

**University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of History**

**History 701. History in a Global Perspective:
“Comparison in History”**

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History 701 has three broad goals. First, to encourage you to think about history and about your work from a global perspective. Second, to introduce you to faculty outside your area of study and incite you to work with a spectrum of historians during your studies. And finally, to promote a greater sense of intellectual and personal community among graduate students and foster links among students in different fields.

This year the seminar will focus on comparison in history. Comparison is essential to place your own work (and the research of others) in a global perspective. Why and how does one compare, and to what end? What is to be gained by comparison and what are the problems associated with it? How does comparing help historians in a wide variety of temporal and thematic fields think about their materials in fresh and novel ways? Historians have often called for more comparing and more comparative history, with modest results. Why is this so?

While most of you will not become comparative historians the vast majority of you will practice comparison in order to situate and define your work. The seminar will introduce you to how history department faculty approach about the process of comparison, and evaluate its problems and pitfalls.

Given the size of the class (40 + students) and the limited time at our disposal (50 minutes per week) our discussions will be suggestive and illustrative rather than comprehensive. The goal is to help all students think about new questions and approaches. Like every course you will take while in Madison, what you get out of the seminar is dependent on the investment you make in it.

Requirements and class mechanics:

We meet on Thursdays from 12:05 to 12:55 in the Curti Lounge. Please arrive a few minutes early so that we may begin on time. Most seminars will be led by a faculty member who will discuss a topic or methodology related to comparing. Readings consist of one or two articles chosen by the visiting faculty, and will be posted on the class Learn@UW page one week in advance. Guests will speak for approximately 20 minutes and we will then open up the floor to questions and debate. Your participation is essential. Please note that I am asking you to attend the September 14th Mosse lecture (more details below) and we will discuss it on September 23 with Prof. David Sorkin.

The requirements for this course are modest. Do the readings and come to seminar prepared with questions. In addition, you should:

- Write up a 2 page research proposal that is comparative in nature (due December 15.)
- Write short reflections about the readings or about the faculty presentation and seminar. Your comments can take the form of a short critique, a series of questions, or an evaluation of the texts. I'm looking for no more than one paragraph (7-10 lines). Your comments should be posted on the class "discussion" site by the Friday following our seminar. Please post comments for 8 of the 12 weeks of readings and presentations (I'm including the Mosse lecture session).

Grading is based on attendance (please notify me if you will be absent; an unreasonable number of absences will be noted), contributions to discussion (both written and oral), and your research proposal.

History 701 website: *Go to your Learn@UW → locate your class list and click History 701 → then click on "content" (for the readings) or "Discussion" (to post your comments) in the upper left hand corner.*

September 2. Laird Boswell. Introduction.

September 9. Jim Sweet. The Cunning of Comparativist Reason

Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, "On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 16.1 (1999): 41-58

Michael Hanchard, "Acts of Misrecognition: Transnational Black Politics, Anti-Imperialism and the Ethnocentrism of Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 20.4 (2003): 5-29.

September 14. To prepare for Professor David Sorkin's presentation on September 23, I am asking you to attend the Mosse lecture on Sept 14, presented by Prof. Mary Gluck (Brown University). If you can't attend the September 14 lecture, you should attend one of the subsequent lectures (September 15 and 16). The lecture series is entitled "The Invisible Jewish Budapest: Assimilation and Urban Modernity in Central Europe."

Tuesday Sept 14. Room L160 Chazen Museum, 4. pm. "Public Spaces, Private Selves: Jewish Flâneurs in Fin-de-Siècle Budapest"

Wednesday Sept 15. Room L140 Chazen Museum, 4 pm. "Jewish Humor: Self-Parody or Therapy?"

Thursday Sept 16, Room L160 Chazen Museum, 4 pm. "Parvenues and Pariahs: The Scandal of the Budapest Orpheum."

September 16. Jeremi Suri. Historical Comparisons as International History

Jeremi Suri, "The Making of an International Counterculture." *The American Historical Review* 114 (February 2009): 45-68.

September 23. David Sorkin, Discussion of the Mosse Lectures

September 30. Lou Roberts, Comparative Method: Dos and don'ts

Micol Seigel, "Beyond Compare: Comparative Method after the Transnational Turn," *Radical History Review*, Issue 91 (Winter 2005), pp. 62-90.

October 7. Francisco Scarano, New World Slavery as Comparative History

David Brion Davis, "Looking at Slavery from Broader Perspectives." AHA Forum. *American Historical Review* 105, no. 2 (April 2000): 452-66.

October 14. Florencia Mallon. The Challenges and Benefits of Comparative/Transnational History in Latin America

Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (University of California Press, 1995), pp. xv-xx, 310-330.

October 21. Francine Hirsch. The USSR as the new British Empire?

Readings TBA

October 28. Leslie Abadie and Christine Lamberson: Managing time to degree and crafting a CV as an emerging scholar

November 4. Nan Enstad. Minor Transnationalisms

Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih eds., *Minor Transnationalism* (Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 1-23.

November 11. Miranda Johnson. The Politics of Comparison in Settler Societies

"Why are Race Relations in New Zealand Better than in South Africa, South Australia, or South Dakota?" *New Zealand Journal of History* 5, 2, 1972

November 18. Mark Kleijwegt. Documenting Slavery in Comparative Perspective

Readings TBA

November 25. Thanksgiving

December 2. Pernille Ipsen. Interracial Marriage in Trading Posts and Colonies: a Comparison

Readings TBA

December 9. Laird Boswell. Final Thoughts: Should Historians Compare and to What End?

Peter Baldwin, "Comparing and Generalizing: Why all History is Comparative, Yet No History is Sociology" and Nancy L. Green, "Forms of Comparison," in Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor eds., *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (Routledge, 2004), 1-22, 41-56.