

University of West Georgia
Department of History
Fall 2011

HIST 6684: Historiography

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Course Description:

History, it has been argued, is the art of interpretation. Scholars continually revisit issues of the past, bringing with them new approaches and new questions. If they did not, there would be no need to study the past—one book would suffice. “Historiography” refers to the various approaches and methods historians have taken to explore the past. Understanding these approaches and methods – their nature, application, strengths and weaknesses – is central to doing history as a professional.

This graduate seminar offers students an introduction to history as a professional discipline. Over the course of the semester, we will discuss the development of the historical profession in the United States and, in particular, a number of major approaches taken over the last generation of scholarship. The assignments in this class all ask you to analyze approaches and methodologies and to apply those analyses in a variety of ways.

Learning Outcomes:

Students who apply themselves successfully this semester will:

- demonstrate understanding of the professionalization of history as a discipline over the 1800s and 1900s.
- demonstrate mastery of a range of major approaches and methods and how to apply those approaches and methods to historical research.
- learn how to craft historiographical analyses.
- improve their skills at oral and written communication.

Required Texts:

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2007).

ISBN 978-0226823379

Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge University Press, 1988)

ISBN 978-0521357456

Charles Bolton and Scott P. Culclasure, eds., *The Confessions of Edward Isham: A Poor White Life of the Old South* (University of Georgia Press, 1998).

ISBN 978-0820329731

Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Beacon Press, 2001).

ISBN 978-0807050071

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage Books, 1995).

ISBN 978-0679752554

- John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme* (Penguin Books, 1983).
ISBN 978-0140048971
- Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Mariner Books, 2000).
ISBN 978-0395937587
- Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).
ISBN 978-0226871462
- Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
ISBN 978-0807858547
- Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford University Press, 2010).
ISBN 978-0195340846
- Immanuel Wallerstein, *World Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Duke University Press, 2004).
ISBN 978-0822334422
- William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Anchor Books, 1977).
ISBN 978-0385121224
- John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford University Press, 2004).
ISBN 978-0195171570

Note: A selection of articles and book excerpts may also be assigned.

Course Grades and Assignments:

Your final course grade will be factored as follows:

Participation	40%
Review of Reviews + Review	10%
Response Papers (2)	20% (10% each)
Historiography Paper Assignment	30%

This is a multi-part assignment, broken down as follows:

- Topic Proposal Essay (2 pages) 5%
- Comprehensive Bibliography 5%
- First Draft (no percent of grade, but if not done, you will receive a 0 for entire assignment)
- Presentation 5%
- Final Draft 15%

Detailed information regarding assignments will be provided in class; however, it is important to introduce each task here.

Being able to debate ideas and to defend your arguments is a central skill at the graduate level. Therefore, participation comprises 40 percent of your final grade. Every class, I expect you to have read the assigned works, and be ready to discuss their arguments and approaches, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Failure to be engaged actively in the class will negatively affect your grade.

Book reviews form a major resource in the historical profession. Most scholarly journals provide over half of their issues to reviews of recent works. In order to introduce you to this aspect of the field, the assignment asks you to gather all reviews you can find on JSTOR (available through the UWG Library database collection) on Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream*. After reading through them all, compose a 6 page essay (double-spaced, 12 pt font, regular margins) in which you review the reviews (what makes for a strong review and what does not) and then provide a brief review of your own. The review of reviews section should be about four pages long, your own review about two.

The two response papers ask you to consider the various approaches we will encounter during the semester. Though the books cover different topics, focus on their methods. I will provide the question to respond to about a week or two before the due date. Each response must come in the form of a 5 to 7-page essay (double-spaced, 12pt font, regular margins).

Central to your final grade is a 12 to 15-page historiographical analysis of a topic of your choice, composed in stages over the entire semester. The first and final drafts must be double-paced, 12pt font, with regular margins. Unlike a research paper, your essay will not study any primary sources rather it will explore how scholars have approached your topic. Questions you should consider include: what approaches and methods have been taken to your topic? What are their strengths and weaknesses? How has understanding of your topic changed over time? Avoid creating a series of miniature book reports. You will notice during the semester that almost all the books we read contain a section on historiography. That is because at the most basic level, historiographical analyses demonstrate mastery of the profession and its approaches. More importantly, these analyses help the author show the works significance and contribution to the larger field.

In the third week of the term, you will turn in a 2-page topic proposal, explaining the topic and its relevance to the historical discipline. On October 4, you will turn in a comprehensive bibliography, listing all relevant scholarly works on the topic, both books and journal articles. Make sure to avoid popular history books and magazines. Your first draft is due on November 1. It must analyze between 5 and 7 books and 3 to 5 articles drawn from the bibliography. These works must be among the most important on the topic. I will return the draft to you before Thanksgiving Break with comments. The week after Thanksgiving, we will devote class to presentations on your topics, using the session as a workshop. The final draft is due on December 6.

Course Policies:

It should go without saying that in a graduate class, I expect professionalism at all times. That includes: attendance at all class sessions; being prepared and engaged in class at all times; participating actively in all discussions; and, avoiding all instances of plagiarism—the use of someone else's words or ideas without proper citation. For any instance of plagiarism discovered, the same policy applies: failure for the course and the reporting of the incident to relevant authorities, including the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.

It should also go without saying that at the M.A. level, you should be using direct citations to support your arguments and following correct Chicago-style formatting. This is why I have assigned the Kate Turabian book.

Course Outline

August 23:

- Graduate Skills
• Discuss: Turabian

August 30:

- The History of Professional History, I
• Discuss: Novick, 1st half

September 06:

- The History of Professional History, II
• Discuss: Novick, 2nd half
• **Due: Historiography Paper – Topic Proposal Essay**

September 13:

- The Art of Interpretation
• Discuss: Bolton and Culclasure
• **Due: Review of Reviews + Review Assignment**

September 20:

- Social Power, I: Neo-Marxism
• Discuss: Rediker and Linebaugh

September 27:

- Social Power, II: The Post-Modern Critique
• Discuss: Foucault

October 04:

- The New Social and Military Histories
• Discuss: Keegan
• **Due: Historiography Paper – Comprehensive Bibliography**

October 11:

- The New Cultural History
• Discuss: Eksteins

October 18:

- Women and Gender
• Discuss: Walkowitz
• **Due: First Response Paper (on Rediker and Linebaugh, Foucault, Keegan, and Eksteins)**

October 25:

- Race and Slavery
• Discuss: Amussen

November 01:

The New Religious History

- Discuss: Williams

• **Due: Historiography Paper – First Draft**

November 08:

World History/ “Big History”

- Discuss: Wallerstein and McNeill (both books)

November 15:

What is History?

- Discuss: Gaddis

• **Due: Second Response Paper Assignment (on Walkowitz, Amussen, Williams, Wallerstein, and McNeill)**

November 22:

Thanksgiving Break – No Class

November 29:

Historiography Paper Presentations (on revised drafts)

December 06:

Historiography Papers Due