

Department of History
University of Wisconsin-Madison
College of Letters and Science

Theory/History/Japan
History 855

Spring 2013
Friday 3:30-5:30
5257 Humanities

Professor Louise Young
OH Tues 11-1 and by appt
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Course Description

The practice of history has been shaken up after two decades of theoretical provocations, set in motion by a series of turns: the cultural turn, the linguistic turn, the transnational turn. We must now navigate a thicket of “posts” (post structuralism, post modernism, post colonialism), “news” (the new imperial history, the new humanities, the new environmental history) and “criticals” (critical regionalism, critical race studies, critical Asian studies) as we read, write, and teach history. This course will help you build an intellectual compass to guide you through this wealth of theory and find ways to bring it into your historical practice.

The syllabus is set up to match a theoretical reading with a historical monograph on the same theme—e.g. Terry Eagleton, Ideology with Carol Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths; and David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity with Harry Harootunian, Overcome By Modernity. Topics have been chosen to match the research interests of students planning on attending the seminar.

Course Requirements

1. **Attendance and participation.** (15%)
2. **Weekly web response.** (15%) Each week by 11:00 am the day our class meets, all students should post a short response to the readings on the course website at learn@UW.
 - a. For those weeks we are reading a historical monograph, please develop 2-3 discussion questions. Pose your question, but also explain what prompted you to ask it.
 - b. For those weeks we are reading a theoretical text, sketch out 2-3 concepts you find useful for your work or that have changed the way you think about history. One paragraph per concept.

3. **Presentation: theory in context.** (15%) Pick one topic from the syllabus and situate the featured work within the broader context of theory on this theme. For example, if you choose “nationalism”, place Ernest Gellner’s work in context for the class. Who is Ernest Gellner? What impact has he had on theories of nationalism? Who are the people he is in conversation with? How does he fit in a broader field of debate about nations and nationalism? Can you provide a thumbnail sketch of the chronological development of theories of nationalism? What kinds of presentist concerns drive theoretical debate? Your presentation should take about 10 minutes (I’ll cut you off at 15). Bring a one-page outline of the presentation to distribute to the class.
4. **Annotated bibliography.** (15%) Students will prepare a bibliography covering work on your master’s or dissertation topic, composed of theoretical and historical (or literary) works. The bibliography should include 8-10 books and articles and be organized thematically. Annotations may include brief descriptions of your thematic categories and/or brief descriptions of the titles included in the bibliography. Students will present their conclusions orally as brief in-class presentations (10 minutes) and in writing as annotated bibliographies. Due one week after your in-class presentation.
5. **Ten-page essay.** (40%) In the essay, lay out the theoretical influences on your own work. Alternatively, you can pick one of the historical readings, and discuss the use of theory and critique its effectiveness. Ideally, this assignment should build on (2) the presentation of theory in context and (3) the annotated bibliography. Due May 15.
6. For those of you in other disciplines or working on particular projects such as prelims, I am open to adapting these assignments to suit your academic programs.

Readings

Course readings are listed in the class schedule. All readings are on sale at the University Bookstore and on reserve at College Library.

Class Schedule

I. introduction

25 Jan.

Overview of the syllabus, roundtable introductions.

- Prepare for class: 5 minute self-introduction to your research interests. Bring a one-paragraph description of your project (as it is currently formulated: we expect these to be diamonds in the rough!) to circulate (10 copies).

II. *modernity*

1 Feb. David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, 1-65, 99-140, 201-283

8 Feb. Harry Harootunian, Overcome By Modernity, TBA

III. *ideology*

15 Feb. Terry Eagleton, Ideology, an Introduction, 1-158, 193-224

22 Feb. Carol Gluck, Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period, 1-72, 157-246

1 March NO CLASS

IV. *theorizing "the social"*

8 March William Sewell, Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformations, 1-196, 318-373

15 March Hyun-ok Park, Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution in Manchuria, TBA

V. *nations and nationalism*

20 March* new time: WED 5:30-7:30
Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, all (143 pp);
Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, The Invention of Tradition, 1-14

5 April Tak Fujitani, Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan, TBA

VI. *consumer culture*

12 April Don Slater, Consumer Culture and Modernity, 1-173

19 April Miriam Silverberg, Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: the mass culture of Japanese modern times, 1-50, 177-270

VII. *class*

26 April Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, The Future of Class in History: What's Left of the Social?

3 May Ken Kawashima, The Proletarian Gamble: Korean Workers in interwar Japan

VIII. *summary session*