

**SFA Fall 2008**  
**HIS 530:040 Historiography**  
**T 6-8:30**

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Office Hours: MW 9:45-11:45, 1-2; TR 10-12



“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

“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

“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.

## TEXTS FOR PURCHASE

Joyce Appleby, et al.	<i>Telling the Truth About History</i>
Richard Evans	<i>In Defense of History</i>
Anna Green	<i>The Houses of History</i>
Martha Howell	<i>From Reliable Sources</i>
Peter Novick	<i>That Noble Dream</i>

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

<u>Participation (50% of your final grade)</u>	
1. Discussion	15%
2. Thesis Exercises	10%
3. Presentation	25%
<u>Papers (50% of your final grade)</u>	
1. Review on Richard Evans	10%
2. Review on a title of your choosing	10%
3. Seminar Paper	30%

## **Class Discussions**

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 15% of your grade.

## **Presentation**

Once during this semester, you will prepare a presentation on a historian or historiographical issue. These presentations will require you to prepare a 12-15-minute introduction to the person or topic, including a brief description of the important books and contours of the subject. You will also be asked to lead a class discussion on the major issues. Handouts, PowerPoint slides, or other such tools can be incorporated in your allotted time. You will be able to sign up for your particular topic the first week of the semester. We will discuss this project in more detail in class. This assignment will be worth 25% of your grade.

## **Thesis Exercises**

You will write weekly thesis exercises (anywhere from one paragraph to one page in length) focused on the assigned material. This exercise is meant to prepare you for discussion and to help you focus on the main idea of that week's readings. You will have twelve of these assignments due and I will grade them based on your ability to summarize the readings. The two lowest grades will be dropped, leaving you with ten graded assignments for this portion of your grade. As always, late papers will not be accepted under any circumstances. These short papers will account for 10% of your grade.

## **Reviews**

Twice this semester you will write book reviews, each approximately 2-3 pages in length. You will receive more detailed commentary in class, but the first review will center on Richard Evans's *In Defense of History*, and the other will focus on a book of your choosing (I will provide you with a list in class). No books can be duplicated, so you will sign up for the book you wish to examine. You will be able to sign up for your particular book the first week of the semester. The due dates are listed on the course schedule. Together, these reviews will constitute 30% of your grade.

## **Seminar Paper**

Finally, you will write a seminar paper (due at the end of the course) that will focus on a historian or historiographical issue that interests you. This paper—which should be 10-12 pages long—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. We will discuss this assignment in much more detail in class. This paper will be worth 30% of your final grade.

## **Note on the Seminar**

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. This course may seem daunting at first glance, but be aware that the reading is spread throughout the semester in differing degrees of intensity and that the writing assignments total less than 40 pages of text for the entire seminar. 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 the historical mind.

## **Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism**

Finally, although I do not expect to encounter incidences of academic dishonesty or plagiarism at the graduate level, any student caught in such unethical activity will fail the course. Plagiarism may involve uncited or uncredited use of papers or materials taken in whole or in part from other persons or references, such as from Internet websites, books, journals, or from other students' papers or assignments. If you are unsure of the meaning of this description, confer with the professor. Any violations of academic integrity will be reported to both the Graduate Director of the department as well as the Director of the Graduate School. You may read the university's policy, including your right to appeal charges of dishonesty, at: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic\\_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

## **ADA Compliance**

The History Department is committed to providing appropriate and confidential accommodations for students with documented disabilities as outlined by SFA policy and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) guidelines. If you have or think you may have a disability, please contact the Office of Disabilities Services (ODS). Human Services Building, Room 325, 468-3004 or 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

**Aug 26: Introduction; What is History?**

**Sept 2: Relativism / Objectivity**

Readings:

Appleby: 3-90

Green: 1-32

Howell: 1-42

Novick: 1-110

**Sept 9: 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*

**Sept 16: 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*

**Sept 23: 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*

**Sept 30: 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*

**Oct 7: 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*

**Oct 14: 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*

**Oct 21: Gender**

Readings:

Green: 253-276

Wood: 277-292; 234-248

Optional Readings:

Anne Scott, *The Southern Lady*

Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900*

Laura Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*

Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Formation of American Society*

Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*  
George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*

**Oct 28: Race**  
**\*\*Second Review Due\*\***

Readings:

Novick: 469-521

Optional Readings:

Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels*

Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 750-1925*

Mechal Sobel, *Treblen On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith*

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*

Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*

Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black*

Albert Rabateau, *Slave Religion*

Grace Hale, *Making Whiteness*

David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*

**Nov 4: 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*

**Nov 11: "New" Histories**

Readings:

Wood: 249-263

Optional Readings:

Paul Boyer and Steven Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*

John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*

Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865*

Stanley Elkins, *Slavery*

Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*

Mark Smith, *Mastered By the Clock*

**Nov 18: Popular Historians**

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*

**Nov 25: No class meeting (use this time to prepare your seminar paper)**

**Dec 12: Conclusion**

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

“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