History 900 – Intro to History for U.S. Historians – Fall 2011

Department of History, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Meeting Time and Place – Mondays, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., 5245 Mosse Humanities
Prof. Dunlavy – ofc: 5209 Mosse Humanities Bldg., mailbox #5005, t. 608.263.1854, cdunlavy@wisc.edu
Office Hours: Monday, 1:00-2:00 p.m.; Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m.; or by appointment.

Goals of this Course

The faculty in U.S. history created this course with three purposes in mind. One is to provide a forum in which incoming U.S. students – yourselves – can become better acquainted with each other. A second goal is to introduce you to a broad range of the U.S. faculty at the outset of your graduate career. Each week from Sept. 26 through Dec. 5, a member of the U.S. faculty will visit seminar to discuss recent developments in her/his field(s) of expertise. These visits will usually take place during the second hour of seminar.

The third goal is to give you a common grounding in certain essentials of the profession as you embark on your graduate career. The interpretation of this goal has varied somewhat 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 historians do, how it has changed over time, and how it might be transformed in the future. We will also explore essential conceptual tools for historians (learning to discern the influence of modernization theory in the work of historians, thinking about power), the challenges of internationalizing U.S. history, the burgeoning body of digital resources, professional issues such as the education of historians and professional ethics, and the research process (culminating in a research proposal).

Readings and Writing Assignments

The assigned reading 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 have been placed on reserve at UW libraries:

• Steven Lukes, Power: A Radical View, 2d ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

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Other assigned readings will be available on Learn@UW or elsewhere on the internet (a handful remains to be finalized — update to follow soon).

Other useful works to know about (on reserve, non-circulating, or available as electronic resources at UW libraries):


• Good complements to our historiographical readings:

• More on transnational history:

Four assignments are required over the course of the semester. The first is a review essay, in which you reflect on the joint implications of our historiographic reading, together with a handful of primary sources that we will select collectively. The second and third are reports, respectively, on the status in your field of transnational approaches to U.S. history and of digital/online resources. The final project, due at the end of the semester, is a research proposal. 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 for future research.

**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. In the first part of the semester, each of you, working with a partner, will take responsibility for launching discussion of the week’s assigned readings. Grades will be

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based on participation (30%), the review essay (15%), the reports on transnational approaches and digital resources in your field (15% each), and your research proposal (25%).

**Schedule of Lectures, Sections, and Readings**

**Note:** Most seminar meetings will be divided into two parts. In one part – usually, but not always, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.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.

September 12

Introductions

September 19

Discussion of assigned reading:

September 26

12:00-1:00 p.m.  – Prof. Will Jones (Post-WWII, labor, African American history)

October 3

12:00-1:00 p.m.  – Prof. Charles Cohen (religious, colonial history)

October 10

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.  – Prof. Tony Michels (Jewish, radicalism)
12:00-1:00 p.m.  – Discussion of a sample of primary sources from the preceding readings, to be chosen collectively. Selections as of 9/25/11 (will be available on Learn@UW):
- Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893).

October 17

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.  – Profs. William Cronon, Nancy Langston, Gregg Mitman (environmental, Western)
12:00-1:00 p.m.  – No assigned reading; discussion topic: What have we learned about the history of writing U.S. history?

**Assignment due:** review essay (ca. 8-10 pp.), based on the preceding readings.
October 24

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. — Essential conceptual tools: modernization theory and power

Assigned readings:

12:00-1:00 p.m. — Prof. William Reese (education, reform movements)

October 31

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. — Transnational approaches to U.S. history


Assignment due: report (ca. 5 pp.) on transnational approaches in your field of interest

12:00-1:00 p.m. — Prof. Cindy Cheng (Asian American, Cold War culture)

November 7

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. — The research process

Assigned reading:

12:00-1:00 p.m. — Prof. John Hall (military, American Indian)

November 14

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. — Getting (and maintaining) a grip on the growing body of digital resources

Assigned reading (all linked on Learn@UW):
- Websites:
  - Digital History Reader: [http://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/](http://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/)
  - History Matters: [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/)

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Railroads and the Making of Modern America (GIS-based): http://railroads.unl.edu/
- The Valley of the Shadow (path-breaking in its day): http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/
- Learning to Do Historical Research: http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/
- History News Network: http://hnn.us/
- Google search: digital history

12:00-1:00 p.m. – Prof. Stephen Kantrowitz (19th century, Civil War era)

November 21

No class meeting – third assignment (on digital resources in your field) is due (email it to me, please); push ahead with your research proposal

November 28

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Professional standards and ethics

 Assigned readings:

- American Association of University Professional, Statement on Professional Ethics, draft ca. April 1966. Available on Learn@UW.
- Richard Rayner, “Channelling Ike,” The New Yorker, April 26, 2010. Available on Learn@UW.

12:00-1:00 p.m. – Prof. Nan Enstad (gender, cultural history)

December 5

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. – Educating historians

 Assigned reading:


12:00-1:00 p.m. – Prof. Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen (intellectual history)

December 12

11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. – Workshop-style presentation of research proposals


December 21

Research proposals are due (ca. 10-12 pp.)

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