

Each student will be assigned three presentations over the course of the semester. Presentations will last from 12-15 minutes (speakers will be asked to conclude at 15 minutes). One of these will be a presentation on the main reading for the week, and a second one will be on book chosen from the supplementary reading list. For these presentations, the presenter will be responsible to introduce the author, **concisely** summarize the argument, discuss the scholarly reception of the book, and assesses its historiographical significance. The student must also craft 3-5 questions for discussion arising from the reading. In the supplementary book presentation, the student will summarize the book in more detail for the other students in the class who have not read it and make comparisons and connections between the supplementary reading and the main reading for the week. The third presentation will be based on one of the articles assigned for the week. This presentation will be shorter, 5-8 minutes, and will not require a discussion of the author or the article's reception, but must provide the historiographical context for the week's topic.

WRITTEN WORK:

There will be two significant papers over the course of the semester. Each paper will be a comparative review of two books assessing their contributions to the larger historiographic issues to which they speak. One book must be one of the main readings of the week on the syllabus, and the other(s) must come from the supplementary reading list from the same week as the main reading chosen. Detailed assignment sheets describing the expectations, length, and due dates for the writings assignment will be given out in class and posted on blackboard. Late papers will be penalized for each day the paper is late. All written assignments must be completed and turned in through Canvas in order to pass the class.

GRADING BREAKDOWN:

100 Points: Participation in class discussion or Canvas discussion board (You can earn up to 8 points per class. We meet 13 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. Graduate students will do 3 presentations (40 points for each book; 20 points for one article).

100 Points: First Paper

100 Points: Second Paper

100 Points: Final Exam.

-20 Points: Each absence after the first one will cause a twenty point deduction.

FINAL GRADE SCALE:

A 465-500; A- 450-464; B+ 435-449; B 415-434; B- 400-414; C+ 385-399; C 365-384; F 364 or less.

*Note that for PhD students, a grade of B- or less will constitute a failing grade

RECOMMENDED READING:

[The American Yawp: An Open Source U.S. History Textbook \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site..](#)

[Foner and McGirr, American History Now \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.](#)

REQUIRED READING (available at UNCG's Bookstore):

The books listed below are available for purchase at the bookstore. Some of them are available as free e-books through the Jackson Library. The articles can be accessed through the class Canvas site under the "Course Modules" heading.

1. *Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*
2. *Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story*
3. *Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War.*
4. *Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*
5. *Michael Kazin, *War Against War: Fighting for Peace*
6. Lisa McGirr. *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State*
7. *Jefferson Cowie, *The Great Exception: The New Deal and the Limits of American Politics*
8. *Elizabeth Borwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights*
9. *Mae Ngai. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*
10. Darren Dochuck, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt*
11. *Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*
12. Bryant Simon, *The Hamlet Fire: A Tragic Story of Cheap Food, Cheap Government, and Cheap Lives*
13. *Ann Parsons, *From Asylum to Prison: Deinstitutionalization and the Rise of Mass Incarceration after 1945*

*Available as e-books through the Jackson Library.