History 201: Historian’s Craft
History in a Global Age

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Spring 2016
Wednesdays, 8:50 am - 10:45 am
University Club 313

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Office hours: University Club, Room 305 (email me for an appointment)

Course Overview

The study of history, as a discipline and a professionalized practice, was once considered almost exclusively in terms of nations or regions (e.g., Mexican or European history). The question at the heart of the course is: How has the writing and teaching of history changed in an age of ever-accelerating globalization? What are the advantages and disadvantages of writing history from a global perspective? While aware of the central role of Western nations and peoples in such events, the course also emphasizes a variety of non-Western aspects of globalization, the tensions between and among Western and non-Western actors, and the conceptual and analytical limits of the very concept of the “global.” Students will learn that global history cannot be narrated as a single homogenized story, but rather it must be viewed from multiple perspectives.

Course Objectives

The first goal of this course, very broadly, is the teach you how to think and read like a historian. The second goal, more specifically, is to introduce you to the ways in which historians today are writing histories that transcend the nation. The third goal builds off the first two. As you learn to think and read like a historian, and as you learn more about transnational approaches to the writing of history, you will learn how to research and write history from a global and transnational perspective.

These three goals work in tandem to help you develop skills to fulfill your General Education Communication B Requirement. This involves scholarly analysis of primary and secondary sources, including understanding the difference between two. You will also develop research skills, taking advantage of all the wonderful resources available online while also realizing that not everything can or should be “googled.” Finally, through group discussions and presentations, you will hone your communication skills, both written and speaking. Even if you never take a history class again (although I hope you do!), these skills, I promise you, will be invaluable throughout your life.

Requirements and Grading

Attendance (10%).
Discussion questions (20%): Post two questions to Learn@UW by Tuesday at 5 pm.
Class presentation (20%): Provide a 15-25 minute background presentation on a week’s readings.
Mid-term primary source analysis, 3-5 pages (20%) due in-class February 24.
Final paper, 7-10 pages (30%) due May 11.
Readings

The following books are required readings and are available for purchase at the campus bookstore:


Device Policy

(adapted from Hendrik Hartog and Michael Gordin)

Technologies have advanced in the past few years faster than etiquette and the norms of polite behavior that might govern their use. I include this section of the syllabus with regret. Please read it carefully. I understand that for many of you it is extremely difficult to take notes without using a laptop, and I want you to get the most out of this class. Any use of personal devices that enhances learning is a good thing. But these devices can also hurt learning, not only for the user but especially for nearby students. If you intend to use a laptop or tablet, please do not use that time to check Facebook, message your friends, tweet, watch movies, or shop. That way, your activities will not distract other students (and trust me, experience has shown that these activities are in fact highly distracting to those who want to learn). If you have a laptop open, I assume that you are not in fact engaging in those activities. Please don’t let me find out we are wrong. Finally, as far as I am concerned, there is no reason I can imagine why you should ever be looking at your phone during our discussion; it is both rude to me, and rude to your fellow students.

Course Schedule

Week 1, January 20.

Introductions and Course Overview

Sherry Turkle, “Stop Googling. Let’s Talk,” *New York Times*, 26 September 2015. Learn@UW

Week 2, January 27.  Global History and Its Discontents

Thomas Bender, “Introduction” and “Global History America Today” in A Nation Among Nations: America’s Place in World History (New York. NY: Hill and Wang, 2006). Learn@UW

Week 3, February 3.  American Icons


Week 4, February 10.  Contesting Time


Week 5, February 17.  Commodities & Capitalism


Week 6, February 24.  Slavery


NB: Primary source analysis due on February 24; please email to me as a PDF.

Week 7, March 2.  No Class This Week.

Week 8, March 9.  Global Governance


Week 9, March 16.  Immigration

Week 10, March 23.
No class: Spring Break

Week 11, March 30.
What Was the Cold War?


Week 12, April 6.
Decolonization


Week 13, April 13.
Development


Week 14, April 20.
Ecological and Environmental Politics


Week 15, April 27.
Labor, Consumption, and the Neoliberal Order


Week 16, May 4.
Big Picture Models


David Bell, “This is What Happens When Historians Overuse the Idea of the Network,” *New Republic*, 25 October 23. Learn@UW

Final papers due May 11: please email them to me as a PDF.