

CH 601: Introduction to Contemporary History

Fall 2008

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Office Hours: M&W 10-11 a.m.

Description

This seminar's purpose is to introduce beginning graduate students to important (if not paradigmatic) methodological, and analytical / interpretive trends in twentieth-century historiography. ('Historiography' is at once written history and the history of written history.) How have historians gone about their craft? What epistemologies have framed their approaches? Is 'objective history' possible? What is Marxist historiography? What is post-structuralism? What is hermeneutics? What is the not-so-new New Cultural History? What is Subaltern Studies? Our seminar will explore these and other important questions related to historical inquiry and interpretation to prepare students for the remaining CH seminars and subsequent graduate work in history and/or related disciplines. Be aware that our seminar will focus primarily on historiographical concerns, employing works of historical scholarship along the way. The course's main essay assignment—due during finals week—will focus on contemporary history as well as historiography. Moreover, our seminar will embrace a transnational historiographical and historical perspective.

Outcome

Upon completing this seminar, you will have the necessary tools to: 1) Recognize and debate influential perspectives and problems in the 'making of history' in the twentieth century; 2) Think historically, critically, analytically, and theoretically; and 3) Compose a clear, concise, and intellectually robust historiographical essay.

Expectations / Requirements

Seminar participants are expected to engage the readings thoroughly and critically, prepare short written responses to the readings, present and discuss the readings, and submit a final historiographical essay. (Keep in mind that CH 601 is a colloquium and *not* a research seminar intended to produce a paper or papers based on archival documentation, newspaper research, oral history, and so forth.) One or more seminar participants will open our weekly meetings with brief reviews of the readings and will offer questions to stimulate discussion. A schedule will be created during our first meeting. Overall, the seminar's ultimate success or failure depends on the participation of its students. Navigating the choppy waters of historiography requires enthusiasm and effort. It may also require some gentle prodding.

Readings

The books listed below, except those by Marx, are available at Follett's bookstore on Court Street. Marx's books are in the 'Course Documents' folder on the course's Blackboard web site. The journal articles also are in that folder, while the book chapters have been photocopied and are available to you (at no cost) at the Contemporary History Institute in Brown House.

Lambert (ed.), Making History: An Introduction to the History and Practices of a Discipline.

Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

Thompson, The Essential E.P. Thompson.

Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.

Hunt (ed.), The New Cultural History.

Scott, Gender and the Politics of History.

Mallon, Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru.

Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.

Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto.

De Leon, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire,' Editorial in The People (New York), Sept. 12, 1897.

Gadamer, 'The Discrediting of Prejudice by the Enlightenment' in The Hermeneutics Reader (London: CIPG, 1988).

Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,' in The Interpretation of Cultures.

Giddens, 'Hermeneutics and Social Theory' in Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory (Berkeley: UC Press, 1982).

Haber, 'Anything Goes: Mexico's 'New Cultural History',' HAHR 79:2 (1999).

Habermas, 'On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality' in The Hermeneutics Reader (London: CIPG, 1988).

Hawley, 'Antonio Gramsci's Marxism: Class, State, and Work,' Social Problems 27:5 (1980).

Hobsbawm, 'Asking the Big Questions. History: A New Age of Reason,' Le Monde diplomatique (Dec. 2004).
Lilla, 'Michel Foucault,' in The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals and Politics (New York: NY Review of Books, 2001).
Mallon, 'The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies,' American Historical Review 99:5 (1994).
Megill, 'The Reception of Foucault by Historians,' Journal of the History of Ideas 48:1 (1987).
Knight, 'Subalterns, Signifiers, and Statistics: Perspectives on Mexican Historiography,' LARR 37:3 (2002).
Patterson, 'Post-Structuralism, Post-Modernism: Implications for Historians,' Social History 14:1 (1989)
Stern, 'Hermeneutics and Intellectual History,' Journal of the History of Ideas 46:2 (1985).
Tompkins, 'A Short Course in Post-Structuralism,' College English 50:7 (1988).
Vaughan, 'Cultural Approaches to Peasant Politics in the Mexican Revolution,' HAHR 79:2 (1999).

Written Work

Participants will prepare weekly 'Responses' or 'Reactions' to the readings, each no less than 500 words (approximately two double-spaced pages, 12-point Times New Roman font). The 'Responses' should take the form of abbreviated book reviews like those in professional journals, including the American Historical Review. The readings should be summarized and subjected to critical analysis. Do not mistakenly equate weekly 'Responses' and seminar *participation*, the latter of which entails the verbal exchange of ideas during our weekly meetings. Seminar students also will compose a final historiographical essay due during finals week. That essay—some 15 pages in length—will *examine two books of your choice or one book and four journal articles on some aspect of contemporary (twentieth-century) history*. The essay must be anchored in our seminar's foci as well as in your personal thematic, national/regional, and temporal interests. Please note: With the professor's consent, any participant may select such readings from reading lists in other courses in which the participant is enrolled as long as those readings are not the subjects of historiographical essays in those courses. More specific information on the historiographical essay is forthcoming.

Grading

Participation will constitute 30% of the course grade, 'Response' papers 30%, and the final historiographical essay 40%. Late 'Response' papers will not be accepted. Any tardy final essay will incur a penalty of 20% per day.

Plagiarism

Any academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Students found to be plagiarizing and/or cheating in any way, shape, or form will, without exception, receive a failing grade in the course and may be referred to the administration for formal proceedings. For a detailed description of plagiarism, consult: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>.

Special Needs

Any student with special learning needs should consult with the professor during the first week of the quarter and should provide the professor official documentation from the appropriate University office.

Civility

The professor expects that seminar participants will treat each other with respect, just as they will respect the professor. Our hours together pass quickly, so the professor asks that students be punctual. Also, cell phones must be silenced. Mutual respect between the professor and his/her students is a vital element of any seminar.

Schedule

Sept. 11	<i>Introduction</i>	
Sept. 18	<i>History and Historiography</i>	Lambert, <u>Making History</u> .
Sept. 25	<i>Marx and Materialism, I</i>	Marx and Engles, <u>The Communist Manifesto</u> . De Leon, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire.' Marx, <u>The Eighteenth Brumaire</u> .
Oct. 2	<i>Marx and Materialism, II</i>	Hobsbawm, <u>Primitive Rebels</u> .
Oct. 9	<i>A New Marxist Historiography</i>	Thompson, <u>The Essential E.P. Thompson</u> (selections).
Oct. 16	<i>Post-Structuralism and Hermeneutics</i>	Tompkins, 'A Short Course in Post-Structuralism.' Patterson, 'Post-Structuralism, Post-Modernism.' Lilla, 'Michel Foucault.' Megill, 'The Reception of Foucault by Historians.' Geertz, 'Thick Description...' Giddens, 'Hermeneutics and Social Theory.' Stern, 'Hermeneutics and Intellectual History.' Gadamer, 'The Discrediting of Prejudice by the Enlightenment.' Habermas, 'On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality.' Hobsbawm, 'Asking the Big Questions.'
Oct. 23	<i>Deconstructing Foucault</i>	Foucault, <u>Discipline and Punish</u> .
Oct. 30	<i>Gender/Language/History</i>	Scott, <u>Gender and the Politics of History</u> .
Nov. 6	<i>The 'New Cultural History' and the Rise of Subaltern Studies</i>	Hunt, <u>The New Cultural History</u> (selections). Hawley, 'Antonio Gramsci's Marxism.' Mallon, 'The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies.' Vaughan, 'Cultural Approaches to Peasant Politics...' Haber, 'Anything Goes.' Knight, 'Subalterns, Signifiers, and Statistics.'
Nov. 13	<i>The 'New Cultural History,' Peasant Politics, Peasant Agency</i>	Mallon, <u>Peasant and Nation</u> .
Nov. 18	<i>Historiographical Essay Due</i>	435 Bentley Annex, 3 p.m.

This syllabus is subject to change.