

HI 200: The Historian's Craft
Professor James Johnson
Fall, 2017

Office: Department of History, Rm. 403

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 4-5 p.m.; Tuesdays, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.; and by appointment

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Faculty-in-Residence Open Hours. I am a faculty member in residence at South Campus. Once a week I host an open house, with music, good conversation, and something tasty to eat. I hope you'll drop by. Wednesdays, 6-9 p.m., 522 Park Drive, Rm. 121.

The Historian's Craft explores a variety of approaches to history through a series of groundbreaking books. Coupled with discussions of these works of scholarship are week-by-week considerations of more abstract questions such as *What is history?* *What is a historical fact?* and *What is historical objectivity?* Over the course of the semester, you will write regular summaries of the books as well as historical works of your own based upon oral, archival, and scholarly sources.

Final Grades reflect a combination of written work, presentations, special projects, and class participation, based on the following proportions:

Two-page papers	30%	Transcription	10%
Oral History Project	20%	Research Essay	30%
		Presentations and Participation	10%

Classes are conducted as a seminar, with active participation expected from all students. When readings are assigned from E. H. Carr's *What is History?*, you will be asked to review your reading notes, and two or three will be called upon to summarize three important points from the reading.

For all other books, you will submit a two-page summary (single-spaced) of the reading on the final day of each book's discussion, which will be given two grades on a ten-point scale according to the following criteria: 1) as an accurate and comprehensive summary of the book's content and fair rendering of the historian's approach, sources, and interpretation; and 2) for clarity of expression (organization, grammar, spelling, etc.). Together these writing assignments will account for 30% of the grade. Late papers will not be accepted.

You will complete three larger assignments in the course: an oral history project, a transcription project, and a final essay based on original archival research at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Oral history project

You will select an event that occurred before your own lifetime and interview five individuals who were in some way affected by it (no more than two may be relatives). You will write a historical essay at least 7 pages long that uses the words of those interviewed to explore the event in its larger context and significance. You are to incorporate relevant material from two published, scholarly works of history, which will be used as guides in preparing this essay. Brief descriptions of the topic will be presented to the class on September 19, and oral presentations on the finished essay (due October 17) will take place on October 24, 26, 31, November 2, and 7.

Transcription Project

Students will come to class on Oct. 19 having selected three letters to transcribe, totaling at least seven manuscript pages, from a letter-writer in Civil War collection scanned and posted on the Massachusetts Historical Society's website (<http://www.masshist.org/online/civilwar/index.php>). The letters should be from an early, middle, and late date among those posted online. Completed transcriptions, with spellings and punctuation recorded exactly as found in the original, are due in class October 31. A one-page, single-spaced summary of the letters that also briefly describes its author and reports on what the letters reveal about him is due the same day.

Research Project

Students will write a 10-12 page paper on a single box drawn from the Massachusetts Historical Society's Civil War archives. Students will receive these assignments on our October 17 visit to the MHS and begin independent work in the reading room there, which will include gaining a thorough understanding of the contents of the box, learning as much as possible about the life of their author(s), and, with the use of secondary sources, deciding how best to place the material in its historical context. Project descriptions of fifteen minutes from each student will be given in class November 28-December 12.

Academic Conduct

All work you submit in this course must be your own. Presenting the work of someone else as your own is plagiarism, and it will be punished by an F for the assignment and possibly for the course, with possible further sanctions by the University Academic Conduct Committee. The Boston University *Academic Conduct Code* describes a plagiarist as "the student or scholar who leads readers to believe that what they are reading is the original work of the writer when it is not." Plagiarism includes copying the work of others, restating the work of others without citing the source, and collaborating with others without acknowledging their contribution. A detailed discussion with examples appears in the *Arts and Sciences Academic Conduct Code* (<http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/#Plagiarism>). It is your responsibility to read these pages carefully and know exactly what constitutes plagiarism.

All websites consulted for use in written work must be acknowledged in your papers. Unacknowledged use of material from the internet will be considered plagiarism and punished as such.

With the exception of October 19, when you will need your computers, laptops are not permitted in class. Please do not use any other electronic devices during class.

Required Texts

E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Vintage)
 Studs Terkel, *Hard Times* (The New Press)
 Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary* (Vintage)
 Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard)
 William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (Hill and Wang)
 Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (Vintage)
 Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men* (Harper Perennial)

Schedule of Classes

September 5 - Introduction to the class

September 7 - E. H. Carr, "The Historian and His Facts," from *What is History?* (1961) (3-35); Studs Terkel, *Hard Times* (1970) (any 50 pages, interrupted or contiguous; note which pages you read)

September 12 - Terkel, *Hard Times* (any additional 50 pages, interrupted or contiguous; note which pages you read) - Two-page essay due

September 14 - Carr, "Society and the Individual," from *What is History?* (36-69); Laura Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale* (1990) (1-35)

September 19 - Brief descriptions of oral history topic. Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale* (36-71, 309-45)

September 21 - Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale* (any additional chapter) - Two-page essay due

September 26 - Visit to the Massachusetts Historical Society (We will gather in front of the History Department, 226 Bay State Road, at 3:30 and leave promptly)

September 28 - Carr, "History, Science, and Morality" (70-112); Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983) (1-61)

October 3 - Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (62-125) - Two-page essay due

October 5 - Carr, "Causation in History" (113-43); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War* (1998) (ix-xxiii, 3-68)

October 12 - Lepore, *The Name of War* (71-121, 173-90) - Two-page essay due

October 17 - Visit to the MHS - We will gather in front of the History Department (226 Bay State Road) at 3:30 and leave promptly. Oral history essay due (7 pages minimum)

October 19 - In-class transcription work

October 24 - Oral history presentations

October 26 - Oral history presentations

October 31 - Oral history presentations - Transcriptions and one-page summary due

November 2 - Oral history presentations

November 7 - Oral history presentations

November 9 - Carr, "History as Progress" (144-76); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land* (1983) (3-81) - One-page overview of MHS box due

November 14 - Cronon, *Changes in the Land* (108-26, 159-70) Two-page essay due

November 16 - Carr, "The Widening Horizon" (177-209); Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men* (1992) (1-77)

November 21 - Browning, *Ordinary Men* (133-89) - Two-page essay due

November 28 - MHS project presentations

November 30 - MHS project presentations

December 5 - MHS project presentations

December 7 - MHS project presentations

December 12 - MHS project presentations

December 19 - Final Paper due at noon (226 Bay State Road, Rm. 403)