AMERICAN SOCIAL HISTORY  
(History 6687-01 for Graduate Students)

Instructor: Cita Cook  
Office: 3210 TLC (678-839-6037)  
Website: http://www.westga.edu/~ccook  
Email: ccook@westga.edu

Office Hours: Monday, 1:30-4:30; Wednesday, 1:30-5:30; other times, by appointment
Class Meetings: Monday, 5:30-8:15, History Seminar Room, 3205 TLC

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Through class discussions and written assignments, students will show a growing understanding of the methods used by and disagreements between social historians as they have researched and interpreted the activities and interactions of different American individuals, families, and communities. They will also develop a clearer sense of how geography, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, economics, and other historical factors have affected and been affected by people as they came together and sometimes disagreed while trying to achieve their goals and to overcome the challenges they faced. Finally, students will demonstrate the ability to analyze secondary sources critically and to write professional book reviews and review essays.

REQUIRED READING MATERIALS
You need a copy of each of the following books (listed in the order in which they will be assigned):
(This book is out-of-print, so you will need to order a copy on-line, which should make it cheaper. Try “alibris” for copies that are less than $10.)
Each week, students may also be assigned one or more required essays that will be available on-line, through electronic reserve, or handed out in class. The directions and password for the electronic reserve will be explained in the first class.

Everyone should have copies of the latest editions of Skrunk and White’s *The Elements of Style* and Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers*, as well as both volumes of any edition of any textbook on the history of the United States.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Classes will involve discussion of assigned readings, occasional mini-lectures by the instructor, one or more videos, and any other activities that we decide would be useful. You are responsible for bringing to class each week any written assignments due that day and any books and essays that we shall be discussing. This might include some of the readings assigned for the week before if we agreed to continue that discussion in some way. Graduate students should expect to average about four hours outside of class for every hour in class, meaning you should be reading, studying, and writing for this class about twelve hours each week. Never try to do all of the work for one week on one day. Some of the assigned writing will be given grades and others will be marked “Satisfactory” or “Try Again.” Points may be deducted for frequent lack of clarity and errors in grammar and/or punctuation. You can get help with this by meeting with me and/or making an appointment in the Writing Center (highly recommended for anyone who is not a comfortable writer of standard scholarly English). There will be no extra credit granted for this class. You have to earn at least a “B” (an average of 80-89 points on all work) to gain graduate credit for the course. If you receive “C’s” in two graduate courses at West Georgia, you can be dropped from the M.A. program.

I. **Class Attendance and Participation** - 10% of the semester grade

Seminar meetings, by definition, involve mostly group discussions, so regular attendance and participation are especially important. I shall try to see to it that everyone has a chance to participate in class discussions and that no individuals dominate what is said, but I need your cooperation to do this. The discussions will be conducted on the assumption that everyone has read all of the reading assigned for that day. Ask any questions you have and say what you had trouble understanding, but always be prepared to present some kind of reaction to the reading. Any extra thoughts or questions that you do not have a chance to bring up in class can be written on the weekly reports.

Unexcused absences, lateness, or early departure will be penalized. If you have to miss a class, you must discuss with me whether it is excused (only for circumstances clearly beyond your control), arrange to get any handouts that are not available on-line, find out what was covered in class, check the website to learn what the new assignment involves, and make up any missed assignments. Do not come to class if you are truly ill and contagious, but you should do everything possible not to have to miss a class because of job or childcare responsibilities or medical appointments.

Part of the grade for this segment will be based on the punctuality of your work and your willingness to follow the directions. New assignment sheets, including what essays are available on-line or on electronic reserve, will be available on my website, at the latest by Monday
afternoon each week. If you have a special reason why any assignment needs to be late, be sure
to discuss with me whether the lateness will be excused. Please do not submit any written
material by email attachments unless given special permission to do so.

You are required to meet with me outside of class at least twice during the semester (at
least once before spring vacation and at least once after spring vacation), as well as whenever
else you feel the need. Too often instructors find out too late about problems that could have
been solved with earlier notification, so please let me know when you need help and when I have
not been clear enough.

II. Weekly Comment Sheets and Short Assignments - 10%

Each week, you are required to hand in an informal comment sheet, as well as mini-
reviews on each of the assigned readings for that day. There may be occasional short homework
or in-class assignments designed to help you develop the knowledge and skills necessary to do a
successful research project (and, if necessary, to make sure everyone is keeping up with the
reading). You are also expected to develop a glossary of terms in social history that are relatively
new for you to hand in at the end of the semester. All of this work will be marked “Satisfactory”
or “Try Again.”

A. Comment Sheets:

Each comment sheets should average about one page. They will not be graded individu-
ally, but the overall evaluation of them will be based on the thought and originality they show,
not for the degree of historical information they reflect or for the extent to which they indicate
that you do or do not agree with me. They are journal-style comments rather than essays and do
not have to be typed unless you have absolutely illegible handwriting. Each comment sheet
should include the following information and sometimes answer other questions that will be on
particular assignment sheets:

1. Any personal thoughts and/or questions you have about any of the reading you have
done and any of the issues we have covered in class discussions. This might include emotional
or intellectual reactions to some of the historical experiences, what you would like to say to a
particular historian that would not be appropriate in a book review, or any other thoughts you
have had about the history and historians.

2. Any thoughts, questions, or problems you have concerning the class and/or your
specific work.

3. Any suggestions you have for the class and/or any information about your life that you
think I should know.

The amount of material connected to each of these issues will probably vary from week to week,
but always consider whether you have anything to say in each category.

B. Mini-Reviews of Assigned Reading:

Each week you will hand in a one or two page mini-review of each of the assigned
readings. Those for books will probably include more information than those for articles. These
are meant to be a record of your reading that you might refer to for many years to come, so take
seriously the need to include all of the bibliographic information. They should not include any

direct quotes. Unless I have indicated otherwise on the assignment sheet, each of these should include the following information:

1. Any information you would need to refer to this work in a bibliography, footnote, or endnote (author’s name, title, city and name of publisher, publication date if a book, volume and date if in a journal, name and publication information for the full book if it is an essay or chapter, page numbers). Check Turabian’s guide for the proper format. If you are studying for a graduate degree in a field other than history, talk to me about the format you should use.

2. Summarize in your own words the question(s) covered in the article, chapter, or book and the main conclusions (thesis or theses) suggested by the author.

3. List the kinds of primary sources used by the author and evaluate briefly the strengths and weaknesses of both the choice and use of these sources.

4. Summarize your thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the work, including its contributions to the field of history in general and social history in particular.

5. List any terms from the reading that you plan to add to your glossary.

6. List any questions you have about the work or questions it inspired in you about the material it covered.

C. Glossary of Social History:

Throughout the semester, you are required to develop an alphabetical glossary of terms in social history (and sometimes specific historical phenomena or particular scholars) that you were not able to define when you began this class. Your definitions should be, as much as possible, in your own words. If you use someone else’s words, you need to include a note for it. (Otherwise, you might plagiarize it in something you write later.) If you wish, you may include short illustrative examples of the application of a term. I shall be bringing up certain terms for discussion each week and you should feel free to do the same. I may ask to see a draft of your glossary sometime during the semester, but you receive credit for it (without a formal grade) when you hand in your final version at the end of the semester.

III. Short Book Reviews - 30 % (10% each)

You will write critical book reviews of three or four pages (double-spaced, with an average font and one-inch margins) on three of the assigned books, following the standard guidelines for short book reviews in professional historical journals. I shall be handing out more specific directions for them. They are due on the day in which the class will be discussing the particular book. In each review, you should summarize briefly what the book covers; discuss the basic thesis or theses of the book, its main arguments, and the author’s choice and use of sources; and give any positive or negative criticisms you have of any aspects of the book. Be sure to cover in some way enough of the different sections of each work to convince me that you have read the entire book. You do not need to include endnotes for these essays but should indicate page numbers in parentheses for any specific quotes or segments of information. These essays should be typed but should not be in any kind of folder. You are required to do one review by February 18, one by April 7, and one by April 21.
IV. Individual Review Essay - 40%

On May 5, the last meeting of the class (the day set aside officially for a final exam), you will hand in a review essay of fifteen to eighteen pages (double-spaced, with an average font and one-inch margins), discussing and comparing at least three books and possibly one or more articles by at least three different authors, with all of the works relating in some way to a general topic of interest to you. If you are thinking about writing a thesis or a thesis/project, it is highly recommended that you choose a topic related to what you plan to research. This is not a standard historiographic essay, but you will need to consider what each author and work contributes to the field of social history. Part of the final grade for this will include the quality and timeliness of work you did for mini-reviews for each of the works (due at the very latest by February 25, March 10, and March 31), a class presentation on what you learned from the reading, a rough draft, and the final paper. I shall be handing out specific guidelines for all of this within the first few weeks of the semester, as well as assigning a model review essay in social history for everyone to read and discuss.

V. Essay about Social History - 10%

On May 5, you are required to hand in an essay of four to six pages about what you have learned about social history and what you think about the approach of some of its primary practitioners. I shall develop more specific guidelines for this by some point during the first few weeks of the semester.

VI. Academic Honesty

All assignments handed in at the University of West Georgia should reflect only the work of an individual student. This does not mean that students should not study together, only that each should work alone when doing the final version of an assignment. Any use or paraphrasing of the ideas, information, or words of anyone else without crediting them is plagiarism and is a crime. A direct quote of the words (even only a few words) of someone else must be in quotation marks as well as have a note of its source. Any clear evidence of plagiarism or any other kind of cheating on any assignment will (after consultation with the student) result in a permanent zero for that assignment. See the section on the Honor Code in the Catalog or Uncatalog.
THE SCHEDULE

The dates and the topics on this schedule are tentative. For most weeks, one or more specific essays available on-line will be assigned to supplement the required books; for a few weeks, all of the reading will be assigned essays. Although the content and the schedule may change somewhat according to the needs and interests of the members of the class and I reserve the right to add new written assignments if necessary to assure that everyone does the reading, the major deadlines may not be any earlier. Pay attention to new information about any of this on assignment sheets or in class announcements.

January 14 - Introductory Class
January 21 - KING HOLIDAY

There will be no class, but everyone must talk with me during the week.

1. January 28 - Approaches to Social History (including most of Rutman’s book)
   TENTATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR REVIEW ESSAY DUE
2. February 4 - Gender in the Early Chesapeake Colonies (including Brown’s book)
3. February 11 - Community Studies (including Faragher’s book)
4. February 18 - Native American Social History (including Perdue’s book)
   LAST DAY TO DO THE FIRST REVIEW OF AN ASSIGNED BOOK
5. February 25 - Race and Class in the Antebellum South (as covered in assigned relevant essays)
   MINI-REVIEW FOR FIRST BOOK IN THE REVIEW ESSAY DUE
6. March 3 - Class in the Nineteenth-Century North (including Blumin’s book)
7. March 10 - Family History (as covered in assigned relevant essays)
   MINI-REVIEW FOR SECOND BOOK IN THE REVIEW ESSAY DUE
March 17 - SPRING VACATION STARTS (no class)
8. March 24 - Urban Workers in the South (including Hunter’s book)
9. March 31 - Each student will assign and lead the discussion of an essay related to his or her review essay topic.
   MINI-REVIEW FOR THIRD BOOK IN THE REVIEW ESSAY DUE
10. April 7 - Textile Mill Communities (including Hall’s book)
    LAST DAY TO DO THE SECOND REVIEW OF AN ASSIGNED BOOK
11. April 14 - Internal Migration (including Gregory’s book)
    ROUGH DRAFT OF REVIEW ESSAY DUE
12. April 21 - Immigration to the United States (including Ngai’s book)
    LAST DAY TO DO THE THIRD REVIEW OF AN ASSIGNED BOOK
13. April 28 - Conclusions about social history
May 5 - Dinner together

REVIEW ESSAY AND ESSAY ON SOCIAL HISTORY DUE