

**History 9817**

**United States History and Historiography**

Fall Term

Wednesdays 11:30 am – 2:30 pm, Lawson Hall 2270C

**Professor Rob MacDougall**

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Office Hours: **TBD**

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Course Website: <http://www.robmacdougall.org/9817>

**THIS IS A DRAFT SYLLABUS, STILL SUBJECT TO CHANGE. IT SHOULD GIVE YOU A GOOD IDEA OF WHAT THIS COURSE IS ABOUT AND WHETHER YOU WANT TO TAKE IT, BUT DO NOT USE IT TO BUY BOOKS OR TO PREPARE FOR CLASS ONCE THE COURSE HAS BEGUN. A FINAL VERSION OF THE SYLLABUS WILL BE AVAILABLE BY SEPTEMBER.**

**If you require this material in an alternate format, or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you, please contact Prof. MacDougall. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2111 +82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.**

### **Course Description**

Historiography means both the writing of history and the study of historical writing itself. This seminar will introduce you to some major themes and core works of United States historiography, and invite you to develop your skills as readers and critics of historical literature. It is not a comprehensive survey of American history (hardly possible in 13 weeks), but rather a history of historical writing about the United States. We will read and discuss a combination of classic and modern texts—some of the best work in the profession—to see how American historiography has changed over time, and how history is always shaped by the historical, intellectual, and biographical circumstances of those who write it. We will learn a great deal about United States history along the way, but the course is really an intellectual history of history, in the American context.

### **Objectives and Outcomes**

Students in History 9817 will:

- Become familiar with some major themes and core works of United States history, and with the evolution of historical writing on the American past.
- Learn to make and analyze historiographical arguments.
- Analyze the relationship between historical texts and the historical, intellectual, and biographical circumstances in which those texts were produced.
- Build a theoretical vocabulary relevant for historiographical discussions.
- Work collaboratively with classmates to strengthen their analytical capacities.

## Assignments and Evaluation

This is a graduate course. Thorough reading and informed discussion—in every seminar—are the central requirements. You are expected to attend every meeting prepared to engage actively with the readings and with each other. Most weeks, you will be asked to post online (or email me) a short response to the readings for that week or some other small assignment.

You will write one book review (4-6 pages) locating a work of scholarship in its historical context, and one longer essay (10-15 pages) tracing and discussing the development of historiography on a specific subject over time. There will be no midterm or final exam.

In-class participation (reading, discussion, insight)	20%	
Short homework assignments / online responses	20%	
Historiographic Book Review (4-6 pages)	20%	due in February (Date TBD)
Historiographic Essay (10-15 pages)	40%	due in April (Date TBD)

## Schedule

I'm not going to lie to you: the readings for this class are extensive. We will discuss strategies for efficient reading, and I will often direct you to focus on particular chapters or sections of these texts, but the bottom line is that there is a lot of reading, and you are responsible for coming to each class prepared to discuss all readings assigned. You are welcome to buy any of these books, but I do not require you to do so, and I have not ordered any books at the Campus Bookstore. All readings will be available on reserve at D.B. Weldon Library, in the Centre for American Studies office (SSC 1003), and/or online.

## Key

- 📖 Book on reserve shelf at Weldon (2-hour loan) and at Centre for American Studies.
- 📄 PDF available on course website (<http://www.robmacdougall.org/9817>).
- 📖 E-book or journal article available through online library catalogue.

### Week 1 Welcome to the Course

Pierre BAYARD, *How To Talk About Books You Haven't Read* (2007). 📖

### Week 2 Reading History in Four Dimensions

- John HICKS, *The Populist Revolt* (1931), pp. vii-ix, 54-95. 📄
- Richard HOFSTADTER, *The Age of Reform* (1955), pp. 60-93. 📄
- Lawrence GOODWYN, *The Populist Moment* (1978), pp. vii-xxiv, 20-54. 📄
- Barton SHAW, *The Wool-Hat Boys* (1984), pp. 78-90. 📖
- James LIVINGSTON, *Pragmatism, Feminism, and Democracy* (2001), pp. 1-33. 📄
- Charles POSTEL, *The Populist Vision* (2007), pp. 3-22. 📄

### Week 3 Early, Professional, and Progressive Historians (1800s-1930s)

- George BANCROFT, *History of the United States, Volume II* (1840), pp. 450-466. 📄
- Frederick Jackson TURNER, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," (1893), in Martin Ridge, ed., *History, Frontier, and Section*, pp. 59-91. 📄
- Charles BEARD, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913), pp. 1-18, 253-291. 📄

Joyce APPLEBY et al, *Telling the Truth About History* (1994), pp. 91-125. □

David BROWN, *Beyond the Frontier: The Midwestern Voice in Historical Writing* (2009), pp. 25-71. □

#### **Week 4 The Consensus Historians (1940s-1960s)**

Richard HOFSTADTER, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1948). □

John HIGHAM, "Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic," *American Historical Review* 67 (1962): 609-625. □

David BROWN, *Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography* (2006). □

#### **Week 5 The New Social History (1960s-1970s)**

Herbert GUTMAN, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America," *American Historical Review* 78 (1973): 531-588. □

Ira BERLIN, "Herbert G. Gutman and the American Working Class," in *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class* (1987), pp. 3-69. □

Alice KESSLER-HARRIS, "A New Agenda for American Labor History: A Gendered Analysis and the Question of Class," in *Perspectives on American Labor History* (1989), pp. 217-234. □

Daniel RODGERS, *Age of Fracture* (2011), pp. 77-79, 90-107. □

#### **Week 6 Slavery and the Problem of Agency**

Ulrich B. PHILLIPS, *American Negro Slavery* (1918), pp. 291-308. □

Stanley ELKINS, *Slavery* (1959), pp. 81-87, 102-115, 128-39. □

John BLASSINGAME, *The Slave Community* (1972), pp. xi-xii, 105-148. □

Eugene GENOVESE, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974), pp. 3-7, 113-149. □

Deborah Gray WHITE, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (1985, Rev. ed. 1999), pp. 1-25. □

Walter JOHNSON, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003): 113-124. □

### **Historiographic Book Review Due This Week**

#### **Week 7 Women's History**

Eleanor FLEXNER, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (1959), pp. vii-x, 41-61. □

Caroll SMITH-ROSENBERG, "The New Woman and the New History," *Feminist Studies* 3 (1975): 185-198. □

Linda KERBER, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 9-39. □

Mary RYAN, *Mysteries of Sex: Tracing Women & Men Through American History* (2006). □

Laurel Thatcher ULRICH, *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (2007), pp. 191-222. □

#### **Week 8 The Cultural Turn (1980s-1990s)**

Joan SCOTT, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 1053-1075. □

George CHAUNCEY, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World* (1994). □

Gail BEDERMAN, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (1995). □

James LIVINGSTON, *The World Turned Inside Out* (2010), pp. 37-54. □

**Weeks 9-13 Topics to be Chosen by Class**

In the second half of the class, we will examine a major theme or topic in United States history each week. You will have the opportunity to vote on which five topics we cover from a list that I provide. I have yet to finalize this list, but likely topics include:

- African-Americans and Civil Rights
- American Capitalism / Business History
- The New Political History
- Race
- Sexuality
- Technology and the Environment
- Transnational and Comparative History
- The U.S. in the World / Diplomatic History
- War and Military History
- The American West

**Historiographic Essay Due Last Week of Classes**