

## SEMINAR IN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

History 300, Section 5  
Tues 4:10-6:55

Sarah Curtis  
Fall 2010

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The purpose of this course is not to learn about the history of a particular time and place but to introduce you to the world of working historians – how historians research, explain, analyze, and revise interpretations of the past. We will do this in three ways: 1) by discussing the evolution of the discipline of history with special emphasis on issues and debates that have emerged in the recent past, 2) by exploring the practical issues of research method and historical interpretation, and 3) by completing a research project from primary (original) sources.

This class is required of history majors and minors and is a prerequisite for the proseminar in history. It also fulfills the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR).

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

By the end of the course, you should have learned:

- the basic principles of history as a discipline, by
  - understanding the development of history as a discipline over time.
  - recognizing and distinguishing among different approaches to history.
  - understanding current controversies in the discipline.
  - reading books and articles in history in a critical manner.
  - understanding the difference between history and historiography.
- the mechanics of writing a research paper, by
  - choosing a viable research topic.
  - identifying, locating, and interpreting relevant primary and secondary sources.
  - using the library, archives, and the internet for historical research.
  - crafting a historical argument and supporting it with evidence.
  - expressing your argument in clear, engaging, and logical writing.
  - using proper formatting and citation techniques.
  - editing, rewriting, and polishing drafts.
- good communication, speaking, and discussion skills, by
  - engaging in respectful yet critical dialogue in a seminar setting.
  - working cooperatively in small groups.
  - practicing clear, engaging presentation skills to a larger group.

### **OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Tuesday and Thursday 2:30-3:30, and by appointment

office location: Science 267

phone: (415) 338-2250

e-mail: scurtis@sfsu.edu

website: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/scurtis>

### **READING MATERIALS:**

I have ordered two books for this class, which are available for purchase at the bookstore:

John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 5th ed.

Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell, *The Pocket Handbook for History*, 2nd ed.

We will also be using a recent issue of the history department student journal, *Ex Post Facto*, which I will hand out in class.

### **ELECTRONIC RESERVE AND WEBSITES:**

Some of the readings are available on electronic reserve at the library. They can be accessed via the internet on campus or at home at the following address: <http://eres.sfsu.edu/> (or by the link on the library web page or my web page.) The password for this course is archives. (If you are having trouble logging in, check that you have correctly spelled the password.) These readings are indicated on the schedule with the abbreviation ER. A few readings are directly accessible on the web, in which case the URL is given in the syllabus. I have also set up direct links to these readings on my web page (<http://bss.sfsu.edu/scurtis>).

### **RESEARCH PROJECT:**

During much of the semester you will be working on an original research project. You can choose any topic that interests you, but you must use primary sources. We will be discussing how to find sources in much more detail in class. The result of this project will be a 12-15 pp. paper and a short oral presentation. Many of the other assignments also relate to the research project.

We will be meeting twice with Kendra Van Cleave, the research librarian for history to discuss library resources and search strategies. Kendra is also available throughout the research process to give you individual help. Contact her at: [kendrav@sfsu.edu](mailto:kendrav@sfsu.edu).

### **CLASS MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

This class will be conducted seminar-style, as a discussion rather than a lecture class. That means, first, that reading, research, and writing assignments must be completed before class, and that, second, you should be prepared to discuss the material for that day when you come to class. The intellectual quality of a seminar depends largely on the commitment of its members, so the usefulness of our class sessions will depend on you. This is especially true in this class because we will only meet once a week. You are expected to attend the entire class session, and you will be graded on participation. If, due to illness or natural disaster, you cannot make class, please let me know by e-mail or telephone **in advance** of the class meeting. Bring documentation of the reason for your absence to the next class meeting. More than two unexcused absences will result in a grade of zero for participation.

Participation grades are determined by both quantity and quality of the comments you make and questions you raise in class. Every student should try to speak at least twice during every class. Students should not be afraid to disagree with other students if they do so respectfully. The most valuable comments are those that advance the discussion and provide new perspectives.

**GRADING:**

The grading system is designed to reward you for completing assignments on time and proceeding through the research and writing process step-by-step rather than throwing together a paper at the last minute. Procrastinators, take note!

DATE	ASSIGNMENT	%AGE
weekly	class participation	20
Aug. 31	history standards paper	5
Sept. 14	preliminary description of research interest	ungraded
Sept. 14	university library requirement	2.5
Sept. 21	conference session summary	2.5
Sept. 21	historical journal review	2.5
Sept. 30	letter to employer	2.5
Oct. 12	historical readings paper	7.5
Oct. 19	research project proposal	5
Oct. 26	bibliography	5
Nov. 18	rough draft of research paper	7.5
Nov. 30	peer review	ungraded
Nov. 30, Dec. 7	oral presentation	5
Dec. 14	final draft of research paper You cannot pass the class if you do not turn in a final paper.	35
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

All written assignments should be typed (12 pt font), double-spaced and stapled in the upper-left-hand corner with normal margins. Assignments due on Tuesday but turned in late by Thursday will be penalized one half grade (e.g. from an A to an A-); those one week late one full grade (e.g. A to B). **Work more than one week late will not be accepted.**

If you find yourself unable to finish the course requirements by the end of the semester, it is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. I will issue no instructor-initiated withdrawals or incompletes. Student-initiated incompletes are reserved for serious medical excuses and other natural disasters with documentation within the last three weeks of the semester. The last day to drop a course without a "W" is September 7; the last day with a "W" (except in extreme circumstances) is November 16.

**EXTRA HELP:**

Students needing extra help, especially with writing, are encouraged to seek tutoring assistance at the Learning Assistance Center (<http://www.sfsu.edu/~lac/>) or the Campus Academic Resource Program (<http://www.sfsu.edu/~carp1/>). Both programs are especially interested in working with students enrolled in GWAR classes.

## **August 24**

### **Introduction**

### **or Why Are We Here?**

Overview of course. Introductions.

*Questions for discussion:* Why are you a history major or minor? What brought you to the study of history? What do you hope to get out of the major?

## **August 31**

### **The Uses of History**

### **or Why Bother with the Past?**

Read Tosh, chaps. 1-3; Gary Nash, “Years of Ferment,” and “History, Culture, and Politics,” chaps. 4-5 in *History on Trial* (ER); HNN coverage of Texas history standards (<http://hnn.us/articles/124219.html>) (Read a few articles from each category.)

*Questions for discussion:* What is the purpose of history? What is the difference between “historical awareness” and “social memory”? Is “objective” history possible? How do societies and individuals use history? Does history change according to present concerns? What kinds of specializations are there within history? Do you think that some approaches are more valid or important than others? What kind of history should be taught in American schools?

Write a 3-4 pp. paper that answers the following questions: How have history standards been determined for American secondary schools? Is there a better way? (This is not a straight opinion essay; make an argument using the readings by Gary Nash and on the HNN website as background material.)

## **September 7**

### **The Raw Materials**

### **or Just What Is A Primary Source Anyway?**

Read Tosh, chaps. 4-5; Jeff Sahadeo, “‘Without the Past There is No Future’: Archives, History, and Authority in Uzbekistan” in *Archive Stories* (ER) and Wiener, “In the Belly of the Mouse: The Dyspeptic Disney Archives” (ER)

Browse the following web sites:

The Valley of the Shadow (<http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/>)

American Memory (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html>)

EuroDocs: Britain, 1816-1918 ([http://eudocs.lib.bsu.edu/index.php/Britain\\_1816-1918](http://eudocs.lib.bsu.edu/index.php/Britain_1816-1918))

Suggest one viable research paper that could be written using documents from one of these sites.

Meet at the Labor Archives, 480 Winston Drive (NW of campus, behind Stonestown) for a presentation by the archivist, Catherine Powell. This presentation will last until approximately 5:15 p.m., after which we will reconvene in the classroom.

*Questions for discussion:* What are the “raw materials” of history? What is the difference between a primary and a secondary source? How do historians find sources and topics? How can documents be used to reveal historical “truth”? Do documents always mean what they say? What are some methods for evaluating and interpreting documents? How reliable are web sources for research?

**September 14**  
**Working with Primary Sources**  
**or How to Read a Document**

Read Renée M. Sentilles, “Toiling in the Archives of Cyberspace,” in *Archive Stories* (ER); *Pocket Handbook*, chaps. 28-29

Complete the university library requirement, if you have not done so already. Print out your proof of completion (available via “My SFSU”) and turn it into me. Information on the OASIS tutorial and quiz is available at [http://www.library.sfsu.edu/instruction/research\\_skills.html](http://www.library.sfsu.edu/instruction/research_skills.html).

Turn in a short preliminary description of research interest: What topic would you like to explore in your research project? What kind of sources do you think will be available? (You may propose more than one topic if you like.) This assignment is required but ungraded. Sign up for an appointment to discuss your topic with me before **September 30**.

Meet in Burk Hall 210 for a presentation by the research librarian for history, Kendra Van Cleave, on locating and working with primary sources. Kendra is also available throughout the research process to give you individual help. Contact her at: [kendrav@sfsu.edu](mailto:kendrav@sfsu.edu).

**Thursday-Friday, September 16-17**

SFSU Rights Conference: The Question of Rights in US Society  
Program can be found at: <http://www.h-net.org/~law/sfsurights2010/index.html>  
Attend one session and write a 1-2 pp. response (**due Tuesday, September 21**) answering the following questions: What was the theme of this session? What was the argument of each paper (presentation)? What additional issues did the commentator and members of the audience raise?

**September 21**  
**Approaches to History, Past and Present**  
**or Why Isn’t History About Dead White Men Anymore?**

Read Tosh, chaps. 6-7 ; Daniel J. Walkowitz, “Ellis Island Redux: The Imperial Turn and the Race of Ethnicity,” in *Contested Histories in Public Space* (ER)

Examine one historical journal (assignments to be given in class) for the following information: purpose, scope, audience, types of articles and/or reviews, content, frequency of publication, availability at SFSU. Type this information on a single sheet and make copies for the class.

Turn in response from conference session (see above).

*Questions for discussion:* What kinds of articles do you find in these journals? How specialized are they? What are the different kinds of historical writings (articles, review articles, book reviews, monographs, surveys, texts, etc.)? How is historical information exchanged at conferences? What kind of history is presented to the public in monuments and museums? Who determines what individuals or events will be commemorated?

### **September 30**

#### **Methods and Sources, Part I or What Do Historians Do With the Sources They Find?**

Read Tosh, chap. 8; Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, chaps. 3 and 18 (ER); Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, chap. 4 (ER); Nina Rattner Gelbart, *The King's Midwife*, sections 1-4 (ER)

*Questions for discussion:* What choices do historians have in structuring their historical accounts? Does the style in which you write history affect the interpretation of the past? Do you think history is more like a scientific discipline or a literary one? What is the Marxist interpretation of history? What kinds of questions is Diamond trying to answer? What are his sources? How has he structured his account? How important is quantitative data to history? How has Laslett used statistics to dispute commonly held views about marriage age in early modern England? What kind of sources has Gelbart used? How has gender affected her interpretation?

Write a 1-page letter (single-spaced) to a potential employer explaining the utility of a history major in terms of skills and knowledge.

### **October 5**

#### **Methods and Sources, Part II or What Do Historians Do With the Sources They Find?**

Read Tosh, chaps. 9-10; Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods*, prologue (ER); Robert Darton, “The Great Cat Massacre” (ER)

*Questions for discussion:* How does history differ from art history? How has Jardine used Renaissance paintings to inform her analysis? What insights have psychoanalysis, literary theory, and anthropology given to history? What kinds of sources has Darton used? How have anthropological methods informed his account? Which one of the readings (Diamond, Gelbart, Laslett, Jardine, and Darton) did you find most effective?

*Roundtable of student research projects.* This roundtable will allow each student to present his/her research topic and for all of us to brainstorm on that topic – to provide help in identifying possible primary sources, secondary sources, research questions, etc.

### **October 12**

#### **Using the Library for Historical Research or Why Can't I Do All My Research on the Internet?**

Meet in Burk Hall 210 for a presentation by the research librarian for history, Kendra Van Cleave, on search strategies and secondary sources. During the second half of the class session, you will have time to compile a preliminary bibliography for your topic.

Write a 4-5 pp. paper that compares and contrasts the approach to source material in the five historical readings (Diamond, Laslett, Gelbart, Jardine, Darnton) with specific reference to the concepts in Tosh. Some questions you might want to consider are: What kinds of sources do they use? How do they interpret those sources? What is the scope of the question they want to answer? What methodologies do they use? Do they use methods from disciplines other than history? How so?

### **October 19**

#### **Notetaking and Citing Sources or How to Avoid Plagiarism**

Read *Pocket Handbook*, chaps. 27, 30, 32 (bring your copy to class); Nelson, “What’s Happened to History?” (<http://hnn.us/articles/969.html>)

*Questions for discussion:* How serious is plagiarism? What exactly does it consist of? How can you avoid it? Which of the historians in Nelson’s piece would have gotten thrown out of college for plagiarism? How do historians incorporate arguments, information, and quotations into their writing? What is the function of a foot- or endnote? What are useful notetaking methods? What are the appropriate forms for notes?

Examine the endnotes in the essays in *Ex Post Facto* (bring your copy to class). Find examples of at least three types of notes (reference, content, etc.). Why did the author choose to use a note in this location? What kind of note was it? Was the note useful?

Write a 1-2 pp. proposal for your research paper following the outline below (number each section): 1) description of and background to topic, 2) historiography: how much historical scholarship has already been done on this topic and what kind, 3) historical question(s) you hope to answer in your paper, 4) why the topic is interesting and important, 5) a description/list of the main primary sources for your topic (scope, size, where located), 6) how the primary sources will help answer the questions you wish to consider in your paper.

**October 26**  
**The Writing Process**  
**or How to Put Together Your Paper**

Read *Pocket Handbook*, chaps. 1-2; skim and review chaps. 3-26 (bring your copy to class); essays by Daniels, Scott, and Elrick in *Ex Post Facto* (bring your copy to class). Identify the thesis statement each essay.

*Questions for discussion:* What is a thesis statement? How are these essays structured? What are effective methods of organization? How will you incorporate the work of other historians in your paper? What is the difference between a historiographical and research paper? How will you begin your paper?

Write a bibliography for your research paper. This bibliography **must** be in Chicago documentation style (see *Pocket Handbook*, pp. 178-83). Divide the bibliography into primary and secondary sources. You should have at least a half a dozen secondary sources.

**November 2 Small Group Workshops**

**November 9**

**November 16**

Students will meet on one of these days during class time with instructor in small groups according to a schedule to be announced. Each student should bring six photocopies of one page of a primary source s/he is using for his or her paper.

**November 18 Rough Draft**

Please note that this is a Thursday; no class meeting.

**ROUGH DRAFT due by 4 p.m. in my office (Science 267).** This is an absolute deadline. You will need one copy for me and one for your student partner. Both should be hard copies. The draft should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and include notes and a full bibliography; you will be graded on completeness.

**November 23 Thanksgiving Break**

**November 30 Presentations**

Complete peer reviews (form to be distributed in class) and return them along with the annotated paper draft to the author. Make copies of the reviews to turn into me. I will also return paper drafts to you on this day.

We will begin presentations according to a schedule to be determined in class. In a 10-15 minute presentation, describe your research and conclusions to the class. You will want to include any necessary background information to your topic, a description of your primary sources, the

historical question you examined, the thesis you came to, and a summary of your main conclusions. You may use notes, but do not read your presentation. Keep it interesting and lively. Practice it at home to make sure you can deliver it smoothly within the time limit.

**December 7              Presentations**

Continue presentations.

**December 14**

**FINAL DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE** in class at 4:10 p.m.

Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope so that I can return your paper to you.