

History 7500
Graduate Proseminar in Early American History: to 1877
Fall 2017

Tuesdays, 4:35-7:35; CTIHB 351

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217 CTIHB

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 or by appointment

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"In short, one may say anything about the history of the world-- anything that might enter the most disordered imagination. The only thing one can't say is that it's rational. The very word sticks in one's throat." --Dostoevsky.

Course Description: This course is the first half of a two-term sequence introducing you to the graduate study of American history. It's presumptuous, there being over eighty thousand historical works of some kind on the Civil War era alone, and counting, not to mention thousands more on the colonial era, and tens of thousands on the Revolution and the Early Republic. Nor does it really make sense to end Reconstruction in 1877, once the standard end date--most historians now agree that 1896 is more sensible--but we have to stop somewhere. In short, the course can't be comprehensive. But it will introduce you to the main currents--the debates, the shifting ideas, methods, and sources--that have shaped recent historical scholarship. This will give you the means to navigate these waters for yourself as you progress in your careers. To begin to craft voices for yourselves as professional historians and teachers. Historical voice is subtle, shaped now more than ever before--and much like literature--by concerns for language, tone, and point of view. Certainly the most influential single work of the past two generations in my own field, the history of race, is actually a historical novel--but one written by a former academic and an accomplished editor of major scholarship. In this class, you will read fiction and philosophy as well as history, and listen to music, and watch films and videos. You'll also produce such expressive work yourselves. I think today that this is a fundamental exercise for professional historians, history teachers, and students. To be able to handle diverse forms of historical consciousness and translate them into the classroom and the world.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of this semester, students should:

- know the main survey narratives of Anglo-American history from 1600-1877
- understand the major historiographical trends shaping those narratives
- be able to absorb new fields of historical scholarship quickly and effectively
- know how, both verbally and in writing, to evaluate and constructively discuss such material in professional scholarly settings
- have begun writing an annotated syllabus for either a survey class or an upper-division undergraduate American history class
- have begun writing an annotated bibliography for the field of American history
- understand the broad range of disciplinary learning outcomes as outlined on [the History Department's web page](#).

Course Requirements: All students enrolled in this class must fulfill the following requirements:

- complete the assigned material every week and participate actively in discussions
- write **four** 500-600 word (2 pages, double-spaced) **book reviews**, on any of the assigned books on the syllabus, to be submitted on the day we discuss the book in class
- write **four brief "think pieces"** (2 pages or so each, longer is fine if the spirit moves you; the brief think pieces don't have to be written--they can be art, music, video, whatever) on the assignment for a given week; brief think pieces may be produced individually or in groups; like reviews, think pieces are due on the day we discuss the material they cover
- **lead one class discussion** on the assigned material for one week
- **create and present a multimedia undergraduate lecture** with accompanying creative and academic assignments, on the major theme of one weekly assignment
- **begin** work on **an annotated syllabus**
- **begin** work on **an annotated bibliography**
- produce a **final project** on a major historiographic theme of particular interest to you. This final project can be either in the form of a traditional historiographic essay (in the 10-15 page range) or of a fully developed, finished, and substantial think piece

Attendance: All students are expected to attend every class meeting. If an unavoidable conflict arises, speak with me ahead of time. You will be expected to complete additional work to make up for missed class time. For reference, the University's attendance policy is available in the Student Code at [Policy 6-100III-O](#).

Grading and Incompletes: Your grade is based on both your produced work, written and otherwise, and the extent and quality of your participation in class discussions. **Do not underestimate the importance of talking in class.**

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- class participation (including undergraduate lecture and leading discussion): one-third
- reviews and think pieces: one-third
- final project: one-third

I will consider incompletes only in cases of dire need.

Academic Misconduct: Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct, misrepresenting one's work, and inappropriately collaborating. Definitions can be found in the Student Code at [Policy 6-400I-B2](#). If you are suspected of academic misconduct, I will proceed according to the policies of the History Department, the College of Humanities, and the University, which are outlined [on the Department's web page](#).

Students with Disabilities: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability and Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability and Access.

Topics and Assignments

Access. There are no books for purchase at the university bookstore. Instead, most of the course materials are available free online, either via the Marriott Library catalog (you will need to sign in with your uID to access online texts) or directly from the web (urls given below). All the other

materials have been put on 1-Day Reserve at the Marriott Library Reserves Desk. If you wish to have copies of the main course books to mark up and use for subsequent study and work, you are of course free to buy them. All are available at Amazon.com in print or Kindle format and at the iBooks Store.

On Too Much Reading. Please understand that unless the assignment directs you otherwise, you are not expected to read every assignment word for word. If you try to read word for word, history graduate school will overwhelm you, and you'll be missing the point. You need to learn to read quickly for argument and use of evidence. Getting lost in every word and sentence is too passive and almost guarantees that you'll lose the thesis of the work in the details. Don't rely on published book reviews to give you a work's argument either. Figure out for yourself which passages in a work need careful attention and which may be skimmed. Be willing to go back and forth within the work to be sure you understand the point of each section, and also always consider context, bias and limitations. Figure out how to express your reading succinctly and write it down in your notes. Do this for all the works for a given week, think through how those works fit together or disagree, then write that down--now you're ready for class (and well on the way to annotated bibliographies and syllabi). This very active process is the key survival skill for graduate school. It's the only way you'll remember what matters, perform consistently well in class discussions, and begin to assemble your own picture of the field.

Week 1: 8/22. Introduction: Genealogies vs. Metaphysics.

Sample undergraduate introductory lecture: Old Worlds Collide.

Assignment: Po Bronson, "The Power (and Peril) of Praising Your Kids," *New York Magazine*, February 12, 2007, at: <http://nymag.com/news/features/27840/>.

What's your favorite work of history? Come to class prepared to pitch why you find it compelling, and to discuss your goals for the program here. What kinds of history teaching and practice you plan to pursue in the program and after you graduate?

Questions: Does Dweck's work match your experiences? What are realistic alternatives to praising students' intelligence and ability? Think about the people

who've taught you the most in life. What strategies did they use? If you have classroom experience, what strategies have worked best for you?

Week 2: 8/29. Empire, Truth, and Subjectivity

Assignment: Go to the Virtual Jamestown website and look at John White's 1585 original watercolors of Native Americans:<http://www.virtualjamestown.org/exist/cocoon/jamestown/fha/J1010>. Then compare those to the black and white etchings published in England (also available on the site).

*Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Harvard, 2003). Full text available online via Marriott Library Catalog [books available this way will be marked with an asterisk]

Google and watch the entire episode (not just the trailer) of the PBS documentary "We Shall Remain" [hence WSR] episode 1, "After the Mayflower."

Explore the Pokanoket tribe (Wampanoag nation) website and listen to the music (hit play on the home page), at: <http://pokanoket.us/>.

Questions: What do you make of White's watercolors? Critical or accepting? Are White's Indians fully human in White's eyes? Equal to the British? How different are they? Does he Europeanize them, or do you think that his watercolors are faithful representations? How do his originals compare to the public etchings?

What precisely is Chaplin's thesis? What kinds of sources does she use and how does she use them? Where do you think her approach came from?

Compare and contrast Chaplin to WSR. Ask yourself how WSR differs from most history you've learned. What do you make of such an aggressive point of view? More important, think about what evidence the producers might have had for their confident vision of what it was to be Wampanoag confronting the English. Are you convinced?

Week 3: Tuesday, 9/5: Recovering Native American Worlds

Assignment: *Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Harvard, 2003).

Find/rent and watch Sherman Alexie's film, *The Business of Fancydancing*.

Neal Salisbury, "The Indians' Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans," *William and Mary Quarterly* [Hence WMQ] 53 (1996), 435-458. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2947200>;

Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians got to be Red," *American Historical Review* [hence AHR] 102 (1997), 624-44. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2171504>

Juliana Barr, "Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the 'Borderlands' of the American Southwest," *WMQ* 68 (2011), 5-46. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5309/willmaryquar.68.1.0005>

Questions: What do you make of Richter's tone? Elegy? Self-contempt? Crocodile tears? How do Shoemaker and Barr differ from Richter and from each other in both tone and interpretive strategies?

In sum, do you agree with Richter that because of cultural genocide and the lack of written sources, early Native American history is distinct from other fields of American history? Does it require radically different methods? Do those methods translate to other fields and sources?

What might Alexie think? Are historians' attempts at recovery and representation as a toxic brand of romanticism? But if so, why did he bother to make the film or to write?

Week 4, 9/12: Colonialism, Reason, and Equality.

This week, we sum up seventeenth-century themes. I hope by now you've noticed certain patterns.

Foremost, that professional historians try to recover the rules of a given time and place: rules of behavior, language, knowledge, power, resistance--anything in human experience. In the 1960s and 1970s, and much of the 1980s, historians tended to focus on the big rules, the "structures" of imperialism, capitalism and class, race, slavery, gender; the resistance those structures generated; and the new structures born dialogically of resistance, conflict, and accommodation.

Eventually, this big picture approach became tired. It became too obvious that big generalizations weren't adequate to capture real life and real communities on the ground. So in the 1990s and 2000s, academic theory and historiography tuned down in scale--and up in sensitivity--to individual lives and small communities, leading to numerous local histories, collective biographies, and "microhistories". Naturally, these were then synthesized into new, more subtle big picture narratives and analyses emphasizing the contingency of experience and the agency and constraints of all the actors.

To see for yourself how this has worked, begin with a famous passage from perhaps the biggest "structuralist" analysis of our period. Google a high-res image of Diego Velasquez's great painting, *Las Meninas* (1656). Study it carefully. Then read only the introductory section of the Wikipedia entry on it. Ask yourself, knowing only the bare bones of the painting's context, what *Las Meninas* tells you about the rules of knowledge and power across seventeenth-century European and European colonial worlds. Finally, find a copy of Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* and read Chapter 1, "Las Meninas."

Produce your own brief reading of the big "structures" revealed by, first, Charles White's watercolors of Native Americans and, second, the etched versions published in England.

Next, READ CAREFULLY (word for word) Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*.

Then absorb Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (NY: Knopf, 2012)

Google "Middle Passage, images", and see what you get.

Then check out Jason Taylor's remarkable underwater sculpture installation: <http://www.underwatersculpture.com/sculptures/>.

How have the big rules of the "representational" era been reconceptualized from local perspectives of the colonial frontier (and their representations in the metropole)?

This rethinking is of course the aim of scholars like Chaplin, Richter, Bailyn, or novelists like Morrison. To get past the old structuralist claims that colonialism produced human reason and equality by defining colonized peoples as irrational and inferior.

What alternatives does recent scholarship reveal? Can the colonized be understood as more than suffering and absence? Is it persuasive to reconfigure colonialism and its massive consequences--modernity: political, social/economic, cultural, and technological/scientific--to include, or even privilege colonized experiences?