

## History 200: The Historian's Craft

**Spring, 2017**

**Class: Wednesday, 2:30-5:15**

**Room HIS 504**

**Office Hours: Wednesday, 12:30-2:15,**

**Room 402, or by appointment**

**Professor Louis Ferleger**

**Department of History**

**226 Bay State Road**

**Office Phone: 353-8311;**

**email: [ferleger@bu.edu](mailto:ferleger@bu.edu)**

**Course Requirements:** The class will meet once a week. In the seminar you will be analyzing and critically reviewing various books to define and explore the craft of the historian. These include: the nature of the sources presented, the scale of analysis (e.g., local or regional, national or global, oral or biographical), narrative devices for exploring a topic, the case study approach, schools of history, statistics, economics and history, etc. The purpose of this seminar is to examine and explore the craft of the historian. It differs from other courses in history: it is less concerned with studying the events and processes of the past than with examining how historians practice their arts of description, research, and analysis. Through a sequence of written assignments, oral presentations, class exercises and other activities we will develop reading strategies for primary sources and historical scholarship, build up research skills to develop questions and find materials, and cultivate writing and presentation capabilities as historians. .

Attendance and participation in discussions are vital and students should come to class having done the reading, prepared to raise questions about it and to offer your own interpretations of the issues at hand. In many ways the course is a forum for your views and whether they are expressed verbally or in writing, clarity, coherence and respect for your peers are necessary.

Each week, two members of the seminar will take responsibility for leading discussion during the class. **Each seminar leader will prepare a 3-6 pages double-spaced (normal spacing and fonts) critical review of the required reading (all papers must be turned in or emailed to me 24 hours before class begins, no later than Monday at 12:30).** The critical review should include a description of the research and the evidence used to support the arguments/theories as well as an analysis of the research methodology and approach of the author. **Other class members are required to turn in a weekly paper (2-3 pages double-spaced—normal spacing and fonts) that critically reviews the reading. This paper may be turned in at the beginning of class or emailed to me before class.** The shorter review should define the thesis or argument, and then offers a brief evaluation of the book's strengths and weaknesses. In the final paper (**10-12 pages double-spaced, normal fonts**), you will critically evaluate the assigned readings in the course and write about the distinctions, differences, similarities in approaches, arguments, frameworks, etc. among the books.

An important part of the learning experience in the course is practicing skills of expository writing. Make sure your papers are printed neatly and double-spaced (normal

spacing and fonts). Keep a second copy of the paper for security. Make certain that you do not commit the crime of plagiarism (**you should not read history book reviews of the assigned readings; there is a computer program available that can identify plagiarized phrases and sentences from published book reviews. In addition, I have read every review published of each book and will recognize if you have plagiarized**). If you do not understand the rules, ask for advice.

Your final grade will be based on 1) classroom participation, attendance, presentations, and weekly papers (60%) and 2) final paper (40%).

**Required Books:**

(Available in BU Bookstore)

George Huppert, *After the Black Death: A Social History of Early Modern Europe* (Indiana University Press, 1986)

Stephen Kalberg (ed.) Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism with Other Writings on the Rise of the West*, 4th edition (Oxford University Press, 2008)

Patrick M. Malone, *Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians* (John Hopkins University Press, 1991)

Robert C. McMath, *American Populism: A Social History: 1877-1898* (Hill and Wang, 1994)

Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games* (The Modern Library, 2009)

Michael Crichton, *The Rising Sun*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (Oxford University Press, 1986)

Richard White, *The Organic Machine: the Remaking of the Columbia River* (Hill and Wang, 1995)

Donald Yerxa, editor, *Recent Themes on Historians and the Public* (University of South Carolina Press, 2008)

## **Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:**

September 5: Introduction—Historian's Craft

September 12:

Reading: Patrick M. Malone, *Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians*

September 19:

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

October 3:

Reading: Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*

October 10:

Reading: Robert C. McMath: *American Populism: A Social History: 1877-1898*

October 24: Reading: Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games*

October 31:

Reading: Donald Yerxa, editor, *Recent Themes on Historians and the Public*

November 7:

Reading: George Huppert, *After The Black Death: A Social History of Early Modern Europe*

November 14: Discussion-Historical methods

November 21: Reading: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

December 5: Discussion-Historical Methods

December 12: **Final Paper Due**

**Presentations:**

**September 12:**

Reading: Patrick M. Malone, *Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians*

**Presenters:** 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_

**September 19:**

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

**Presenters:** 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_

**October 3:**

Reading: Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*

**Presenters:** 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_ 3)\_\_\_\_\_

**October 10:**

Reading: Robert C. McMath: *American Populism: A Social History: 1877-1898*

**Presenters:** 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_

**October 24:**

Reading: Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games*

**Presenters:** 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_

**October 31:**

Reading: Donald Yerxa, editor, *Recent Themes on Historians and the Public*

**Presenters:** 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_

**November 7:** Reading: George Huppert, *After The Black Death: A Social History of Early Modern Europe*

**Presenters:** 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_

**November 21:** Reading: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

**Presenters:** 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_ 3)\_\_\_\_\_

**May 1: Final Paper Due**

