

HI 850  
Spring 2015  
HIS, Rm. 304  
M, 12-3

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Hours: M, 3-4:30  
W, 11-12:30

## **Introduction to American Historiography**

This seminar introduces graduate students to the historiography of American history in the United States from its pre-professional founding in the nineteenth century to the present. We will evaluate “classic” texts as artifacts of their time but also as contributions to the development of a tradition of historical writing and provocations to consider the value and limitations of contemporary scholarship. “New Directions” is a selection of new approaches that seem to promise openings to the advancement of historical scholarship in the future.

The agenda of each seminar will be as follows. In the first part, a student will give an oral presentation on one “presentation” book listed for that week. In the second part we will discuss the two articles required for that week. The last part of the seminar will be devoted to a discussion of that week’s required book.

### **SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Discussions, Presentation, and Book Evaluation**

**Discussion:** Seminar members should be prepared to discuss the required reading. Since much of what we learn will depend on the exchange of ideas in class, an important part of the grade will depend on the quantity and quality of oral contributions.

**Book Evaluations:** To help organize and focus one’s thoughts about the reading, each week students will submit short (2-page) responses to the central book, which will be due in class on the day it is discussed. The paper should provide a fair statement of the book’s primary themes and arguments as well as a brief evaluation of how well the historian establishes them.

**Presentations:** Usually at each class one student will turn in a 5-6 page paper on a “Presentation” book for that week, indicating its main themes, arguments, and methods and an appraisal of how well the author succeeds in mobilizing them as well as a brief indication of how they can be connected with the required book assigned to the class. On the same day the student will also give an oral report/critique of approximately fifteen minutes based on his/her paper. On the day of the student’s presentation, he/she is excused from turning in the short response paper for that week.

## Historiographic Paper

An 18-20-page essay on the historiography of United States history based on the course's readings and discussions will be due at the end of the semester. Which historians, movements, themes, arguments, and methods to emphasize is up to each student, but one might find it helpful to consult "state of the field" essays that appear in journals such as the *Journal of American History*, *Reviews in American History*, and *Modern Intellectual History*.

GRADE BREAKDOWN: Discussion 40%, Response and Presentation Paper and Report 30%, Historiographic Paper 30%

READINGS: Books that are required are available at BU's Barnes and Noble bookstore or may be ordered from various online book sellers. Many may be accessed in digitalized form at Mugar's e-books or e-reserve sites. Articles from journals are on J-Stor.

ETIQUETTE: To preserve a classroom atmosphere conducive to collective learning, turn off cell phones and use laptop computers sparingly and only for taking notes on the discussion. Laptop use should not interfere with your ability to interact with the instructor and other students.

PLAGIARISM: Read the Academic Conduct Code to understand the college policy on plagiarism. All cases of its suspected perpetration will be referred to the Dean's Office. If found guilty, a student will receive the maximum punishment allowed at the university.

## TOPICS AND READING SCHEDULE

Jan. 26 **American Historiography: States of the Field**

Feb. 2 **Snow Day**

Feb. 9 **Objectivity and Professionalization: A Modern "Crisis"?**

Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession* (1988)

"AHA Forum: Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the Future of the Historical Profession*," *American Historical Review*, 96 (June 1991), 675-708

*Presentation*: John Higham, *History: Professional Scholarship in America*, updated edition (1989); or William Palmer, *From Gentleman's Club to Professional Body: The Evolution of the History Department in the United States, 1940-1980* (2008)

Feb. 16 **President's Day**

Feb. 17 **The Progressive Historians and Social Conflict**

Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, vol. 2: *1800-1860, The Romantic Revolution in America* (1927), Vol. 2

Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893), in David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds., *The American Intellectual Tradition*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (2011), Vol. 2, 60-68

*Presentation:* Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913); or Carl Becker, *Everyone His Own Historian* (1935)

Feb. 23 **The "Consensus School" and Historical Critique**

Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1948)

John Higham, "Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic," *American Historical Review*, 67 (Apr. 1962), 609-625

*Presentation:* Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (1953); or Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (1955)

Mar 2 **Intellectual History: From Ideas to Discourse**

Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, vol. 2: *From Colony to Province* (1953)

Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Reflections on the History of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 2 (Jan. 1940): 3-23

David A. Hollinger, "Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals," in Hollinger's *In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas* (1985), 130-51, 210-15

*Presentation:* Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917* (1959); or David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Early New England* (1989)

Mar. 7-15 **Spring Recess**

Mar. 16 **History and American Studies**

Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964)

- Bruce Kuklick, "Myth and Symbol in American Studies," *American Quarterly*, 24 (Oct., 1972), 435-450
- Leo Marx, "Introduction," in Marx's, *The Pilot and the Passenger: Essays on Literature, Technology, and Culture in the United States* (New York, 1988), ix-xvi
- Philip Fisher, "Introduction: The New American Studies," in Fisher's ed., *The New American Studies: Essays from Representations* (1991), vii-xxii
- Presentation:* Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950); or John William Ward, *Symbol for an Age* (1955)

Mar. 23 **Social History—Old and New**

- Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1972)
- Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, "The Political Crisis of Social History: A Marxist Perspective," *Journal of Social History* (1976): 205-21
- Presentation:* Philip. J. Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (1970); or Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society: Essays in America's Working Class and Social History* (1976)

Mar. 30 **The Cultural Turn**

- Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (1994)
- Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, eds., "Introduction," in Fox and Wightman's *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History* (1993), 1-16
- James W. Cook and Lawrence B. Glickman, "Twelve Propositions for a History of U.S. Cultural History," in James W/ Cook, Lawrence B. Glickman, and Michael O'Malley, eds., *The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present, and Future* (2008), 3-58
- Presentation:* Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (1984); or William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (1994)

Apr. 6 **New Directions: The Return of Political History**

- Joanne Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (2002)

Carl N. Degler, "Remaking American History," *Journal of American History*, 67 (June 1980), 7-25

William E. Leuchtenburg, "The Pertinence of Political History: Reflection on the Significance of the State in America," *Journal of American History*, 73 (1986), 585-600

Meg Jacob and Julian Zelizer, "The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History," and Ira Katznelson, "The Possibilities of Analytical Political History," in Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (2003), 1-19, 381-400

*Presentation:* Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (1992); or Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (2014)

Apr. 13 **New Directions: Gender and Sexuality**

George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (1994)

Carroll Smith Rosenberg, "'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America' (1975), in *Smith Rosenberg's Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (1986)

Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History*, 75 (June 1988), 9-39

*Presentation:* Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (1995); or Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present* (2011)

Apr. 22 **New Directions: Race, Transnationalism, and the non-West**

Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (2012)

Daniel Immerwahr, "Caste or Colony? Indianizing Race in the United States," *Modern Intellectual History*, 4 (Aug. 2007), 275-301

Ian Tyrrell, "Beyond the View from Euro-America, Environment, Settler Societies, and the Internationalization of American History" in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (2002), 168-91

David A. Hollinger, "The Historian's Use of the United States and Vice Versa," in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (2002), 381-95

*Presentation:* Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (1993); or Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (2014)

Apr. 27 **New Directions: Intellectual History and Contemporary History—Too Close for Comfort or The Long Goodbye?**

Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (2012)

*Presentation:* Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression* (2012); or Mark Greif, *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933-1973* (2015)