

## **HIS 382-01: Modern Classics of Historical Writing**

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**Class Meetings: Depends on your pairing, but always in Mears 216**

### **Course description**

This course will introduce students to some of the most important themes, debates, and scholars in the field of history during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Over the course of 14 weeks, we will read important works of scholarship by Fernand Braudel, E. P. Thompson, Joan Scott, and others, examining the books and articles that helped pioneer fields like social history, gender history, and economic history. The class will follow a tutorial method, based on the system of graduate education at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, to provide students with advanced work in critical reading, analytical writing, and the cogent expression of ideas. The class will be writing intensive.

### **Class format: Tutorials**

Top graduate programs in the United States and undergraduates at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are taught using method known as the “tutorial” or “supervision” system. The method involves a series of weekly meetings between no more than three students and a professor. At each meeting, a student presents her or his essay on a pre-assigned topic. The essay becomes a spring-board for an intensive discussion of the set texts. The tutorial method has been described as the most effective pedagogical method for accelerated learning by advanced and able students in the humanities and social sciences. In particular, it improves students’ prose and their cogency and speed in composing analytical writings.

At the beginning of semester, you will be assigned a tutorial partner. Each week you will attend a one hour tutorial with your partner and the instructor. *Both* students will do the set reading. *One* of the two students will be assigned to write a 3-4 page essay in response to a set question. She or he will send her or his paper to the professor and tutorial partner *24 hours* before the scheduled class. The other student is required to provide written feedback on the content and style of the essay, and bring two copies to the tutorial. The next week the roles of writer and commentator will switch. (In tutorial groups with three students, in one week Student A will write a paper and students B and C will respond, and in the following week Students B and C will each write a paper and Student A will respond to one of those papers.) At the end of semester students may select *one* essay they have written and revise it to implement the feedback they have received from their partner and professor.

### Course Objectives

This course will help students to fine-tune and increase their skills in the following areas:

- Identifying, summarizing, and critiquing the arguments in classic works of historical writing, and examining debates between scholars;
- Producing a brief analytical paper in response to a historical question;
- Analyzing peers' writing and helping them with constructive feedback;
- Discussing their ideas cogently and persuasively in class discussions.

### Assessment

Assignments in this course are constructed to help you develop and demonstrate your mastery of course objectives. They will make the following contribution to your overall grade:

#### Attendance and participation 15%:

Attendance is compulsory and critical because students are working in pairs. The instructor will keep records of attendance throughout semester. Students may take **one flexi-day** over the course of the semester without penalty on a day *when they are not the essay writer*. You must inform your partner and professor of your intended absence. You are not required to submit feedback on that day. I recommend saving your flexi-day in case you fall ill during semester.

In addition, when calculating grades, I will drop your lowest essay mark. In practice this means that you may miss submitting one essay and the relevant class when you are the essay writer, as long as you are willing to have all your remaining grades count towards assessment. If you elect to activate this option, it is crucial that you notify both your professor and tutorial partner 24 hours or more before your scheduled meeting so that your partner is able to join another group that week.

Additional missed classes will adversely affect your grade unless you *supply written evidence of significant illness or misadventure*. If you know that regular sporting, cultural, military, familial, or religious obligations are likely to intrude on class time, you must come and see me with your schedule during the first week of semester.







- 1) Journal articles will usually be downloadable from the internet or from an electronic database subscribed to by Grinnell College and identified after the citation.
- 2) Scanned chapters will usually be placed on P-Web or E-reserve.
- 3) Books will be available on Reserve at Burling Library and may be purchased from the campus bookstore or online. Second-hand or rental copies are fine but please acquire the listed editions. If you do not intend to purchase books, it will be your responsibility to scan the relevant pages of the books and bring them with you to your supervision.

Robert Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2009).

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of Early New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003 [1983]).

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995 [1975]).

Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, [1979]).

Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Lie* (Princeton: Princeton, 2017 [1986]).

E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966 [1963]).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1 (01/25) 12pm: Introduction (no essay due)**

**Discussion question: The history of whom? The history of where?**

Sara Maza, *Thinking about History*, pages 1-82

### **Week 2 (Begins 02/01): Annales School**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: Fernand Braudel described “the history of events” as “surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs.” He urges his readers to observe “the underlying currents” of history instead (p. 21). What are these**

**“currents”? How does Braudel emphasize their significance? What are the potential advantages and/or disadvantages to historians of adopting Braudel’s “philosophy of history”?**

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper Collins, 1992 [1949]). There are 3 PDF files online. You are not required to read all the pages in all the files. Instead, in Braudel 1, read: 17-24, 276-82, 352-54. Braudel 2, read: table of contents, 335-66, 380. Braudel 3, read: 459-83, 500-4, 526-29, 543-44. P-Web.

Peter Burke, “Fernand Braudel”, in *The Annales school: Critical Assessments*, ed. Stuart Clark, 6 vols (London: Routledge, 1999), vol.3, pp. 111-123. P-Web

The Braudel reading can be found in 3 pdf’s on Pioneerweb. You are not required to read all the pages in all the files! Instead, in Braudel 1: read 17-24, 276-82, 352-54. Braudel 2, read: table of contents, 335-66, 380. Braudel 3, read: 459-83, 500-4, 526-29, 543-44. P-Web.

### **Week 3 (Begins 02/08): Race and Slavery**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: Eric Williams writes (using the racial terminology of his day) that “Here, then, is the origin of Negro slavery. The reason was economic, not racial; it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but with the cheapness of the labor... The features of the man, his hair, color, and dentifrice, his ‘subhuman’ characteristics so widely pleaded, were only the later rationalizations to justify a simple economic fact: that the colonies needed labor and resorted to negro labor because it was cheapest and best.” After reading Williams, Jordan, and Fields, do you agree? Did racism or capitalism create slavery in the Americas?**

Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. i-xiv, 1-40, 573-82. P-Web.

Eric E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, [1944] 2006), [these pages from 1961 edn—we are requesting the most recent reprint] pp. 3-29, 51-57, 197-212. P-Web.

Barbara Fields, “Ideology and Race in American History,” in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*. Ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson. New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 143-177. P-Web.





## **Week 7 (Begins 03/07): The Invention of Tradition**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: Eric Hobsbawm suggests that although the “invention of tradition” has taken place in societies throughout history, it is more frequent in the modern era. Is the theory of “invented traditions” proposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger more useful in helping us understand “traditions” or the time period in which they were “invented”?**

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge, 1983): Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” pp. 1-14, Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland,” pp. 15-41; David Cannadine, “The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition,’ c. 1820-1977,” pp. 101-164. P-Web.

## **Week 8 (Begins 03/14): Microhistory**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: William Cronon writes that “Our project must be to locate a nature which is within rather than without history, for only by doing so can we find human communities which are inside rather than outside nature.” How does Cronon balance the role of human agents (like colonists and Indians), natural phenomena, and other actors in producing an “ecological history of early New England”?**

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of Early New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003 [1983]). Pages 3-81 and 108-156. **For Purchase.**

## **SPRING BREAK**

## **Week 9 (Begins 04/04): The New Cultural History**

(Student Y submits, X reviews)

**Essay question: In “The Great Cat Massacre” Robert Darnton attempted to explicate a seemingly opaque event in Paris in 1730 by excavating the way that culturally specific symbols were evoked, used, and understood by the protagonists of the incident. To what extent do you think Darnton “got the joke” of the massacre?**

Robert Darnton, "Introduction" to *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), pp. 3-7. P-Web

Robert Darnton, "Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Severin," in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), pp. 75-104. P-Web.

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**Week 12 (Begins 04/25): The History of Science**

(Student X submits, Y reviews)

**Essay question: TBD**

Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer,