

History 500
Introduction to the Professional Study of History

Fall 2021

Mondays 9:00 - 11:50am | 211 & 210 Dickinson Hall

Professors

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 to 3:30 pm & by appt. | [WASE calendar](#)

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INTRODUCTION

The class introduces the main topics, methods, theories, and problems of History as an academic discipline. When it was introduced in the graduate curriculum of Princeton University in 1960, it could legitimately claim to offer students a comprehensive introduction to the study of History. Today, such assertion sounds preposterous. Writing history has become a diverse intellectual practice, encompassing such a vast array of themes, models, styles, jargons, techniques, and problematics, that the ambition of offering an exhaustive introduction to the state of the field is doomed to failure. Consequently, this class has been taught differently every year, in accordance to the inclinations, expertise, and beliefs of the teaching faculty. This year, we decided to develop a syllabus that purports to reconstruct the processes that led to the eclectic character of history-writing familiar to us today. To do so, the topics covered during the semester are loosely organized in chronological order to give historical depth to our understanding of historians' cognitive practices. As historians, we believe that the best way to grasp the discipline of History is to approach it *historically*, focusing on the changing epistemological legitimations, metaphysical presuppositions, heuristic languages, institutional organizations, and thematic interests.

Requirements

1) Regular attendance and close reading of the assigned material is mandatory. Students are required to upload their reactions to the readings in Blackboard's "Discussion Board" on Saturday and Sunday before class. Participation in class discussions and written postings count for 40% of the grade.

2) Students are required to write a 4-6-page book review. The reviews will be handed in to the instructors before Fall Break and count for 25% of the final grade. The book is to be chosen among the following titles:

- Connie Chiang, *Nature Behind Barbed Wire: An Environmental History of the Japanese American Incarceration* (Oxford University Press, 2018).
- Gabrielle Hecht, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade* (MIT Press, 2012).

- Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Cornell University Press, 2012).
- Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
- Sophia Rosenfeld, *Common Sense: A Political History* (Harvard University Press, 2011).
- Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

3) The third and final course component is a 15–20-page historiographical essay on a topic of your choice (to be approved by the two instructors by week 10), due on Dean’s Date, Tuesday, December 14th. This final assignment counts for 35% of the grade.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Meetings: In adherence to Princeton University’s public health guidelines, we are planning to meet in person, but reserve the right to change the format as required by the evolving situation.

Each week we ask:

- (a) **Readings:** All readings are posted as .pdf files through the seminar’s Canvas webpage. Throughout the course you may find it useful to consult the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) when encountering new philosophical terms or concepts.
- (b) **Discussion Board:**
 - Please complete the readings and upload your reaction paper to the course discussion board (on Canvas) by noon of the Saturday before our Monday discussions. (~500 words)
 - Before class on Monday, please read through your colleagues’ posts and write down (for yourself) a few brief follow-up comments/questions to your original post. Bring these notes to class. The idea is not to comment on others’ posts directly but to reflect on how your initial reactions to the readings have been honed, challenged, or confirmed by your colleagues’ reactions, and to frame a question for our discussions.
- (c) **Course Meetings:** Each week, the course will be divided into two smaller discussions before uniting the class in the last half of our seminar meeting. These halves our will be separated by a brief break. This pattern will ensure that all students come to know everyone else in the seminar over the course of the semester.
- (d) **Office Hours:** Each professor has regular office hours each week, as posted on the course Canvas page and available on our WASE calendars (links above).
 - During the first two weeks of the semester, each student will have a solo 15-minute meeting with each professor. (We’ll alternate to ensure each of us gets to know each of you, such that you meet with both professors in the first two weeks of class.) At the end of the semester approaches, you will meet with one of us once more. These meetings are mandatory.

Week One – **The Myth of Objectivity** – September 13

- Lorraine Daston & Peter Galison, “The Image of Objectivity,” *Representations* Vol. 40 (1992): 81-128.
- Bonnie G. Smith, “What is a Historian” and “The Practices of Scientific History,” in *The Gender of History: Men, Women, & Historical Practice* (Harvard University Press, 2000), 70-129.
- Ian Hacking, “Historical Ontology,” in *Historical Ontology* (Harvard University Press, 2002), 1-26.
- Allan Megill, “Objectivity for Historians,” in *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), 107-123.
- Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* Vol. 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14.

Week Two – **Origin Stories** – September 20

- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, “Editor’s Preface” [1955] and “First Draft: The Varieties of Historical Writing” [1822, 1928], in *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction, Reason in History*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge University Press, 1975), 5-24.
- Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Use and Disadvantages of History for Life” [1874], in Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. D. Breazale (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59-123.
- Max Weber, “The Scholar’s Work” [1917], in *Charisma and Disenchantment: The Vocational Lectures*, ed. Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon, trans. Damion Searls (NYRB, 2020), 3-42.
- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “Introduction,” in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, with a new foreword by Hazel V. Carby (Beacon Press, 2015 [1997]), 1-30.
- Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 26, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 821-865.

Week Three – **The Revolutionary Promise of Marxism** – September 27

- Karl Marx, “For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing” and “The German Ideology: Part I,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. by Robert C. Tucker. 2nd Edition (W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), 12-15, 146-200.
- W. E. B. Du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” in *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (1903), intro. Shawn Leigh Alexander (University of Massachusetts Press, 2018): 1-12.
- W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Propaganda of History,” in *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1935), 699-716.
- Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (Morrow, 1970), 1-14.
- Cedric Robinson, “An Ending,” in *Black Marxism: The Making of a Black Radical Tradition* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 307-318.
- Supplementary: Karl Marx, “The Commodity,” in *Capital* (Penguin, 1976-1990), 125-177.

Week Four – **The Emancipation of the Present** – October 4

- Antonio Gramsci, “Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc” and “Intellectuals and Education,” in *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. David Forgacs (NYU Press, 2000): 189-221 and 300-322.
- Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940), in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 4: 1938-1940 (Harvard University Press, 2003), 389-400.
- Frantz Fanon, “On Violence,” in *Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (Grove Press, 2004 [1961]), 1-62.
- E.P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past & Present*, No. 38 (December 1967): 56-97.
- Adom Getachew, “Revisiting the Federalists in the Black Atlantic,” in *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton University Press, 2019): 107-142.

Week Five – **The Past is a Foreign Country** – October 11

- Mary Douglas, “The Two Bodies,” in *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (Routledge, 1996 [1970]), 69-87.
- Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 101 (1972): 1-37.
- Peter Brown, “Introduction,” *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 20th ann. edition (Columbia University Press, 2008 [1988]), xxi-lxvii.
- Philip Deloria, “Counterculture Indians and the New Age,” in *Playing Indian* (Yale University Press, 1998), 154-180.
- David Engerman, “Rethinking Cold War Universities: Some Recent Histories,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5 (2003): 80-95.
- Katherine Park, “Introduction,” in *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (Zone Books, 2010), 13-38.

FALL BREAK [October 16 – 24]

Week Six – **Epistemologies of Sex and Gender** – October 25

- Michel Foucault, “We Other Victorians,” and “Right of Death and Power over Life,” in *History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 (Vintage, 1990 [1976]), 1-14 and 133-159.
- Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 91, no. 5 (1986), 1053-1075.

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, article 8 (1989): 139-167.
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Introduction: Axiomatic,” in *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, 1990), 1-63.
- Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” Vol. 17, no. 2 (1992): 251-274.
- Dana Simmons, “Impostor Syndrome, a Reparative History,” *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 2 (2016): 106-127.

Week Seven – **Historical Plots** – November 1

- Jorge Luis Borges, “On Exactitude in Science” [1946], in *Collected Fictions*, trans. by Andrew Hurley (Viking, 1998).
- Hayden White, “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 26-57.
- Reinhart Koselleck, “Perspective and Temporality: A Contribution to the Historiographical Exposure of the Historical World,” in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004 [1985]), 130-155.
- Gillian Beer, “Introductory,” in *Arguing with the Past: Essays in Narrative from Woolf to Sidney* (Routledge, 1989), 1-11.
- Tiya Miles, “Removal,” in *The Ties that Bind* (University of California Press, 2005), 149-161.

Supplementary: If you are curious, Umberto Eco expanded Borges’ one paragraph story into a longer version (even it is only 12 pp.): “On the Impossibility of Drawing a Map of the Empire on a Scale of 1 to 1” [1982], in *How to Travel with a Salmon and Other Essays* (Mariner Books, 1995), 95-106.

Week Eight – **Can the Subaltern Speak?** – November 8

- Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage, 1979), 1-110.
- Ranjit Guha, “Prose of Counterinsurgency,” in *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 45-84.
- Gayatri C. Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Two Histories of Capital,” in *Deprovincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 47-71.

Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* Vol. 37, no. 1 (2003): 113-124.

Fernando Coronil, "Latin American Postcolonial Studies and Global Decolonization," in *Postcolonial Studies: An Anthology*, ed. Pramod K. Nayar (Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 204-224.

Week Nine – **Has Critique Run out of Steam?** – November 15

Judith Butler, "Preface (1999)," in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 2007 [1990]), vii-xxviii.

Martha Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody," *The New Republic* (22 February 1999).

Vanessa R. Schwartz, "Walter Benjamin for Historians," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 106, no. 5 (2001): 1721-1743.

Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 30, no. 2 (2004): 225-248.

Lisa Ruddick, "When Nothing is Cool," in *The Future of Scholarly Writing*, ed. Angelika Bammer & Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 71-85.

Week Ten – **The Politics of "Recognition"** – November 22

Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* No. 181 (1990): 95-118.

Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age," *New Left Review* No. 212 (1995): 68-93.

Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," *Feminist Theory* Vol. 8, no. 2 (2007): 149-168.

Glen Sean Coulthard, "Introduction: Subjects of Empire," in *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 1-24.

Ruha Benjamin, "Black AfterLives Matter: Cultivating Kinfulness as Reproductive Justice," in Adele Clarke and Donna Haraway, eds. *Making Kin not Population: Reconceiving Generations* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2018), reprinted in the *Boston Review*, <http://bostonreview.net/race/ruha-benjamin-black-afterlives-matter>.

Week Eleven – **Space and Place** – November 29

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (W.W. Norton & Co, 1995), 69-90.

Eileen Maura McGurty, "From NIMBY to Civil Rights: The Origins of the Environmental Justice Movement," *Environmental History* Vol. 2, no. 3 (1997): 301-323.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 197-222.

Dianne D. Glave, “‘A Garden So Brilliant with Colors, So Original in Its Design’: Rural African American Women, Gardening, Progressive Reform, and the Foundation of an African American Environmental Perspective,” *Environmental History* 8/3 (2003): 395-411.

William Rankin, “Mapping Time in the Twentieth (and Twenty-First) Century,” in Kären Wigen and Caroline Winterer, eds. *Time in Maps: From the Age of Discovery to Our Digital Era* (Princeton University Press, 2020), 15-35.

Week Twelve – Trust in Data? – December 6

Fernand Braudel, “History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*” [1958], trans. Immanuel Wallerstein, in *Review* Vol. 32, no. 2 (2009): 171-203.

David Armitage and Jo Guldi, “The Return of the *Longue Durée*: An Anglo-American Perspective,” *Annales HSS* Vol. 70, no. 2 (2015): 219-247.

Lynn Hunt, “Does History Need a Reset?” *Annales HSS* Vol. 70, no. 2 (2015): 249-254.

Sarah Igo, “Me and My Data,” *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* Vol. 48, no. 5 (2018): 616-626.

Daniel Rosenberg, “Search,” in *Information: A Historical Companion*, ed. Ann Blair, et al. (Princeton University Press, 2021), 259-284.