

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

HISTORY 600

SPRING 2024 SEMINAR TOPICS

Instructions & Guidelines

In this document you will find a list of History 600 seminars that will be offered by the Department of History in spring semester of 2024. All History 600 seminars require instructor permission in order to enroll. Please read the course descriptions carefully, and begin contacting faculty as soon as possible once you have found the seminar that you would like to take. We do not allow students to request permission from multiple instructors at the same time, so please make your choice early and only contact another instructor if you are unable to get a seat in your first-choice course. When an instructor gives their permission to have you in the course, you can be sure that your seat is reserved. You will also receive a confirmation email from [Sophie Olson](#) (Undergraduate Program Coordinator) letting you know that instructor permission has been entered into the enrollment system. Then, you should be set to enroll when your appointment arrives.

In your emails to professors, please include the following information:

1) Subject Line: History 600 Seminar

Emails titled in this way are more likely to receive a timely response.

2) 10-Digit Campus ID#

This is very important, as permission to enroll cannot be entered without your 10-digit campus ID number, so any delay in getting this information could delay your enrollment in the course.

3) Why you are interested in the course

In the course information, some professors have more-specific instructions and ask for additional information, so be sure to address those items as well.

Important: History 600 seminars are open to History majors and History certificate students who have completed a History 201 course. If you have not declared the History major or the History certificate, you must do so before you will be authorized to enroll in a seminar. See the [Declaring the History Major or Certificate](#) page for information about how to declare the major and certificate.

HISTORY 600-001

Global History of Non-Violence

Professor Mou Banerjee
Monday 1:20-3:15pm

This course is an introduction to the intellectual history of non-violence as a viable method of political resistance and civil rights activism. We shall study the evolution of the politics of non-violence in the 20th century globally and compare the evolution of different strategies of non-violent political protests as these emerged in political regimes in the regions of South Asia, South Africa and the USA through the inspired political leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and others. Our aim will be to recognize key features of nonviolent action or civil resistance and meditate on whether nonviolent action is an outdated mode of public protest in the 20th and 21st century. Is it still a weapon of the weak, or does it hold within itself the transformative power of morally destabilizing authoritarian regimes?

The main objective of the course is to help students think and write critically about the discourses of non-violent and civil resistance practices. We will do this through close reading and analysis of primary sources and secondary material, as well as through writing assignments. In the written assignments, we shall work on identifying and engaging with historical arguments through examination and contextualization of primary sources and through critiques of academic monographs or articles.

By the end of this course, students will have achieved the following course learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate a strong basis of knowledge of the history and political practice of non-violence in the world.
- Demonstrate the ability to do historical research and analysis, including the use of primary sources and demonstrate the ability to write a research paper of publishable quality.

Students will be expected to consult the UW-Madison and Wisconsin Historical Society Archives and familiarize themselves with the Center for Campus History, to write their final papers.

Students interested in this course should contact Professor Mou Banerjee via email (mbanerjee4@wisc.edu) with their campus ID number, major(s), year in college, and a brief description of their interest in the course.

HISTORY 600-002

The European Union in History

Professor Laird Boswell
Wednesday 11:00am-12:55pm

This seminar examines the origins and development of European Union from its origins in the 1950s to the present. We will trace the expansion of Europe in the political, economic, and cultural realms. What was the purpose of European unification and did it change over time? Did the European Union end up reinforcing national states or, on the contrary, did it strengthen regionalism and cultural pluralism? Was European unity a democratic process or was it a top-down enterprise? Did it benefit particular nations, economic interests, or social groups? What are the origins of Euroscepticism and why have extreme right-wing parties successfully run on anti-EU platforms? The readings will introduce you to a range of approaches and interpretations. In addition to common readings and discussions during the first half of the semester, students are required to complete a 20-25 page research paper. Students may work on any topic connected to the history of the European Union from the 1950s to the present day.

Students interested in this course should contact Professor Laird Boswell via email (lboswell@wisc.edu) with their campus ID number, major(s), year in college, and a brief description of their interest in the course.

HISTORY 600-003

Abolitionist Movements, 1619-Present

Professor April Haynes
Wednesday 11:00am-12:55pm

This course fosters original research about social movements to end race-based slavery, other forms of human trafficking, and the prison-industrial complex. We will formulate new research projects to address major questions raised by the transatlantic, Anglophone historiography on slavery and abolitionism. Historians from Hilary McD Beckles to Manisha Sinha have concluded that the first abolitionists were enslaved people of all genders. Some questions raised by their findings include: What political traditions did enslaved abolitionists bequeath to their descendants? How did free people of color organize against slavery as part of a larger Black Freedom Struggle, despite political disfranchisement and severe economic constraints? How did activist dynamics shift when white Britons and North Americans joined the movement? To what extent did the legal abolition of slavery in former British colonies and the United States enable real freedom? To what extent did political actors sharing imperial, capitalist, and white supremacist interests simply reinstitute “slavery in all but name”? And how did post-slavery activists address this tension?

Since the nineteenth century, multiple social movements have framed their goals and rhetoric in terms of abolition. Some target modern institutions by comparing them to chattel slavery, while others sustain an unbroken tradition of dissent drawing upon Black abolitionist perspectives from centuries past. This seminar offers students an opportunity to discover and analyze modern movements such as “the new abolitionism” espoused by anti-trafficking activists, prison/police abolition, and abolition feminism. We will read representative texts produced by and about these movements as starting points for new research in the history of social movements. To what purposes has abolitionism been invoked in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and with what results? How and why have modern abolitionist movements persistently taken a transnational approach, just like their predecessors?

Students will explore the digital and physical archives most likely to answer targeted questions in both of the above areas of inquiry. A capstone research essay of roughly 20 pages will be the major summative assignment in History 600. As your senior thesis, it will involve original primary-source research that meaningfully contributes to the existing historical literature.

Students interested in this course should contact Professor April Haynes via email (april.haynes@wisc.edu) with their campus ID number, major(s), year in college, and a brief description of their interest in the course.

HISTORY 600-004

Women and Crusades

Professor Elizabeth Lapina
Wednesday 1:20-3:15pm

In 1099, a motley army from Western Europe took the city of Jerusalem and massacred its population. This was the beginning of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which lasted for two hundred years. In our seminar, we will approach this historical development from an unusual perspective, focusing on the role of women. Women actively participated in the crusades and in the life of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other states established during the First Crusade and in its immediate aftermath. Women were, of course, also among the many victims of crusaders.

In the seminar, we will analyze the motivations of women who went on crusades as well as a wide variety of roles that women played while on crusades. However, we will spend the majority of the time discussing the women living in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other states established during or in the aftermath of the First Crusade. These states, ruled by Latin (Western) Christians, were notable for the heterogeneity of their population, so we will attempt to uncover the experiences of Muslim, Jewish, Eastern Christian as well as Latin Christian women. Among other things, we will discuss queens of Jerusalem and other noble women and will attempt to understand the extent and the limitations of their power; we will study women as patrons, responsible for numerous architectural and artistic projects; we will discover patterns of religious beliefs and practices proper to women in this region ; and we will study the variety of fates of women who became captives of war. The students will also watch (on their own) Ridley Scott's film, "Kingdom of Heaven" about the Kingdom of Jerusalem and we will evaluate and discuss the film's accuracy in its representation of medieval women.

Students will be expected to undertake independent research and to submit a paper on any topic having to do with women and either crusades or the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Students interested in this course should contact Professor Elizabeth Lapina via email (lapina@wisc.edu) with their campus ID number, major(s), year in college, and a brief description of their interest in the course.

HISTORY 600-005

CIA's Covert Wars & US Foreign Policy

Professor Alfred McCoy
Tuesday 11:00am-12:55pm

Course Description: Designed for undergraduates and graduate students with some background in U.S. diplomatic history or international relations, the course will probe the dynamics of CIA covert wars through comparative case histories over the past 75 years. By focusing on world regions such as Europe, Latin America, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia, the seminar will explore the central role these covert wars played in the Cold War and its aftermath. These clandestine interventions often succeeded brilliantly from a U.S. perspective. But they sometimes left behind ruined battlegrounds and ravaged societies that became veritable black holes of international instability.

After several sessions reviewing the origins of the CIA and its distinctive patterns of clandestine warfare, the seminar will apply a case-study approach to covert wars in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America—including, the anti-Mossadeq coup in Iran, overthrow of Sukarno in Indonesia, Lumumba's murder in the Congo, and the protracted war in Afghanistan. Reflecting the significance of Southeast Asia to CIA operations, the seminar will also devote four sessions to this region, including anti-Sukarno operations in Indonesia, anti-communist pacification in the Philippines, counter-guerilla operations in South Vietnam, and the secret war in Laos—arguing that the latter two operations are central to understanding more recent conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq.

Through the sum of such content, students should finish the seminar with knowledge about a key facet of U.S. foreign policy and a lifelong capacity for critical analysis of international relations. Beyond such an approach, the course will give students sharpened analytical abilities, refined research tactics, improved oral presentations, and better writing skills.

Class Meetings: This seminar will meet on Tuesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 12:55 p.m. in Room 5257 Humanities Building.

Office Hours: In Room 5131 Humanities, Thursdays 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and other hours by appointment that can be arranged by emailing me at awmccoy@wisc.edu.

Grading: In addition to participating in each class, students shall be marked on their presentation of two 15-minute summaries of the week's topic, and three writing assignments—two short papers for the first and last class, as well as a major essay based on one of the student's oral presentations about a particular CIA covert operation.

Students interested in this seminar should send Professor Alfred McCoy a short email at awmccoy@wisc.edu, stating: (a.) their status (Junior, Senior); (b.) major (History or other); (c.) past courses with this instructor, if any; (d.) GPA (overall and in major); (e.) campus ID (to facilitate registration); and (e.) a sentence about their interest in the course.

HISTORY 600-006

US History through Banned Books

Professor Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen
Wednesday 8:50-10:45am

The current trend of book bannings in the U.S. casts in bold relief the long history of bitter contestation over ideas in America. What has always been fundamentally at stake in these intellectual and cultural battles is the fear that certain ideas are “dangerous” or “un-American” or both. Examining which books have been banned, when, why, and by whom allows us to eavesdrop on the past and encounter how Americans have conceptualized and grappled with ideas about race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, politics, technology, the economy, and morality in their particular historical contexts.

The course will spend the first weeks examining the history of book bannings from colonial times up until today, comparing them with similar phenomena in other national contexts, and then focusing on a number of exemplary cases. This will help prepare students to then pick their own banned book in its historical context to research, which will form the basis of their 20-30 page final paper.

Students interested in this course should contact Professor Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen via email (ratnerrosenh@wisc.edu) with their campus ID number, major(s), year in college, and a brief description of their interest in the course.

HISTORY 600-007

Drunk History: Alcohol in the World

Professor James Sweet
Tuesday 11:00am-12:55pm

*“Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.”—Benjamin Franklin**

This course examines the social history of alcohol production and consumption from 1500 to the present day. Over the course of this 500-year span, alcohol has evolved from an essential element of people’s daily diets to a discretionary commodity associated variously with pleasure, pain, and addiction. This historical transformation has radically altered consumption patterns, social attitudes, and legal regulation of alcohol. We will chart these transformations in this course.

Among the questions we will seek to answer: Where, when, and with whom did various historical actors drink alcohol? Was there a “class” hierarchy of alcoholic beverages—rum, grog, beer, wine? Why did wealthy people fear the drinking habits of the lower classes? Why was drinking considered a male privilege and female consumption of alcohol looked upon so dimly? How did the image of the alcoholic Indian develop in North America? Was there a time when people were actually encouraged to drive drunk? How and when did the idea of the medicalized “alcoholic” develop?

The course takes a cross-cultural perspective, but students are strongly encouraged to develop research projects that can be pursued at the Wisconsin Historical Society. During the first eight weeks, students will read roughly a book per week on various aspects of the history of alcohol. They will also begin developing questions for their research papers, building a bibliography, and engaging in the first steps of their research. During weeks 9-15, students will research and write a 20-30 page paper on some aspect of the history of alcohol. The potential topics that can be researched at the WHS range from the early alcohol trade with Native Americans, to the history of local Wisconsin breweries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to the history of lax drunk driving laws in Wisconsin.

* Franklin is widely attributed with this quote, but he actually never said it!

Students interested in this course should email Professor James Sweet (jhsweet@wisc.edu) with their campus ID number, major(s), year in college, and a brief description of their interest in the course.

HISTORY 600-008

Baseball & Society Since WWII

**Professor James Sweet
Tuesday 1:20-3:15pm**

This seminar will involve participants in a semester-long discussion of the ways in which Major League Baseball both reflected and shaped broader currents of social, cultural, political and economic change in American society following World War II. Thus, rather than understand baseball's history in terms of pennant races, players' statistics or the other considerations that often arise in the daily press, this seminar asks students to understand baseball – and, by extension, sport in general – within the contexts that have shaped it throughout its long career as Americans' "national pastime." The course instructors are Professor James Sweet and Commissioner Allan H. "Bud" Selig. Seminar discussion will benefit particularly from Selig's perspective on the sport and its development over the last three-quarters of a century, informed by his experience as an owner, then, for 27 years, the 9th Commissioner of Major League Baseball.

The seminar will consist of weekly discussions of pivotal topics or moments in post-war baseball history. These subjects include race/ethnicity, a changing media landscape, the game's geographical expansion, labor relations, baseball's economic footprint on the nation and in localities, shifting relations between the sport and government, as well as prominent controversies over the course of the last seven decades. As preparation for discussion, students will read a set of sources, assigned by the instructors. Participation in discussion of the weekly readings accounts for a large part of the final grade. The other major component in the seminar will be a research paper of 20-25 pages on a topic of the student's choice, using the abundant primary and secondary resources available in the Wisconsin Historical Society holdings, as well as other sources that students identify.

Students interested in this course should contact Professor James Sweet via email (jhsweet@wisc.edu) with their campus ID number, major(s), year in college, and a brief description of their interest in the course. Given its capstone status for the History Major and Certificate, seniors majoring or seeking a certificate in the subject will automatically qualify for admission, if they apply in a timely manner.