History 200
The Historian’s Craft

Spring, 2012
Class: Tuesday, 3:00-6:00
Room HIS 304
Office Hours: Tuesday, 11-12:00; 2-3:00,
Room 302, or by appointment

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Course Requirements: The class will meet once a week for three hours.
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.

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 3 o’clock). 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, plus CD), 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 avoid reading 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)


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

Michael Crichton, *The Rising Sun*

Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*


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

**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:**

January 17: Introduction—The Craft of the Historian

January 24:
  Reading: Patrick M. Malone, *Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians*

January 31:
  Reading: Robert C. McMath: *American Populism: A Social History: 1877-1898*

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

Reading: Michael Crichton, *The Rising Sun*; Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

February 14:

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

February 28:

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

March 6:

Discussion—historical methods

March 20:

Reading: Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games*

March 27:

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

April 3:

Discussion: historical methods

April 10:

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

April 17:

Reading: handouts of selected articles

April 24:

Discussion: historical methods

May 1: **Final Paper Due**