I. Working definition of social history

SOCIAL HISTORY: The study of daily routine behavior, crucial life course events, and shared beliefs of the various groups of nonelite people who make up the great majority of the population, with the intention of discovering systematic patterns and inferring the causes of change in these patterns over time.

Topically, this definition leads us to the study of births, marriages, deaths (fertility, health, customs related to demographic events); of socialization, childrearing and childcare, and educational patterns; work conditions, recruitment, workplace culture; geographic and occupational mobility, income, expenditures, and opportunity; cultural and religious conflict, immigration, and assimilation; the political behavior of people (as voters, as rioters); the purpose and effect of institutions that deal with nonelite people; roles and power relationships (gender roles in society, in the family); community development; ideology, values and communication at the popular level; --- to name but a few.

This definition implies that the social historian takes as a central problem and theme the relationship between behavior and belief, between structure and ideas.

Finally, trying to infer causes for changes in behavior or belief patterns leads social historians to an interest in large social transformations like the development of capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, migration, and emancipation.
II. Scope of the field: a crude outline of social and cultural history topics

A. The family
   1. Sexuality, reproduction
      a. Fertility
      b. Birth control
      c. Childbirth
      d. Prostitution
      e. Homosexuality
      f. Sexuality: other topics
      g. Gender
   2. Stages of life, transitions
      a. Life course: theoretical, general
      b. Childhood, childcare
      c. Youth, adolescence
      d. Courtship, marriage
      e. Divorce
      f. Old age, death
   3. The home, housework
   4. Family budgets, household economy
B. Women
   1. Women’s sphere, ideology
   2. Women’s institutions
   3. Women’s rights
C. Education
   1. Elementary and secondary
   2. The higher learning
      a. Higher education
      b. Professional knowledge, science and society
D. Work
   1. Corporate capitalism
   2. Labor, men at work, people at work
   3. Women at work
   4. Unions
E. Communication, media
   1. Print media
      a. Books
      b. Magazines
      c. Newspapers
   2. Film
   3. Electronic media
      a. Radio
      b. Television
   4. Computers and society
F. Consumer culture
   1. Advertising
   2. Consumers, distribution of goods
G. Public opinion
H. Leisure
   1. General
   2. Sports
I. Communities
   1. Works on community as an idea, as a force
   2. Urban history: case studies, syntheses
   3. Rural history: case studies, syntheses
J. European ethnicity and immigration
   1. The immigrant experience
   2. Assimilation, nativism, pluralism
K. Racial minorities
   1. Black Americans
   2. Hispanic Americans
   3. Asian Americans
   4. Native Americans
L. Poverty, income
M. Deviance
   1. Crime, prisons, criminal justice
   2. Insanity, asylums
N. Health, medicine
O. Other reforms
P. Religion and society
Q. Success, mobility
   1. The success ethic
   2. Mobility studies
R. Countercultures, utopias
III. Some journals that deal with American social and cultural history

American Historical Review
Journal of American History
Journal of Social History
Journal of Interdisciplinary History
Social Science History
Historical Methods
Reviews in American History
William and Mary Quarterly
Journal of Family History
History of Education Quarterly
Labor History
Journal of Negro History
Signs
Feminist Studies
Urban History
American Quarterly
New England Quarterly
Radical History Review
Ethnic Studies
History and Theory

IV. Some assessments of social and cultural history

Olivier Zunz, ed., Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1985, pb)
John Higham and Paul Conkin, New Directions in American Intellectual History (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, pb)
James A. Henretta, "Social History as Lived and Written," American Historical Review 84 (December, 1979), 1293-1322
Journal of Interdisciplinary History, volume 13 (Spring, 1983), special issue on quantitative research techniques.
Theda Skocpol, "Social History and Historical Sociology: Contrasts and Complementarities," Social Science History 11 (Spring, 1987).
V. Preparation: critical reading for discussion of works in social and cultural history.

A. What are the major arguments of the book?
B. What sorts of evidence are used to support them?
C. How adequate is the evidence? How conclusively does it support the argument?
D. Are there alternative explanations for the same evidence?
E. What overarching assumptions about human nature and society guide the author? Are implicit or explicit theories used? Appropriately, persuasively?

VI. Samples of my essay reviews:

Reviews of single works:
- Michael Katz’s The People of Hamilton, in *Reviews in American History* vol. 4 (December, 1976)
- Colin Burke’s, American Collegiate Populations, in *Science* vol. 220 (May, 1983)

Review of several works:
"Social Reform and the Urban School," *History of Education Quarterly* vol. 12 (Summer, 1972)
American social and cultural history: 1860-1940

Scope of the course:

In this course we will examine historical works about the lives of ordinary people from about 1860 to 1940. Our effort will be to explore the behavior and beliefs of non-elite people, their daily activities, crucial life-course decisions, and their reactions to major social transformations that affected their lives.

The common readings fall under three themes: emancipation, industrialization, and cultural production. Students will have an opportunity to explore a topic of their choice during a three-week independent reading unit in the middle of the semester.

Methodological emphasis:

Although this is not a course in methodology, there will be continual attention to methodological problems encountered in studying ordinary people in the past. Despite an outpouring of interesting recent work on social and cultural history, our knowledge on many matters is rudimentary and precarious. Thus, methodology will be one of our central concerns.

Assignments:

In addition to reading the assigned works carefully and contributing to the general discussion, each student will prepare three papers. One of these papers will report on work done and insights gained during the independent reading period.

Paperback books to purchase:

Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long* (Vintage)
Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (Oxford)
Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Sorrow, Labor of Love* (Basic)
Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, et al., *Like a Family* (North Carolina)
John Bodnar, *The Transplanted* (Indiana)
David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas* (Texas)
Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements* (Temple)
Roland Marchand, *Advertising and the American Dream* (California)
Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (Yale)

The Labaree book, *The Making of an American High School*, is available only in hardback. I have asked the bookstores to stock it as an optional purchase, and I shall place several copies on reserve when we approach that date on the syllabus.
Class meetings:

The seminar meets on Tuesday mornings, from 10:00 until 12:00. Please inform me in advance if you must miss any session.

Office hours:

My office hours are from 1:30 to 3:00 PM on Wednesdays in Room 215 Education Building, or by appointment. My phone numbers are: 263-2394 (History), 262-2812 (Education), or 238-5910 (home).

Reading assignments:

Week 1  September 4  Introduction to the course

UNIT ONE: EMANCIPATION

Week 2  September 11  The short-run, grassroots impact


Bonus discussion: writing tips and stylistic exhortations

Supplementary reading:

William Gillette, Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879 (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1979, pb).
Week 3  
September 18

Cultural evolution

READ: Lawrence Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977, pb).

Bonus discussion: Folk materials as evidence

Supplementary reading:

Gene Bluestein, The Voice of the Folk: Folklore and American Literary Theory (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1972, pb).

Week 4  
September 25

Black women and work


Bonus discussion: visit to Wisconsin State Historical Library

Supplementary reading:

William H. Harris, The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War (New York, Oxford University Press, 1982, pb).
UNIT TWO: CAPITALISM AND CULTURE IN THE INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION

Week 5
October 5

Ethnic clash: the Chicano experience


Bonus discussion: state of Chicano history (guest)

Supplementary reading:


The industrialization of the countryside


Bonus discussion: oral history

Supplementary reading:


UNIT THREE: INDEPENDENT PROJECTS

Week 8
October 23

Individual conferences

Week 9
October 30

Social gathering, no seminar meeting

Week 10
November 6

Oral reports (double session).
UNIT FOUR: CULTURAL PRODUCTION, REPRODUCTION, AND RESISTANCE

Week 11
November 15

The stratification of culture


Supplementary reading:


Week 12
November 20
Leisure and class


Supplementary reading:


Week 13
November 27
Education and social structure


Supplementary reading:


Joel Spring, Education and the Rise of the Corporate State (Boston, Beacon Press, 1972, pb).


Julia Wrigley, Class Politics and Public Schools: Chicago, 1900-1950 (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1982).

Week 14
December 4

Advertising


Supplementary reading:


Week 15
December 11

Women challenge cultural constraints


Supplementary reading:

Margaret Rossiter, Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940 (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, pb).
Sheila Rothman, Woman's Proper Place (New York: Basic, 1978, pb)