

Seminar in American and African-American History

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510:573:01

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Course Description: This course will focus on historical writing and research. Graduate students working in the field of African American history, on issues of American race relations, and/or on issues of American social movements are encouraged to take this course. We will start with Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* to introduce the subject and strategies of writing, and as a way to understand some of the unconscious issues involved in the process. We will unpack the issue of writer's block; study how to balance research and writing; explore different note-taking and organization techniques. We will deconstruct published articles as a way of highlighting different techniques, and as a way of exploring what makes for a good and/or great article. We will read Heather Williams's *Help Me to Find My People* and *Self-Taught*, because though written by the same person these short books represent radically different approaches to historical writing. Finally, students will learn by doing as they research and write their own original article, historiographic essay, or dissertation proposal that will be lovingly critiqued in class and presented at an historical conference.

Books (Please purchase on your own):

Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1994)

Heather Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005)

Heather Williams, *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012)

Articles (Sakai):

Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance" in *Unequal Sisters*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990) 292-297.

William Jordan, "'The Damnable Dilemma': African-American Accommodation and Protest during World War I," *JAH* (March 1995) 1562-1583.

Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *JAH* (June 1993) 75-112.

Suzanne Lebsock, "Free Black Women and the Question of Matriarchy: Petersburg, Virginia, 1784-1820" in *Black Women in United States History*, ed. by Darlene Clark Hine, et. al., vol. 3, (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing Co. 1990) 847-868.

Nell Irvin Painter, "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," in Linda Kerber et al. eds, *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1995) 125-146.

Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *Journal of American History* 97(3) December 2010, 703-734.

Thomas Sugrue, "Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964," *Journal of American History* 82(2) September 1995, 551-578.

Mary L. Duziak, "Brown as a Cold War Case," *Journal of American History* 91(1) June 2004, 32-42.

Class Schedule:

January 22: Introduction to the Class. Discussion of Lamott's *Bird by Bird*.

January 29: Read the first four articles (Hine, Jordan, Kelly, Lebsock) and analyze for technique, tone and writing. **Post a one page summary of your research paper. Include the topic and approach you intend to take. It's okay if this is tentative.** We will discuss these in class.

February 5: **Research – Class will not meet;** work on your papers; Think about a book/article that you like for its organization, writing, argument and overall presentation; one you like as a model for your first book/article. Read Williams's *Self-Taught*. Pay attention to method; presentation of research; organization and tone. (Will be discussed on February 12 along with assignment for that day)

February 12: Read last four articles (Painter, Thompson, Sugrue, Duziak). These are perceived as classic articles, why? Read Heather Williams's *Help Me To Find My People*, analyze for writing and organization; contrast to *Self Taught*. **Post a bibliographic essay summarizing the sources you intend to use and why.**

February 19: Research – Class will not meet but I am available for individual discussion of your projects.

February 26: Post your introduction on morning of February 22nd. Class discussion of intro's. Class discussion of favorite books.

March 5: Either research or continuation of discussion of intros.

March 12: Spring Break

March 19: Research - Class will not meet; I am available for individual discussion of your projects.

March 26: Research – Class will not meet; I am available for individual discussion of your projects.

April 2 (March 29): Post first draft of your paper on the morning of the 29th. Come to class prepared to discuss papers on the 2nd.

April 9: Research or discussion of drafts

April 16: Post second draft of your paper on the morning of the 12th. Come to class prepared to discuss papers on the 16th.

April 23: Same as above if necessary.

April 30: Discussion of the “process” with a return to Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*