

Historical Methods, Archives, and Interpretations
HS100.293

Monday, Wednesday 12:00-1:15
Gilman 119

Classroom:

Dr Pawel Maciejko

Office Hours: by appointment

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TA: Nick McKenna

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Description

This course offers a survey of historical methods and approaches from antiquity to the present. We will begin by asking, “What is history?” and unpack foundational concepts such as “fact,” “event,” “source,” “narrative,” and “evidence.” We will consider whether history can teach lessons for the future—or whether it offers any lessons at all. The course will also examine the interplay between history and collective memory and explore the various social, political, and psychological uses—and misuses—of historical writing.

Requirements and Expectations

The readings are available on eReserves (accessible through Canvas). **The only reading not included there is Marc Bloch’s *The Historian’s Craft*, for which I ask you to obtain a copy.**

This seminar emphasizes discussion and active participation, grounded in students’ close analysis of the assigned texts. The readings—listed below in the order of our sessions—should be completed by the date under which they appear.

In order for us to have the intense, exciting give-and-take that a class like this both allows and deserves, we need to engage actively with each other and with our shared texts. **I will ask you to put away laptops, phones, and other multi-use screens for the duration of each class.** Fountain pens are not, strictly speaking, required—but are highly recommended.

The materials are often dense and demand careful, repeated reading. I strongly encourage you to annotate the texts: you are expected to look up unfamiliar technical terms, names, and references, and to highlight contradictions, assumptions, or interpretive problems.

Please print and bring all readings to class. Since electronics are not permitted in the classroom, you should either print the assigned texts or acquire hard copies of the books from which they are drawn. I realize that printing involves financial costs. In some cases, it may be more economical to purchase a used printer. Many of the books on the syllabus are available second-hand for just a few dollars—likely cheaper than printing the longer selections.

Grade Summary/Assignments

The final decision on any grade derives from my holistic assessment of your work and effort. Thus, it cannot be quantified exactly. Roughly speaking, however, the breakdown is as follows:

1. Participation: (20%)

- a. Students must attend all seminars. Absences under emergency circumstances will be excused and should be discussed with the TA.
- b. **Each week, one or two students will take minutes of that week’s sessions.** We will begin the following session with a reading of the previous day’s minutes. These minutes will also be posted on Canvas for everyone’s edification. The teaching assistant will upload a sign-up sheet before the first day of class for you all to select the week in which you want to scribe.

2. History Seminar/Lecture Review (25%)

The History Department regularly holds lectures and seminars discussing the works of historians. Attend an event sponsored by the History Department and

write a report of your visit. Your report will summarize the scholar's arguments and reflect your thoughts on the scholarly debates by assessing the questions and comments of seminar attendees.

Examples of history seminars include, but are not limited to, the Monday Seminar, Black World Seminar, The Stulman Lecture. **(500-750 words)**. If you need direction on which seminar to attend, speak with the TA.

Due one week after the event. Upload to Canvas by 11:59PM

3. Assessing Historical Sources (25%)

Choose two (2) sources of your own and write a how-to-guide for undergraduate history majors explaining how historians find, select, evaluate, and use sources.

What are some limitations of sources and how do historians navigate them? **(1500 words)** Due October 20 Upload to Canvas by 11:59PM

4. Approaches to History Reflection (30%)

Imagine you are moderating a dialogue between two or more of the historians listed in any one of the following units: **2, 3, 4, or 5**. Using at least one additional text published by your chosen historian, closely examining their focus, organization, evidence, and conclusions, what can you say about how each historian approaches the study of the past? What questions and assumptions guide their research? How do they defend their claim? What sources do they use? How do the approaches of these two scholars differ? What questions or critiques do (would) they have for each other and how do (would) they respond to critiques? **(3000 words)** Due on the Wednesday two weeks after the completion of the latest unit you select. Upload to Canvas by 11:59PM

Weekly Schedule

Please note: the syllabus is a map, not the territory. Assigned readings may change as the course progresses, so please pay close attention to class announcements.

Unit 0: Welcome, Introductions

Monday, August. 25 Marc Bloch, *The Historians Craft: Reflections on the Nature and Uses of History and the Techniques and Methods of Those Who Write it*, trans. Pater Putnam (New York: Vintage Books, 1964).

Wednesday, August 27

Max Weber, "Science as Vocation," in *The Vocation Lectures*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone, eds. David Owen and Tracy Strong (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), 1-31.

Unit 1: Foundations

- Monday, Sept. 8** Herodotus, *The Histories*, eds. Robin Waterfield and Carolyn Dewald (Oxford: Oxford Scholarly Editions, 1998), Book 1, chapters 1-24, 55-130; Book 2, chapters 1-98.
- Wednesday, Sept. 10** Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Steven Lattimore (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 1998). Book I, chapters 126-46; Book II, chapters 34-70; Book V, chapters 84-116; Book VI, chapters 89-105; Book VIII chapters 45-60.
- Monday, Sept. 15** Augustine, *The City of God*, Book I, Chapters 1, 9; Book II, Chapters 4, 7-8, 20-21; Book V, Chapter 14; Book XI, Chapters 1-2, 13, 33.
- Wednesday, Sept. 17** Anna Komena, *The Alexiad*, tr. Edgar Robert Ashton Sewter revised by Peter Frankopan (London: Penguin, 2009), Preface, Book II, V-VI, VIII
- Monday Sept. 22** Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. David Womersley, New York Penguin Books 1994, Chapter 15.
- Wednesday, Sept. 24** Jacob Burckhardt, *Reflections on History*, trans. M.D.H (London, Allen & Unwin, 1950), 15-32, 172-203.

Unit 2: Political Economy and Anthropology

- Monday, Sept. 29** Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, Chapters I-II, IV, VII.
- Wednesday, Oct 01** E.P. Thompson, "Preface," and "Exploitation," in *The Making of the English Working Class*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964, 1963), 10-14, 149-166.
E.P. Thompson, "London," in *Witness against the Beast William Blake and the Moral Law*, (New York: The New Press, 1993), 174-194
- Monday, Oct 6** Claude Levi-Strauss, "Part IX: The Return" in *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Russell (New York: Criterion Books: 1961).
- AL Kroeber, "An Anthropologist Looks at History" and "History and Anthropology in the Study of Civilizations," in *An Anthropologist Looks at History*, (Berkely: University of California Press, 1963)

Wednesday, Oct. 8 Clifford Geertz, "Chapter 1: Thick Description, Chapter 15: Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

Unit 3: The Annales, histoire des mentalités, Microhistory

Monday, Oct. 13 Fernand Braudel, "The Mediterranean as a Physical Unit: Climate and History", in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* Vol. I, 231-272; "Civilizations" in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol II, 757-835.

Wednesday, Oct. 15 Jacques Le Goff, "Preface," "Merchant's Time and Church's Time in the Middle Ages," "The Historian and the Ordinary Men," in *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, (Chicago and London, 1980), vii-xvi, 29-42, 225-236

Monday, Oct. 20 Giovanni Levi "On Microhistory", in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 97-120.

Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or three things I know about that," trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993): 10-35.

Wednesday, Oct. 22 Carlo Ginzburg, "Our Words and Theirs, Reflections on the Historian's Craft, Today," in *Historical Knowledge: In Quest of Theory, Method and Evidence*, eds. Susanna Fellman, and Marjatta Rahikainen (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 97-119.

Robert Darnton "Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Séverin," in *The Great Cat Massacre*, (New York: Basic Books, 1984, 2009), 75-104.

Unit 4: Historical Sociology and Begriffsgeschichte

Monday, Oct. 27 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), 13-78.

Assessing Historical Sources Assignment Due

Wednesday, Oct. 29 Reinhart Koselleck, "Begriffsgeschichte and Social History," in *Futures Past*, (New York, 2004), 75-92.

Idem, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two Historical Categories," in *Futures Past*.

- Monday, Nov 3** Norbert Elias, "Introduction", "The Development of the Antithesis between Kultur and Zivilisation," "The History of the Concept of Civilité," "On Behaviour at Table," "On Blowing One's Nose," "On Behaviour in the Bedroom," in *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigation, Revised edition* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000)

Unit 5: History of Ideas

- Wednesday, Nov. 5** Arthur Lovejoy, "The Study of the History of Ideas," in *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Harper & Brothers, 1936), 3–23.

- Monday, Nov. 10** Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton University Press, 1988), 29–67.

Daniel Wickberg, "What is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New," *American Historical Review* (June 2007).

Unit 6: Popular Culture, Semiology

- Wednesday, Nov. 12** Peter Burke, "Part I: in Search of Popular Culture," in *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 1–87.

- Monday, Nov. 17** Uspenskij, B. A.; Ivanov, V. V.; Toporov, V. N.; Pjatigorskij, A. M.; Lotman, Ju. M.. "Theses on the semiotic study of cultures (as applied to Slavic texts)" In: Jan van der; Grygar, Mojmír (Eds.), *Structure of Texts and Semiotics of Culture*. The Hague, Paris: Mouton 1973, 1–28.

Juri Lotman, "On the Semiosphere," trans. Wilma Clark, *Sign System Studies*, 33.1 (2005): 205–229.

Wednesday, Nov. 19 Vladimir Toporov, “Translation: Sub Specie of Culture”, *Meta* 37 (1) (1992), 29-49.

Juri Lotman, “The Problem of the Historical Fact” and “Historical Laws and the Structure of the Text,” *The Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1990), 217-244.

Unit 6: Connected Histories, History of Books, History of Science

Monday, Nov. 24 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to be Alien: Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World*, (Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures), Waltham (Mass.): Brandeis University Press, 2011, 20-96.

Wednesday, Nov. 26 Walter Ong, “Orality and Literacy: Writing Restructures Consciousness,” in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds., *The Book History Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 134-46.

Robert Darnton, “What is the History of Books?” in Finkelstein and McCleery, *Book History Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9-26.

Monday, Dec. 1 Thomas, Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: 50th Anniversary Edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1-34, 52-76, 111-142.

Wednesday, Dec. 3 Hayden White, “Part One - The Received Tradition: The Enlightenment and the Problem of Historical Consciousness,” in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 45 – 134.