

History 347L (39630)  
M W 3:30-5 pm. GAR 0.132

Spring, 2011

Professor: Judith Coffin  
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### HIS 347L: SEMINAR IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

This seminar introduces you to a range of historical methods and topics, though with no claim to being comprehensive. The core of the course consists of sessions with different members of the History department faculty leading discussions about their areas of expertise. They will present examples of documents and sources that historians use, talk about problems of interpretation, and show how they generate questions for research. We will visit and work in some of the rich archival collections at the University.

The primary goal of the seminar is to launch all of you on your theses. That means exercises in writing and rewriting, (prepare yourselves), finding secondary materials, discovering and working with documents, and presenting your work to others. By the end of the semester, each of you will have come up with an advisor and a prospectus for the senior thesis you will write next year.

#### REQUIREMENTS:

**1) 40 %: preparation for and participation in each weekly seminar. This has two parts.**

a) Every session you will turn in a paragraph or two (no more than a page, single-spaced) responding to the reading. This writing need not be formal, but it must be grammatical. *If the reading is an article*, think about the author's questions, argument, and sources. Is the argument persuasive? Interesting? Why or why not? What do you think were the trickiest parts of the work – for the author? What questions does the work raise? *If the reading consists of documents*, think about their context, language, producer, and audience. (20%) You will also write a short 2-3 page paper on a document that you choose at one of the campus archives. That is due Friday, March 23.

b) You play a role in creating a high-quality discussion in which everyone participates. This does not mean long and sophisticated speech-making. It may be more appropriate to ask a simple question, or to try to sum up. Listen to your colleagues and respond to them. Learn from them.<sup>2</sup> If you feel you can't get a word in edgewise, and you have tried, please talk to me. (20%)

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<sup>1</sup> For useful tips on how to email, see:

<http://educationaladvocates.blogspot.com/2010/08/email-etiquette-what-students-need-to.html> or <http://www.101emailtippetips.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Here is an interesting essay by a columnist who, it turns out, was a history major.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/14/opinion/14brooks.html?ref=davidbrooks>

**2) 60%: a 12 -15 page prospectus.** A prospectus sets out a research project. You can think of it as a grant proposal. Your project should be interesting, imaginative, well thought out, and feasible. (!! I know, that's a tall order.) It should establish you as someone who has read and thought about the field. I have posted several examples from last year on Blackboard. Read them.

Here are the steps we will follow to the prospectus. Each is required, and each is graded.

- Come up three different topics. Write a sentence or two on each. Think of subjects that interest you, and think concretely about *how* to explore them. Be imaginative but don't worry – you may decide you don't like any of them. DUE FRIDAY, FEB 4, the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of class.
- Read books. Look for sources. Decide, in consultation with me, which of the topics is most feasible and interesting. Write a short (1-2 page) essay on your topic. What is the historical problem that your subject raises? Why is your topic significant? DUE MONDAY FEB 21, the 6<sup>th</sup> week of class.
- Find secondary sources (books and articles) on your topic and prepare a bibliography. See if you can find a review essay on your topic, or a closely related one. These help you find sources and figure out debates and conversations. Look at the important journals in your field. These include the *American Historical Review*, *Past and Present*, *Journal of American History*, *William and Mary Quarterly*, *Journal of Modern History*, *Slavic Review*, *Central European History*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Journal of African History*, *Latin American Research Review*, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, *Journal of Social History*, *Journal of Women's History*, *Signs*, *Representations*, *Speculum*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, *History and Theory* and many others. All of these journals publish both reviews of single books and “review essays.” DUE MONDAY MARCH 7, 8<sup>th</sup> week of class.
- Read those secondary sources! Write a 5 page “historiographical essay.” What has been written on your subject already? What questions have historians asked, and how have those questions changed over time? Have they used or discovered different sources, or have they approached the same sources with new questions? What debates have been important? You will probably want to discuss the books in chronological order; this will help you understand how the topic has changed over time. You must use proper (MLA or Chicago Manual of Style) footnotes (at the bottom of the page)<sup>3</sup> and provide a bibliography. DUE WED MARCH 30, 10<sup>th</sup> week of class.
- Write your prospectus, or research proposal. The prospect sets out your specific topic and how you will study it. Situate your topic in relationship to other work on the subject – in the historiography, in other words. Tell us what primary sources you will use and how you are going to approach them. Provide evidence that you have looked at those sources. (Photocopies are nice, but the point is to show that

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<sup>3</sup> You can find these formats on the web. Use any bibliography and footnoting program you like. I use Zotero, but that is not an endorsement. Noodle Bib is easy to use, but has limits. The library has classes on Endnote.

you have begun to think about what the sources will tell you, and their challenges.) You must use properly formatted footnotes and include a bibliography, with primary and secondary sources listed separately. You'll need to have a draft of this by the 13<sup>th</sup> week of class.

- Note! You will already have done some of this work. The proposal incorporates *revised versions* of the statement of your topic and the historiographical essay. The quality of those revisions counts in your grade.
- Present your proposal to the class. This presentation can be informal (don't read it out loud), but it needs to be good. You will get comments and questions from members of the class and from me. Presentations start the 13<sup>th</sup> week of class
- Deal with all the feedback. Revise your prospectus. It is impossible to separate form from content: clarity, logic, syntax, and grammar all matter in your grade. In fact, the University requires writing quality to matter in your grade. So go over the writing and the argument with a fine-toothed comb. Again, the quality of the revision counts.

Your final prospectus is due Saturday, May 14, and I will make you all brunch.

Note! Your prospectus is not binding; you will certainly change your topic as you do your research, and you may change it dramatically. Unexpected things happen. That is why it is important to do as much background work as possible now. I expect you to have read (we will talk about how to read quickly) at least **8-10 books, articles, and review essays**.

## **SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Many of the sessions are led by visiting members of the faculty, and they are providing the reading. I will make every effort to have that reading posted on our Blackboard site by Wednesday for the following Monday, and by Friday for the following Wednesday. Professors may add questions for you to think about. If they do, think and write about those rather than the default questions. So, please, *check your email through the address you gave to the University, and with which Blackboard works*.

**NO LAPTOPS IN THE CLASSROOM**, except when we are doing specific bibliographic essays. No texting either.

### **WEEK ONE (January 19)**

Wednesday: Introductions

**WEEK TWO (Jan 24 & 26)**

- Monday: Theodore Roosevelt, "History as Literature," American Historical Association Address, 1912  
[http://www.historians.org/info/aha\\_history/troosevelt.htm](http://www.historians.org/info/aha_history/troosevelt.htm)  
Carl Becker, "Everyman his own historian," AHA Address, 1931  
[http://www.historians.org/info/AHA\\_history/clbecker.htm](http://www.historians.org/info/AHA_history/clbecker.htm) (Published in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2. (Jan., 1932): 221-236)
- Wednesday: Judith Coffin, "Sex, Love, and Letters: Writing Simone de Beauvoir, 1949-1963," *AHR* (October, 2010) Find the AHR online. If you get stuck, the article is also on Blackboard.  
Jill Lepore, "How to write a paper for this course," *Historically Speaking*, Vol. 1, No. 11 (Jan., 2010) Blackboard

**WEEK THREE (Jan 31 and Feb 2)**

- Monday: faculty visitor: Professor H.W. Brands. Reading: "The Murder of Jim Fisk for the Love of Josie Mansfield," which Professor Brands will give me to post the week before our session.
- Wednesday: faculty visitor: Professor Wm. Roger Louis. How to begin a research project. Reading TBD by Professor Louis.

**\*\*Please send me three possible thesis topics by Friday Feb 4. \*\***

**WEEK FOUR (Feb 7 and 9)**

- Monday: faculty visitor: Professor Brian Levack. Demonic possession and the supernatural in early modern Europe. Reading tbd by Professor Levack.
- Wednesday: faculty visitor: Professor William Forbath, UT School of Law. Reading tbd.

Consult with me about your topics

**WEEK FIVE (Feb 14 and 16)**

- Monday: faculty visitor: Professor Jacqueline Jones. Reading tbd.
- Wednesday: faculty visitor: Assistant Professor Ben Brower, *A Desert Named Peace*. Chapters tbd.

Consult with me about your topics

**WEEK SIX (Feb 21 and 23)**

Monday: “The Confessions Of Nat Turner, The Leader Of The Late Insurrection In South Hampton, Va. (1831) ‘ <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/turner/turner.html>

\*\*\* Short essay on your topic due Monday Feb 21\*\*

Wednesday: faculty visitor: Professor James Sidbury. Reading: Ranajit Guha, “The Prose of Counter-Insurgency,” in Nicholas Dirks, et. al., *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 336-371.

**WEEK SEVEN (Feb 28 and Mar 2): finding sources, building bibliographies**

Monday: joint meeting with Professor Philippa Levine’s HIS 362G. That class meets in WAG 214. She will be talking about sources in British history, but she will stay afterwards with us to discuss other sources. So please leave your schedules open until 5.30 or 6.

For this class and the next, work on your own bibliographies, which are due Monday, March 7.

Wednesday: bibliographic work on your own topics.

**WEEK EIGHT (March 7 and 9): Archives**

Monday: Ransom Center. The HRC requires you to register and to see an introductory video. Please do this *before* our session starts at 3:30. You can do it on an earlier day, if that’s easier. I will be there at 3 pm.

\*\*\*Preliminary bibliography and revised statement of your topic due Monday, Mar 7\*\*\*

Wed: Center for American History. The CAH does not require you to register, but it is near the LBJ library, and a hike. If you want to walk over with me, meet at our regular classroom at 3 pm

→Your assignment, due Friday March 23, is to write a short (2-3 page) paper on a document – any document, at the Ransom Center, CAH, or Benson.

**SPRING BREAK**

Do at least a little reading over Spring Break.

**WEEK NINE (March 21 and 23)**

Monday: brief class discussion of document papers, which are due Friday. Work at the archive you have chosen.

Wednesday:

Work on your historiographical essays. Consult with me if you need to.

**\*\*short document papers due Friday March 23 \*\***

**WEEK TEN (March 28 and 30) Writing**

Monday: class discussion of historiographical essays.

Wednesday: **\*\*historiographical essays due\*\***

**WEEK ELEVEN (April 4 and 6) More writing**

Monday: What is a prospectus? Class discussion. Read the prospectuses I have posted on Blackboard.

Wednesday: work on your prospectus: find sources

**WEEK TWELVE (April 11 and 13) Yet more writing**

Monday: What makes a good honors thesis? Read one or two theses. Posted on Blackboard.

Wednesday: work on your prospectus

**WEEK THIRTEEN (April 18 and 20) Presentations and editing**

Monday: presentations and critique

Wednesday: presentations and critique

**WEEK FOURTEEN (April 25 and 27)**

Monday: presentations and critique

Wednesday: presentations and critique

**WEEK FIFTEEN (May 2 and 4)**

Monday: presentations and critique

Wednesday: presentations and critique – and course evaluations