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Seminar: Tues. 12:30-3:15
Rm: HIS 304
Office Hours:
Tues. 11-12
Thurs 2-4

GRS857: Methods in American Cultural History

This seminar focuses on a variety of methods cultural historians employ to research and write their histories. Rather than undertaking a chronological and comprehensive survey of the literature of American cultural history, our focus will be on theoretical approaches (including from other fields such as anthropology, geography, and sociology) and their practical applications for historians. How does one go about recovering the mental stuff of past societies and to what ends? The primary goal of the course is to make its participants more intelligent readers of cultural history, and to make those who write in the field more skilled, creative, and reflective practitioners of it. The hope is that even those who consider themselves other kinds of historians—political, economic, etc.—may find new tools for their tool kits.

Copies of all the readings have been placed on reserve at Mugar. Finances permitting, it is advisable to buy volumes that will be useful to you as references in years to come.

Assignments:

1. Two short presentations (one reporting on a classic and the other presenting on research resources)
2. Reading responses (1-2 pgs) for 5 weeks, due by 11 a.m on the day of class in question
3. “Ing” paper on a historical practice (15-20 pgs): two substantial rounds of drafting.

All written work should be submitted to Professor Blower’s mailbox on the third floor of 226 Bay State Road.

Your grade will be based on the overall quality of your written work as well as your contribution to class discussion. Auditors for credit need not complete the writing assignments (though they may in whole or in part), but they should participate in the life of the seminar.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Tues., Sept. 4: **Introduction**

Daniel T. Rodgers, "Thinking in Verbs," *Intellectual History Newsletter* 18 (1996): 21-3

Approaches to Studying Cultural History

Tues., Sept. 11: **Thick Description and Cultural Opacity**

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description" and "Ideology as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973)

Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (1984), intro and ch. 2

Michael Braddick, "The Politics of Gesture," *Past & Present* (Supplement 4, 2009): 9-35

Kenneth Greenberg, "The Nose, the Lie, and the Duel in the Antebellum South," *AHR* 95.1 (Feb. 1990)

RESOURCE PRESENTATION: A/V resources

IN CLASS SOURCES: Charlie Chaplin sings in *Modern Times* (1936)

A. A. Allen televangelizing in the 1960s

Rock concert footage in Boston (1970)

Tues., Sept. 18: **Paradigms and Discourses**

Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), chs. 1- first paragraph of ch. 10

Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths* (1987), preface

Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization* (1995), ch. 1

Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Age of Fracture* (2011), ch. 2

RESOURCE PRESENTATION: dictionaries

IN CLASS SOURCES: The Port Huron Statement (1962)

1960s *Playboy* cartoons

Tues., Sept. 25: **Playing with Scales**

Richard Brown, "Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23.1 (Spring 2003): 1-20

Matti Peltonen, "Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research," *History & Theory* 40 (Oct. 2001): 347-59

Ian Tyrrell, "Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice," *Journal of Global History*, 3 (November 2009), pp. 453-474

Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris and Jacques Revel. "Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History," *International History Review* 33.4 (Dec. 2011), 573-84.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale* (1991), intro and chapter 2.

Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations* (2006), chapter 2.

RESOURCE PRESENTATION: periodicals

IN CLASS SOURCES: newspaper front pages

Ellis Island oral histories

Tues., Oct. 2: **Thinking with Things**

CLASSIC PRESENTATION: Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things* (1986)

Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daedalus* 109.1 (Winter 1980): 121-136.

Michael Zakim, "Sartorial Ideologies: From Homespun to Ready-Made," *AHR* 106.5 (Dec. 2001): 1553-86

Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing* (1989), Part II: intro and ch. 2, Part III: intro and ch. 5

Kristen Hoganson, "Buying Into Empire," in Alfred McCoy, ed., *Colonial Crucible* (2009)

William Rankin, "The Geography of Radionavigation and the Politics of Intangible Artifacts," *Technology and Culture* 55.3 (July 2014): 622-674

IN CLASS SOURCES: souvenirs

Tues., Oct. 4: **Emotions and Feeling**

CLASSIC PRESENTATION: Peter Gay, *Freud for Historians* (1985)

Joanna Bourke, "Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History," *History Workshop Journal* 55 (2003): 111-33.

Christina Kotchemidova, "From Good Cheer to 'Drive-By Smiling': A Social History of Cheerfulness," *Journal of Social History* 39.1 (Fall 2005): 5-37

Susan J. Matt, "You Can't Go Home Again: Homesickness and Nostalgia in U.S. History," *Journal of American History* 94.2 (September 2007): 469-97

Dawn Keetley, "From Anger to Jealousy: Explaining Domestic Homicide in Antebellum America," *Journal of Social History*, 42.2 (Winter 2008): 269-97

Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And Is that What Makes Them Have a History)?" *History and Theory* 51 (May 2012): 193-220

IN CLASS SOURCES: portraits

Tues., Oct. 9: **No class** proposal due by 2 pm to Prof. Blower's mailbox

Tues., Oct. 16: **Proposal workshops**

Tues., Oct. 23: **Class Cancelled**

Cultural Practices in Historical Context

Tues., Oct. 30: **Trading**

Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart* (1988), 17-40

Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (2008), chs. 2-4

Jonathan Levy, “Contemplating Delivery: Futures Trading and the Problem of Commodity Exchange in the United States, 1875-1905,” *AHR* 111.2 (April 2006): 307-335

William Leach, *Land of Desire* (1993), intro., chs. 1-3

RESOURCE PRESENTATION: maps, etc.

IN CLASS SOURCES: 20th century American art and photography

Tues., Nov. 6: **Knowing**

James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (1998), introduction and part I

Ian Hacking, “Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers,” *Humanities in Society* 5, no. 3&4 (1982): 279-295

Dan Bouk, *How Our Days Became Numbered* (2015), preface + chapter 5

Nick Cullather, “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” *AHR* 112.2 (April 2007): 337-64

RESOURCE PRESENTATION: government documents

IN CLASS SOURCE: State Department decimal filing system guide

World War I food posters

Tues., Nov. 13: **Mapping**

CLASSIC PRESENTATION: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974)

Richard White, "What is Spatial History?"
<https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29>

Philip J. Ethington, "Placing the Past: 'Groundwork' for a Spatial Theory of History," *Rethinking History* 11.4 (Dec 2007): 465-93

Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (2011), ch. 4

Ruth Oldenziel, "Islands: The United States as a Networked Empire," in Gabrielle Hecht, ed., *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technologies in the Global Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011), 13–41

Andrew Friedman, *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* (2013), chs 1-2

IN CLASS SOURCES: GIS: slave trade in two minutes

Mapping Occupation (Union troops in the South)

Isao Hashimoto, "1945-1998"

Tues., Nov. 20: **Identifying**

Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society*, 29 (2000): 1-47.

Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally* (2009), chs. 4 and 5

George Chauncey, *Gay New York* (1994), chs. 4 and 7

Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America* (2010), intro., chs. 2, 4, 9-10

IN CLASS SOURCES: Chicago Vice Commission report (1911)

American novels: character sketches

Musical performances

Tues., Nov 27: **Othering**

CLASSIC PRESENTATION: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1979)

Andrew Rotter, "Saidism without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History," *AHR* 105.4 (Oct. 2000): 1205-17.

Karen O. Kupperman, *Indians and English* (2000), introduction, chs. 5-7

Susan Carruthers, "Latrines as the Measure of Men: American Soldiers and the Politics of Disgust in Occupied Europe and Asia," *Diplomatic History* 42.1 (January 2018): 109-137.

Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism* (2003), intro and ch. 5

IN CLASS SOURCE: Julian Ralph travel writings

Rudyard Kipling on Chicago

Tues., Dec. 4: **Performing**

CLASSIC PRESENTATION: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990)

Erving Goffman, "Communication Out of Character," in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959)

Peter Burke, "Performing History: The Importance of Occasions," *Rethinking History* 9.1 (March 2005): 35-52

Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul* (1999), introduction and chs. 3-6

David Scobey, "Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York," *Social History* 17 (1992): 203-227

IN CLASS SOURCES: William B. Huie, "The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi," *Look* (1956)

Scene from *Some Like It Hot* (1959)

Tues., Dec. 11: **Writing Workshop**

Fri., Dec. 14: Final paper due, by 2pm to Prof. Blower's mailbox