

SEMINAR IN AMERICAN HISTORY
History 510:571
SPRING 2018
TUESDAYS, 4:30 – 7:30 pm, Van Dyck 308
Professor Dorothy Sue Cobble
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Course Description

This course considers diverse perspectives on the researching and writing of American history. Its aim is to enable students to make substantial progress on an original research project in American history. We begin by discussing the texts inspiring our research and the new turns in historical scholarship we see as promising. Subsequent class sessions alternate between consideration of either student work-in-progress or essays by prominent scholars that illuminate the work of historical analysis, interpretation, and narrative. Students are expected to complete a range of research and writing assignments, culminating in a final project. For the final project, students may choose to focus on writing a research paper suitable for presentation at an academic conference, an article for submission to a scholarly journal, or a draft dissertation proposal. Students interested in any era or topic in U.S. history, including transnational or global projects involving the United States, are welcome.

Course Requirements

Class Participation and Presentations (40). Includes reading and commenting in class on the assigned articles and the writing of other seminar participants. Includes the presentation of one's final paper and other assigned presentations.

Writing Assignments (60). All the writing assignments below are required; only the review essay (15); the revised draft (15) and the final paper (30) will be graded. Grades will be lowered on assignments not submitted on time. All assignments should be submitted on-line.

1. One-page preliminary statement of proposed project. Due Jan 21.
2. Initial bibliography (any length) of key secondary sources. Due Jan 28.
3. A review essay of 4-6 pages on 2-3 key secondary sources related to your project. Due Feb 18 (15% of grade).
4. Revised project proposal including primary sources. Due Feb 25.
5. Introduction and outline of paper. Due March 11.
6. First draft of paper. Due March 25.
7. Revised draft of paper. Due April 8 (15% of grade).
8. Final paper of 25-35 pages plus bibliography. Due in May at end of term. (40% of grade).

Assigned Reading: Articles and book chapters are available online. There are no assigned books.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 16) INTRODUCTIONS

Assignment due January 21: A one-page preliminary statement of your proposed project. Should include your research topic, why you chose it, and the approach you intend to take.

Week 2 (January 23) INSPIRATIONS AND ASPIRATIONS

Reading:

*E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), 9-14.

*Dan Rodgers, "American Exceptionalism Revisited," *Raritan* (Fall 2004), 21-47.

*Sarah Leonard and Nancy Fraser, "Capitalism's Crisis of Care," Fall 2016 *Dissent*. <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/nancy-fraser-interview-capitalism-crisis-of-care>.

In-class presentations: Come prepared to discuss your project and offer comments on the projects of others; come prepared to discuss 1 or 2 books or articles pivotal in inspiring your project.

Assignment due January 28: Initial Bibliography of Key Secondary Sources (any length).

Week 3 (January 30) EMERGING SCHOLARLY FIELDS

Reading:

*Dan Rodgers, "Cultures in Motion: An Introduction," in *Cultures in Motion*, eds. Daniel T. Rodgers, Bhavani Raman, and Helmut Reimitz (Princeton UP, 2014), 1-19.

*J. Bradford DeLong, Heather Boushey, and Marshall Steinbaum, "Capital in the Twenty-First Century, Three Years Later," and Thomas Piketty, "Toward Reconciliation Between Economics and the Social Sciences," in *After Piketty: The Agenda for Economics and Inequality*, eds. Boushey, DeLong, and Steinbaum (Harvard UP, 2017), 1-24, 543-565 plus notes on 567-568, 657-659.

*Paul S. Sutter, "The World With Us: The State of American Environmental History," *Journal of American History* 100 (June 2013), 94-120.

*TBA

In-class presentations: Come prepared to discuss your bibliography and offer comments on the bibliography of others; come prepared to recommend a review

essay you would like the class to read to help them situate your project in the relevant debates in your field.

Week 4 (February 6) THE REVIEW ESSAY AND SITUATING YOUR RESEARCH IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHIC CONVERSATION

Reading:

*Megan Threlkeld, "Twenty years of *Worlds of Women*: Leila Rupp's impact on the history of U.S. women's internationalism," *History Compass* (2017), 1-13.

*Sean Wilentz, "The Left vs. the Liberals," review of Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed A Nation* (2011) in *NYRB*, Aug 16, 2012 <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/aug/16/left-vs-liberals/>. and Kazin letter, "The Left vs. the Liberals," and reply by Wilentz, Sept 27, 2012.

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/sep/27/left-vs-liberals/>

*Review Essays Recommended by the Class

In-class presentations: Come prepared to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a key secondary text in your bibliography and place it within the historiographical debates in your field.

Week 5 (February 13) NO CLASS MEETING

Assignment due February 18: A 4-6 page review essay of 2-3 key secondary texts related to your project. Be sure to situate the texts in the relevant scholarly debates.

Week 6 (February 20) PRIMARY SOURCES

Reading:

*Marisa J. Fuentes, 'Power and Historical Figuring: Rachael Pringle Polgreen's Troubled Archive,' *Gender and History* 22 (November 2010), 564–584.

*Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Power in the Story," from *Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 1-30.

In-class presentations: Be prepared to discuss the process you are using in locating and organizing primary documents and the interpretive challenges you face with particular kinds of sources (letters, autobiographies, novels, court files, speeches, photographs, oral history, material culture, newspapers). Bring a primary source for class interpretation.

Assignment due February 25: A revised proposal, including your thesis or argument, its scholarly significance, and the key primary and secondary sources you are using (3-4 pages plus bibliography of any length).

Week 7 (February 27) NARRATIVE AND ANALYSIS

Reading:

*William H. McNeill, "Mythhistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians," *American Historical Review* 91, 1 (February 1986), 1-10.

*Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past and Present* 85 (November 1979), 3-24.

*David Armitage and Jo Guldi, "The Return of the Longue Durée: An Anglo-Atlantic Perspective," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 69 (2014).

Week 8 (March 6) DISCUSSION OF REVISED PROPOSALS

In-class presentations: Discuss evolution of your own proposal; read the proposals of others and offer comments.

Assignment due March 11: Introduction (2-5 pages) to your final paper plus one-page outline of paper due.

Week 9 (March 11-March 19) Spring Break

Week 10 (March 20) WRITING AND EDITING

Reading:

*George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," in *In Front of Your Nose, 1945-1950, The Collected Essays* (1968), 127-140.

In-class presentation: Come prepared to talk about how you wrote your introduction, the writing styles you admire, your writing processes and strategies.

Assignment due March 25: First draft of paper (15-30 pages). (At least 15 pages of writing plus outline of the rest is OK).

Week 11 (March 27) ROADBLOCKS, RETHINKING, REVISING

In-class presentations: Discuss your first draft and what revisions are needed (10 minutes max); read the first drafts of other participants and prepare comments on each (5 minutes max)

Week 12 (April 3) NO CLASS MEETING

Assignment due April 8: Revised full draft of paper (25-30 pages of text plus footnotes).

Weeks 13 and 14 (April 10, 17) DISCUSSION OF REVISED DRAFTS

In-class presentations: Come prepared to present your paper (10 minutes max); read revised drafts of all participants and prepare **short written** and oral comments on each paper (5 minutes max).

Week 15 (April 24) LOOKING AHEAD**Reading:**

*C. Wright Mills, "On Intellectual Craftsmanship," in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), 195-226.

Final Projects Due Week of May 7.

Revised 10 January 2018