History 510: 557
Problems And Directed Readings in American History II
Professor Jackson Lears
31 Mine St., Wednesdays, 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Office Hours: 1-3 p.m. Wednesday and by appointment

This course introduces main currents and important controversies in the recent historiography of the United States in the nineteenth century. It is designed to speed your preparation for qualifying exams, to enrich your sense of materials you will teach in the U.S. history survey, and to help you articulate the ways your dissertations will pose and answer questions that have engaged historians. We will read a few classic texts and several recent monographs—most of them revised dissertations. All of the books listed here appear (or will soon appear) on the Master List of reading for the comprehensive examination. Not all have to read in their entirety; parts of some can be skimmed for their argument; and others (I trust) can be savored for their writing as well as their interpretation. I have also included some articles assessing a “state of the field” or probing a new patch of real estate (e.g. the relation between slavery and capitalism.) There is a lot of reading here, and I will happily suggest short-cuts as we go forward, particular with respect to the books.

Of course the literature is vast and the “coverage” model is necessarily incomplete. We will try to uncover insights as well as cover interpretations and information. While the syllabus aims to be reasonably comprehensive, it inevitably reflects my own beliefs about what constitute the major themes of nineteenth century U.S. History. So the reading list embodies the common assumption that sectional tensions over slavery and the subsequent Civil War lie at the core of our concerns, but it also embodies the less common assumption that those conflicts were part of a broader history of capitalism—a history historians are only beginning to address explicitly.

Your written and spoken work, I hope, will also expand the reach of the course. Each week one student will be in charge of coming up with discussion questions and circulating them on Sakai the night before class, and another student will present a short (5 pp.) report that extends a major theme raised by the reading (e.g. the market revolution, the construction of collective memory, etc.) beyond what’s listed on the syllabus. The final assignment is a historiographical essay (3000 words) that either deepens the exploration of the questions raised by the report, or embarks (with my advice and consent) in a new direction altogether.

Articles are available on the course Sakai site. The following books are required and are available online:

Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: the First Generation of Americans*
Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: a New History of the American West*
Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: the Beginnings of the Bible Belt*
Jeffrey Sklansky, *Sovereign of the Market: the Money Question in Early America*
Seth Rockman, *Scrapping By: Wage Labor, Slavery and Survival in Early Baltimore*
Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*
Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: the Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America*
David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, America Before the Civil War, 1848-1861*
Edward Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: the Civil War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863*
Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*
Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*
David Blight, *Race and Reunion: the Civil War in American Memory*
Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*
Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of The American Bourgeoisie*
Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision*
Richard White, *Railroaded: the Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*
Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: the Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*

Schedule of meetings and topics:

**January 17**  Paradigms Lost
Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893).

**January 24**  New Americans
Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution*

**January 31**  No Class (rescheduled for May 2)

**February 7**  Westward the Course of Empire
Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*

**February 14**  The Icy Waters of Egotistical Calculation
Seth Rockman, *Scraping By*
February 21  The Making of an Evangelical Ethos

Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross*
Elizabeth Clark, “The Sacred Rights of the Weak”: Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America,” *JAH*, 1995
Mary Kelley, “Reading Women/Women Reading: The Making of Learned Women in Antebellum America,” *JAH* (September 1996 )

February 28  Slavery and Capitalism

Bonnie Martin, “Neighbor to Neighbor Capitalism: Local Credit Networks and the Mortgaging of Slaves,” in *Slavery’s Capitalism*, pp. 107-121.

March 7  The Road to Disunion

David Potter, *The Impending Crisis*

March 21  The Civil War as Ideology and Experience

Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*
Edward Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*

March 28  Nothing But Freedom

Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*
Stephen Hahn, *A Nation Under our Feet*, selections
Elliott West, “Reconstructing Race,” *Western Historical Quarterly* (Spring 2003).
April 4  Manufacturing Collective Memory
David Blight, *Race and Reunion*

April 11  The Creation of a National Ruling Class
Sven Beckert, *Monied Metropolis*

April 18  Capitalism as a Way of Life
Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune*, selections
Jean-Christophe Agnew, “Afterword: Anonymous History” in *ibid.*

April 25  Westward the Course of Empire, Revisited
Richard White, *Railroaded*
Sarah Keyes, “‘Like a Roaring Lion’: The Overland Trail as a Sonic Conquest,” JAH (June 2009).

May 2  Toward the Twentieth Century
Jeffrey Sklansky, *Sovereign of the Market*, Part Three and Conclusion
Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision*, selections
Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*