The faculty in U.S. history created this course six years ago with (at least) three purposes in mind. One goal is to provide a forum in which incoming U.S. students – yourselves – would become better acquainted with each other. A second is to introduce you to a broad range of the U.S. faculty at the outset of your graduate career – hence, the faculty visits that will be a routine feature of our seminar meetings. A third is to give you as incoming students a common grounding in certain essentials of the profession as you embark on your graduate career.

The interpretation of the third of these purposes – a common grounding in certain essentials – has varied from year to year, depending on who has taught the course. This year, the seminar emphasizes the history of writing about U.S. history since the late nineteenth century, a subject that has enjoyed something of a renaissance in the last decade or so and that will encourage us to reflect on what it is that we do as historians. We will also devote some time to what I see as essential conceptual tools for all historians (learning to discern the influence of modernization theory in the work of historians, thinking about power), to the challenges of teaching (especially in internationalizing U.S. history), to professional issues (the education of historians, professional standards), and to the research process (culminating in a research proposal, due at the end of the semester).

In composing this syllabus, I am indebted to the models offered by my colleagues who have taught this course since 2003, although the responsibility for its content is, of course, mine alone.

Readings and Writing Assignments

The assigned reading, you will notice, is rather heavy in the first weeks of the semester and then eases a bit. In the last weeks of the semester, you will be working principally on your own research proposals. The following books are available for purchase in local bookstores and are on reserve (or will be shortly):


Footnote:

Other readings will be available on Learn@UW, E-Reserves, or elsewhere on the internet. Notice that you may be assigned brief readings by visiting faculty (indicated as TBA below); I will give you periodic updates on those readings and where to find as the information becomes available. Also, we will need to decide collectively what primary sources we want to read for discussion on Oct. 12, and my selections for the weeks of Oct. 26 and Nov. 16 are tentative.

Three writing assignments are required over the course of the semester. The first is a review essay, in which you reflect on the joint implications of three surveys of the history of writing U.S. history, together with a handful of primary sources that we will select collectively. The second is a report on the status of transnational approaches to U.S. history in your principal field of interest. Your final project will be a research proposal – think of this as a dry run for your M.A. or Ph.D. thesis. Our focus will be principally on the form that an outstanding proposal should take, although you should treat this as an opportunity to explore in a preliminary way a question that you are considering as a thesis topic.

Requirements and Grading

To do well in this course, you need to: come to seminar every week (attendance is mandatory – that’s routine in graduate school); come prepared to discuss the reading assignments in depth, which means reading actively and bringing your own questions to our collective discussion; and, for the paper assignments, think hard and express the fruits of your intellectual work coherently and engagingly in written form. Also, each student will each, working with a partner, will take responsibility for launching discussion of the week’s assigned readings. Grades will be based on participation (30%), the review essay (20%), the report on transnational approaches in your field (15%), and your research proposal (35%).

Enhancements

During our first seminar meeting, we will discuss possible ways of enhancing this seminar. One possibility is online “discussions” through Learn@UW in advance of each weekly meeting. Or we might create a group blog. Or... what? From your position on the cutting edge of the newest generation of historians, you may well have other ideas.

Schedule of Lectures, Sections, and Readings

Note: Each seminar meeting is divided into two parts. In one part – usually, but not always, 9:30-11:00 a.m. – we will discuss assigned readings and other matters; in the other part, one or more members of our faculty will join us to discuss the current state of their field or their research. The roster of faculty visits may change, as circumstances require. If visiting faculty members assign an essay or two in conjunction with their talks, I will make those available on Learn@UW or E-Reserves or will send you an internet link.

September 14

Introductions

September 21

9:30-11:00 a.m. – The history of writing U.S. history: Take 1

11:00 a.m – 12:00 p.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. Jeremi Suri (international, diplomatic, social)

September 28

9:30-11:00 a.m. – The history of writing U.S. history: Take 2

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. Jean Lee (history and memory)

October 5

9:30-11:00 a.m. – The history of writing U.S. history: Take 3

11:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. Stephen Kantrowitz (19c, race, political)

October 12

9:30-11:00 a.m. – The history of writing U.S. history: A sample of primary sources
Assigned reading:
- Albert Bushnell Hart, “Imagination in History [pres. address],” American Historical Review 15 (January 1910): 227-251. Digital copy on Learn@UW.
- Carter G. Woodson, “The Beginnings of the Miscegenation of the Whites and Blacks,” Journal of Negro History 3 (October 1918): 335-353. Digital copy on Learn@UW.
- Carter G. Woodson, “Ten Years of Collecting and Publishing the Records of the Negro,” Journal of Negro History 10 (October 1925): 598-606. Digital copy on Learn@UW.

Last rev. 11/4/09 - Check next page for continuation.
• Caroline F. Ware, ed. for the American Historical Association, *The Cultural Approach to History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 3-16 (Introduction). Digital copy on Learn@UW.
• Arthur M. Schlesinger, “What Then Is the American, This New Man?,” *American Historical Review* 48 (January 1943): 225-244.
• Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91 (December 1986): 1053-1075. Digital copy on Learn@UW.

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. Gayle Plummer (Afro-American, international)

**Assigned reading:** Nikhil Pal Singh, “Culture/Wars: Recoding Empire in an Age of Democracy,” *American Quarterly* 50 (September 1998): 471-521. Digital copy on Learn@UW or available through MadCat.

October 19

9:30-11:00 a.m. – What have we learned about the history of writing U.S. history?
No assigned reading; discussion of previous weeks’ readings

**Assignment due:** review essay (ca. 12-15 pp.), based on the preceding four weeks of readings.

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. Will Jones (race, working-class)

**Assigned reading:** Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91 (March 2005): 1233-1263. [Linked on Learn@UW to historycooperative.org or use MadCat.]

October 26

9:30-11:00 a.m. – Essential conceptual tools: readings on modernization theory and power

**Assigned readings:**

• *The Social Sciences in Historical Study: A Report of the Committee on Historiography*, Bulletin 64, Social Science Research Council, 1954, 1-33. Digital copy on Learn@UW.

• Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-112). Digital copy on Learn@UW.

• Clark Kerr et al., *Industrialism and Industrial Man: The Problems of Labor and Management in Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 1-46. Digital copy on Learn@UW and there are multiple copies of the book in UW libraries.

• Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 103-171 (chs. 4-5). Digital copy on Learn@UW.


11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. William Reese (education, reform movements)

**Assigned readings:**


Last rev. 11/4/09 - Check next page for continuation.

November 2

9:30-11:00 a.m. – Teaching transnational approaches to U.S. history


Assignment due: report (ca. 5 pp.) on transnational research in your field

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Faculty visitors: profs. William Cronon and Gregg Mitman (environmental)

Assigned reading:

- Gregg Mitman, “In Search of Health: Landscape and Disease in American Environmental History,” Environmental History 10 (April 2005): 184-210. Available on Learn@UW (or through MadCat).
- You may also be interested the student-constructed page “Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer for Environmental Historians and Others.” Available at www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm.

November 9

9:30-11:00 a.m. – The research process (+ demonstration of the bibliographic software Zotero by David Fields)


11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. Susan Johnson (West, gender, sexuality, working-class)

Assigned reading:


November 16

9:30-10:30 a.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. Charles Cohen (religious history)


11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Professional standards, with Prof. William Cronon

Assigned reading:

Last rev. 11/4/09 - Check next page for continuation.
• American Association of University Professional, Statement on Professional Ethics, draft ca. April 1966. Available on Learn@UW.

November 23

No meeting

November 30

9:30-10:30 a.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. John Hall (military, Native American)
  Assigned reading: None
10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. –Your education as historians
  Assigned reading:

December 7

9:30-10:30 a.m. – Faculty visitor: professors Nan Enstad and Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen (cultural)
  Assigned reading:
10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Presentation of research proposals

December 14

9:30-11:00 a.m. – Presentation of research proposals
11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Faculty visitor: Prof. Colleen Dunlavy (capitalism)
  Assigned reading: None

Final assignment due December 21: research proposal (ca. 10-12 pp.)