



*Before you study history, study the historian.*

E. H. Carr

*Any good history begins in strangeness. The past should not be comfortable. The past should not be a familiar echo of the present, for if it is familiar why revisit it? The past should be so strange that you wonder how you and the people you know and love could come from such a time.*

Richard White

*For if you think of the past as a landscape, then history is the way we represent it, and it's the act of representation that lifts us above the familiar to let us experience vicariously what we can't experience directly: a wider view.*

John Lewis Gaddis

*...the past is a place of fantasy.*

Hayden White

*Historical sense and poetic sense should not, in the end, be contradictory, for if poetry is the little myth we make, history is the big myth we live, and in our living, constantly remake.*

Robert Penn Warren

*We have to comprehend, finally, that we ourselves have a good deal to do with the reception of the history we write and teach. If we tell people continually that history is invariably narrative storytelling about those whose power, position, and influence are palpable, then that is precisely what they will expect from us. But this is only one form of history; and it is incumbent upon us to inform the public, by deed and word, that there is no exclusive preferred form for the writing of history and that no single group in history and no one aspect of the past—the social, the political, the cultural, the economic—is inherently more important, or more essential, or more relevant than the others. If we have respect for our audience, then we must realize that ambiguity and paradox and uncertainty are not strangers to them. They know these things are part of life, and the certainly can be taught to see them as part of history....But historians will be in no position to teach these lessons if we ourselves do not strive to increase not only our tolerance for and acceptance of the complexities of the past but our tolerance for and acceptance of the complexities and ambiguities of our own profession.*

Lawrence Levine

*It is well that we keep in mind the fact that not all of American history is recorded. And in some ways we are fortunate that it isn't, for if it were, we might become so chagrined by the discrepancies which exist between our democratic ideals and our social reality that we'd soon lose heart. Perhaps that is why we possess two basic versions of American history: one which is written and as neatly stylized as ancient myth, and the other as unwritten and chaotic and full of contradictions, changes of pace, and surprises as life itself.*

Ralph Ellison

*The past is never dead. It's not even past.*

William Faulkner

*Yesterday's gone, but the past lives on.*

Bob Dylan

**Course Description**

This seminar will focus on the historical questions central to an understanding of the past and the way various scholars have interpreted historical events. Regular readings and writing assignments will be used to focus on a series of topics such as defining history, the creation of a historical profession, methods of evaluating the past, and the recent trends in writing history. In addition, we will examine the importance of race, class, gender, and culture on the construction of historical interpretation. By examining the various research methods used by historians, this seminar aims to provide you with a more complete understanding of the way history is interpreted, written, evaluated, and (re)constructed. The process of history, then, serves as the broad template for our seminar this semester, and this focus will provide you with a number of key skills you must develop in graduate school.

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**Required Books**

Joyce Appleby, et al: *Telling the Truth About History*. Norton, 1995. [ISBN-10: 0393312860]

Richard Evans: *In Defense of History*. Norton, 2000. [ISBN-10: 0393319598]

Anna Green and Kathleen Troup: *The Houses of History*. NYU, 1999. [ISBN-10: 0814731279]

Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier: *From Reliable Sources*. Cornell, 2001. [ISBN-10: 0801485606]

Peter Novick: *That Noble Dream*. Cambridge, 1988. [ISBN-10: 0521357454]

Gordon Wood: *The Purpose of the Past*. Penguin, 2008. [ISBN-10: 1594201544]

Robert Penn Warren: *All the Kings Men*. Mariner Books, 2002. [ISBN-10: 0156012952]

**Assignment and Grades**

Your grade in this seminar will be based on a series of weekly thesis exercises, book reviews, a seminar presentation, a seminar paper, and regular participation in our discussions. An explanation of the various assignments follows, but the general grade breakdown is:

Participation (50%)

Thesis Exercises	15%
Seminar Presentation	15%
Discussion	20%

Writing (50%)

Book Review (Evans)	15%
Book Review Two	15%
Seminar Paper	20%

**Thesis Exercises**

You will write weekly thesis exercises (roughly one-page in length) focused on the assigned material to be turned in at the beginning of each class. This exercise is meant to prepare you for discussion and to help you focus on the main idea of that week's readings. Late papers will not be accepted under any circumstances. These short papers will account for 15% of your grade.

**Book Reviews**

Throughout this semester you will write two book reviews, each approximately three pages in length. The first review will center on Richard Evans's *In Defense of History*, and the other will focus on a book you will choose from a list I provide. The due dates are listed on the course schedule. Each review is worth 15% (30% of your final grade).

**Seminar Presentation**

Once during this semester, you will prepare a presentation on a historian or historiographical issue. These presentations will require you to prepare a brief (12-15-minute) introduction to the person or topic, including a description of the important books and contours of the subject as well as lead our discussion for a given week. We will discuss this project in greater detail in class. This assignment will be worth 15% of your grade.

**Seminar Paper**

As a capstone to this semester you will write a seminar paper (due at the end of the course) that will focus on a particular historian or historiographical issue. This 10-12-page paper may dovetail with your presentation, but if so, you must focus on a different angle or create a new emphasis. You will have a large amount of leeway here to create something that connects to your academic interests and we will discuss this assignment in much more detail in class. This paper will be worth 20% of your final grade.

**Discussion**

Finally, as a seminar, this course will almost exclusively consist of discussion of the assigned readings. I realize that this reading list may appear daunting at first, but keep in mind that this course is a graduate seminar centered on one of the most important elements of becoming an historian: for you to gain an understanding of our professional history, our research methods, and our relationship to society. You must come to class having completed the readings and prepared to discuss in some detail the themes and issues. You will be graded on both the quantity and quality of your commentary. Your classroom discussion will be worth 20% of your grade.

**Note**

This is a reading and writing-intensive course. I make no apologies for that fact. As graduate students in history you should be exposed to all elements of the profession, from the beginnings of the creative process through the construction of a historical dialogue. Advice? Stay up with the readings, continue to interact with your classmates, and seek out my help whenever you feel that you are beginning to struggle. This course, naturally, is not your only responsibility this semester, but a careful consideration of the material involved in this seminar can greatly help you in your other seminars as you explore the complexities of studying the past.

### Graduate Student Learning Outcomes Statement

The SFA History Department has identified the following Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for all SFA students earning an M.A. degree in History:

1. The student will be able to explain the key issues and developments in at least two historical periods (one per course).
2. The student will be able to identify the main historical works and interpretive debates associated with an event or period.
3. The student will be able to locate, identify, and critically analyze primary sources.
4. The student will be able to research and analyze effectively an issue or topic in writing.
5. The student will be able to present written work in an appropriate academic style, including the proper citation of sources using Chicago Manual of Style (15th or most recent edition).

This course will incorporate to varying degrees on each of these PLOS, with a particular emphasis on PLOs 1, 2, and 5.

### Student Learning Outcomes

The more specific outcomes for this particular class are as follows:

1. The student will be able to explain the various methodologies and approaches to studying the past.
2. The student will be able to trace the various schools of historical thought discussed in class.
3. The student will be able to discuss the importance of race, class, and gender as historical lenses.
4. The student will be able to explain the role and value of different historical perspectives, including various theoretical models of understanding the past.
5. The student will be able to present written work that demonstrates a mastery of the concepts involved in producing scholarship in history. Writing demands a careful use of language and a subtlety of argument, skills that will be emphasized in this seminar.

### Academic Integrity (A-9.1)

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

### Definition of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from

an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic\\_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

#### Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to <http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/>.

#### Withheld Grades (*Semester Grades Policy; A-54*)

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

#### Course Schedule

##### August 28: Introduction: What is History?

###### Readings:

Warren

##### September 4: Relativism / Objectivity

###### Readings:

Warren

Appleby: 3-90

Green: 1-32

Howell: 1-42

Novick: 1-110

##### September 11: Early Historians and the Making of a Profession

###### Readings:

Wood: 1-16; 40-61

T. Hamerow, *Reflections of History and Historians*, xi-161 (Reserve)

D. Thelen, "The Practice of American History" (handout)

###### Optional Readings:

George Bancroft, *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent* (any volume)

Francis Parkman, *France and England in North America* (any volume)

William Dunning, *Reconstruction*

**September 18: The Progressive Historians***\*\*Evans Review Due\*\**Readings:

Novick: 111-278

F. J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (handout)

Charles Beard, "Written History as an Article of Faith" (handout)

Optional Readings:Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*J. Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement*Vernon Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson***September 25: Creating a Consensus**Readings:

Novick: 281-411

Howell: 69-87

Wood: 73-84

Optional Readings:Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*Daniel Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics*Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth***October 2: The Modern Age and the Big Four**Readings:

Appleby: 242-270

Howell: 88-150

Wood: 85-93

Optional Readings:Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*David Potter, *The Impending Crisis*Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness***October 9: Becoming Radical: Historians of the New Left**Readings:

Green: 33-58

Novick: 415-468

Wood: 264-276

Optional Readings:William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History*Staughton Lynd, *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism*Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery*

**October 16: Post-Modernism**Readings:

Appleby: 198-240  
 Green: 204-213; 297-325  
 Novick: 573-629  
 Wood: 212-226

Optional Readings:

Dick Hebdige, *Subcultures*  
 Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*  
 Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse*  
 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*

**October 23: Gender**Readings:

Green: 253-276  
 Wood: 277-292; 234-248

Optional Readings:

Anne Scott, *The Southern Lady*  
 Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*  
 Laura Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*  
 Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*  
 Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*  
 George Chauncey, *Gay New York*

**October 30: Race**

\*\*Second Review Due\*\*

Readings:

Novick: 469-521

Optional Readings:

Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels*  
 Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925*  
 Mechal Sobel, *Treble On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith*  
 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*  
 Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*  
 Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black*  
 Grace Hale, *Making Whiteness*  
 David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*

**November 6: Culture**Readings:

Novick: 522-572  
 Green: 172-203

Optional Readings:

Warren Susman, *Culture as History*  
 Lawrence Levine, *The Unpredictable Past*

Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train*

Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight"

Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*

Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front*

**November 13: "New" Histories**

Readings:

Wood: 249-263

Optional Readings:

Paul Boyer and Steven Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*

John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth*

Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*

Stanley Elkins, *Slavery*

Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross*

Mark Smith, *Mastered By the Clock*

**November 20: No class meeting (use this time to prepare your seminar paper)**

**November 27: Popular History**

Readings:

Wood: 94-109

Optional Readings:

David Donald, *Lincoln*

James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*

Stephen Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage*

David McCulloch, *John Adams*

Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers*

Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex*

T. J. Stiles, *Jesse James: The Last Rebel of the Civil War*

**December 4: Conclusion**

**\*\*Seminar paper due\*\***

