

**HI 200 B1: The Historian's Craft**  
Spring 2017  
HIS 304 (Department of History)  
Fridays, 11:15 am-2:00 pm

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11:30 am-1 pm, Thursdays, 3:30-5 pm, and by appointment

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**Course Description:** This course introduces students to historical methods and to ways of thinking about history. In particular, we will focus on the craft of history writing: how historians ask historical questions, gather and use evidence, make arguments, and tell stories. Course readings will range across American history, covering topics from the colonial period through the mid-twentieth century, as we consider the following questions: How are histories constructed and reconstructed? What do historians think that history represents? Why do historical controversies emerge and how are they resolved, if ever? As part of this course, we will read works of history that reflect different approaches to historical writing and learn to write history with clarity, rigor, and precision. Students will also gain firsthand archival experience by working with primary sources drawn from the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

**Course Organization/Requirements:** This course requires a good deal of reading and writing along with your active participation in class discussions. For each class, you should arrive prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Since this course is a seminar, class meetings will focus heavily on in-class discussions of assigned readings while occasionally introducing additional primary and secondary sources.

Specific course requirements are as follows:

- 5 Reading Responses
- Oral History Project
- Research Paper
- Attendance and active participation in class discussions

Further details about each of these requirements will be provided in class.

**Required Books:** The following books are available at the Barnes and Noble in Kenmore Square:

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*  
James E. Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro*  
Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*

Jill Lepore, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*

Mary Lynn Rampolla. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*

Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*

All other readings will be available on the course Blackboard site (see below). You will always be expected to bring a copy of the reading materials to class on the day on which they are due.

You will also need to view the film *Selma* (2014), which can be rented from amazon.com or iTunes.

**Grade Breakdown:** Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Reading Responses: 20%

Oral History Project: 25%

Research Paper: 35%

Class participation: 20%

**Grading Scale:**

A = 93-100                      B- = 80-82

A- = 90-92                      C+ = 77-79

B+ = 87-89                      C = 73-76

B = 83-86                      C- = 70-72

**Blackboard:** Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, readings, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard page at: [learn.bu.edu](http://learn.bu.edu)

You will have a personal Blackboard folder where you will submit completed assignments.

**Email Policy:** I welcome your email communications. Please allow up to 48 hours for a response. I do not discuss grades over email, so if you wish to discuss the grade you received on a particular assignment, please schedule a time to meet with me.

**Laptop Policy:** During class, you may use your laptop to take notes or to consult readings. Any other uses of your laptop are not permitted. If you use your laptop for purposes other than taking notes or referring to readings, you will no longer be allowed to use your laptop during class.

**Cell Phone Policy:** Cell phones are not allowed during class. If you use your cell phone during class, it will lower your class participation grade.

**Late Assignments:** Graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class, which will be reflected in your class participation grade.

**Attendance Policy:** Your regular attendance and participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates' learning. Missing more than one class will lower your final

grade. Missing more than three classes (three weeks) may lead to a failing grade in the course. Note that these absences need not be consecutive. If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g., varsity athletics, religious observances), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester.

**Formatting for Papers:** All assignments must be word-processed and adhere to the Chicago style guidelines. Assignments should be submitted as Microsoft Word files and formatted in the following way: double spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins.

In addition to submitting hard copies of assignments, you are required to submit all completed assignments electronically by uploading the files to your personal Blackboard folder.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the passing off of another's words or ideas as your own, and it is a serious academic offense. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in the College of Arts and Science Academic Conduct Code. All students are subject to the CAS code, which can be read online at:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

Penalties for plagiarism can range from failing an assignment or course to suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please speak with me.

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### Class Schedule

*Please note: Readings followed by an asterisk (\*) are available on our course Blackboard website. All readings and films should be completed or watched in advance of the class for which they are assigned.*

F 1/20 Course Introduction: Historians and History Writing  
Distribute Reading Response Assignment

Readings:

1. E.H. Carr, "The Historian and His Facts"\*
2. Jill Lepore, "After the Fact," *The New Yorker*, March 21, 2016\*

F 1/27 Personal History  
Distribute Oral History Project Assignment

Readings:

1. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*, Introduction, Chapters 1-3, Epilogue
2. Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Chapter 1

**Deadline: Reading Response Due for Ulrich**

F 2/3 Historical Controversies I: Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings

Readings:

1. Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, Introduction, Chapters 3-7

**Deadline: Reading Response Due for Gordon-Reed**

F 2/10 Oral History

Readings:

1. Studs Terkel, *Hard Times*, pp. 3-117 (available online through Mugar Library)
2. Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Chapter 2

**Deadline: Reading Response Due for Terkel**

F 2/17 Environmental History

Readings:

1. Richard White, *The Organic Machine* (all)
2. Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Chapter 3

**Deadline: Reading Response Due for White**

F 2/24 Conceptions of History Writing

Readings:

1. John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, Chapters 1-5, 8 (available online through Mugar Library)
2. Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Chapter 4

**Deadline: Draft of Oral History Project Due**

F 3/3 Oral History Project Presentations

**Deadline: Oral History Project Due**

*Spring Break: 3/4-3/12*

F 3/10 No Class—Spring Break

F 3/17 Writing a Research Paper

Distribute Research Paper Assignment

Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center Orientation

Readings:

1. Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Chapters 5-6
2. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Introduction, Chapters 2, 6-9

F 3/24 Historical Controversies II: The Holocaust

Readings:

1. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Epilogue, Appendix 1
2. Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men*, Chapters 1, 5-9, 16-18, Afterword\*

**Deadline: Reading Response Due for Goldhagen/Browning**

F 3/31 No class-Independent Meetings to Discuss Research Projects

Readings:

1. Jill Lepore, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, Chapters 1-12

**Deadline: Prospectus Due—Bring Your Prospectus to Research Paper Meeting**

F 4/7 Histories of Popular Culture

Readings:

1. Lepore, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, Chapters 13-30

**Deadline: Reading Response Due for Lepore**

F 4/14 History and Narrative

Readings:

1. Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro*, Chapters 1-30 (Parts I and II)

**Deadline: Reading Response Due for Goodman**

F 4/21 History Through Film / Research Paper Workshop

Readings:

1. Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Chapter 7 (skim)

Film:

1. *Selma* (2014)

**Deadline: Draft of Research Paper Due**

F 4/28 Research Project Presentations/Course Wrap-Up

**Deadline: Research Paper Due**