IDEAS FOR NEXT SEMESTER


This course is an introduction to the graduate study of history that engages with current historiographical debates and presents students with methodological and theoretical approaches that will facilitate their remaining graduate coursework.

Learning Goals

1. Develop an understanding of how History, the discipline practiced by professional historians, differs from history, or events as they have occurred in the past.
2. Develop an understanding of recent trends in historiography and begin the process of incorporating these developments into the student’s own work.
3. Develop and improve the ability to participate in seminar discussions critically and productively.
4. Develop and improve the ability to read and analyze academic texts at the professional level. This will include the ability to identify a book’s thesis, its place in the historiography, its organizational structure, its use of sources, and its theoretical and conceptual framework.

Reading List


**Grades and Assignments**

**Book Reviews:** 6 Reviews each worth 5% for a total of 30% of the grade—the reviews can be on any of our readings (your choice) except Brown, Fuchs and Stuchtey, or Fonner. Each book review must conform to the following guidelines.

Your reviews should be no longer than 1000 words in length, typed and double-spaced. *Include a word count at the end of the review.* Use a type font no smaller than 12 pt. A review that does not meet these requirements will be returned without a grade for revision. All reviews must be turned in at the beginning of the class period during which we are reading the book in question. Late reviews will be penalized 5% for each day that they are late.

No two books are alike so guidelines for book reviews must be general. In order to write a good review you must think carefully about the book and about your report. Since reviews are 1,000 words, you must take pains to organize and present your thoughts with maximum precision, clarity and conciseness. Finally, make sure that you review the book the author has written and not the one you wish she had written.

Begin your review with the author, title, and facts of publication, using a standard [CMS] bibliographical form, e.g.:


Here are seven questions the answers to which must form the substance of your review. The questions do not need to be answered in the order given, but they all need to be addressed clearly and specifically.
1. What is the author’s thesis?

2. What is the author’s purpose in writing the book?

3. How does the author organize his or her material? What is the logic behind the topics of the chapters and how do the chapters go together to make a book? You should be aware that there is almost always a “fit” between the thesis of the book and its organizational logic. Each points to the other. Thus, if you are in doubt about the thesis, pay attention to the organizational logic, and vice versa. In your review include an explicit statement about the fit between the book’s organization, its thesis and its purpose.

4. What theories guide the author’s work? Sometimes you will have to dig out the answer to this question. Do not give a laundry-list of theories. Discuss leading and secondary ones, explicit and implicit ones. This section can include a brief summary of the book, as well as the material describing theories. But make sure that the summary links to the primary issue of theories.

5. What sources does the author use to develop the thesis of the book and why are they used? Do not give a laundry-list of sources. Discuss types of sources used, types not used, and the reasons for turning to some kinds of sources rather than others. Include an explicit statement about the pertinence of types of sources in light of the author’s thesis and theory.

6. How well is the author’s purpose accomplished? In this section you have an opportunity to make an original, critical evaluation of the book. You will want to address the issues of what is well done, poorly done, and originally done.

7. Relate the book to the subject of the course. How does it fit in with the issues raised and discussed in the course to the date of writing?

N.B.: Be sure to cite exact pages in your answers to each question and to number the pages of your review. Use nothing smaller than a “12” (pica) font. Keep a one inch margin on the top, bottom and right side of the paper and a one and a half inch margin on the left side.

Sets of Discussion Questions and book reviews: 10 sets, each worth 2% for a total of 20% of your grade. Sundays by noon you must submit to me by e-mail a set of discussion questions for the next day’s class. Each of these sets must include one discussion question that you come up with on your own and one discussion question that you formulate after reading at least one academic book review of the book in question. For the second question, make sure to cite the review that inspired it and bring a copy of the review to turn in on Monday when you come to class.

Class Participation and Discussion: 15% of your grade
Regular class attendance and active participation in discussions is a requirement in this course. The quality of your class participation is obviously important, and the ideal would be frequent, high quality, participation. The following points tend to characterize effective participation.
1. Are the points made substantive and relevant to the discussion? Are they linked to the comments of others?
2. Do comments show that the participant has been listening?
3. Do comments clarify and highlight the important aspects of earlier comments and lead to a clearer statement of the concepts being covered?
4. Is the participant willing to interact with other class members?
5. Do comments show evidence of analysis?
6. Do comments add to our understanding?
7. Does the participant distinguish between facts, opinions, beliefs, and between positive and normative analysis?
8. Is there a willingness to test new ideas?

Constructive class participation is an essential part of this seminar. I will monitor discussion during each class period. If I come to believe that a particular student is not participating as actively as I think he or she should, then I will make a point of calling on the student in hopes of eliciting a more satisfactory level of class involvement.

When we discuss assigned books, we shall organize our work in relation to the seven-point guide given under “Book reviews” above. Always come to class prepared to answer the questions in relation to the book under discussion.

**Historiography Essay: 35% of your grade.**

The purpose of this assignment is to provide students an opportunity to synthesize the various readings on the discipline of history into a coherent essay focused on a single historiographical theme. Themes can include, but are not limited to, race, gender, class struggles, imperialism, resistance, modernity, etc. If you choose a theme that is not listed above, please double check with me. You will select at least 4 of our readings (at least 2 of which must be books) and in an argumentative essay discuss how each of them articulates a specific vision about your chosen theme. Your essay should flow coherently and you should draw connections between the different readings that you are using. The essay should NOT be a collection of thoughts on the different readings with little to bind them together. You may of course consult additional readings, but not in lieu of the course readings. All your points should be cited and the paper should include a bibliography. The essay should be a minimum of 15 pages and a maximum of 20 and I will hold you to these ranges.

**Weekly Reading Assignments**

Week 1 – Aug 30
Class Introduction – No Readings

Week 2 – Sept 6
LABOR DAY – No Class

Week 3 – Sept 13
What is History?
Readings:
Foner, *Who Owns History?*

Week 4 – Sept 20
Global Historiography
Readings:
Fuchs & Stuchtey, *Across Cultural Borders*

Week 5 – Sept 27
Reading and Writing History
Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*

Week 6 – Oct 4
History, Heritage and the Nation-State
Readings:
Geary, *The Myth of Nations*

Week 7 – Oct 11
Memory and Imperialism
Readings:
MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time*

Week 8 – Oct 18
Borders and Frontiers
Readings:  
Brooks, Captives and Cousins  

Week 9 – Oct 25  
Microhistory  
Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*  

Week 10 – Nov 1  
Social History  
Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*  

Week 11 – Nov 8  
Gender and Sexuality  
Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*  

Week 12 – Nov 15  
Modernity and its Implications  
Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity*  

Week 13 – Nov 22  
THANKSGIVING BREAK – No Class  

Week 14 – Nov 29  
Postmodernism  
Callum, *Postmodernism for Historians*  

Week 15 – Dec 6  
Interdisciplinary History
Vansina, *How Societies are Born*


Week 16 – Dec 13
No Class – Work on Papers

Week 17 – Dec 20
Submit Historiography Papers
Papers Due by 7:00 PM – Submit by e-mail to jarbel@sfsu.edu.