

History 201: Coming to America – Histories of American Migrations

University of Wisconsin – Madison History Department

9/4/2024-12/11/2024

Wednesdays, 3:30-5:25, Humanities 5255

Canvas page: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/425215>

Instructor Information

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 1:00-3:00, Humanities 5269, or by appointment

Course Description

The vast majority of people currently living in the United States can trace their family roots to other countries, and according to one recent estimate more than 50 million people – approximately 15% of the US population – were themselves born abroad. The influx of immigrants from every corner of the globe has led to vibrant cultural exchange and crystallized the United States' view of itself as a "Nation of Immigrants." Immigrants and their allies have always stressed the value of foreign-born Americans' work, ingenuity, public service, and willingness to embrace the United States' foundational values as evidence of their right to belong. At the same time, anti-immigrant factions have consistently pushed back on what they have seen as threatening foreign influences. Couched in the language of racial anxiety, labor competition, public health risks, and many other idioms, nativists have consistently labeled immigrants as dangerous. The legal and extralegal consequences of these fears have subjected immigrants and would-be immigrants to exclusion, deportation, family separation, social and economic marginalization, and even physical harm. This class asks us to examine the diverse experiences of those who have settled in the United States to critically examine the role of migration in shaping the United States. Immigration is naturally a broad topic, and there are many elements we could focus on, such as labor, acculturation, assimilation, or racialization. For the purposes of this class, we will most closely examine the decision to come to the United States and immigrants' immediate reception upon landing.

As a Historian's Craft class, we will be using immigrants' experiences to introduce historical methods and practices. To that end, assignments this semester will help us formulate research questions; craft thesis statements; select and analyze sources; and communicate our findings to other historians. Regardless of how far you intend to pursue your historical career, these skills should help you improve your communication skills, critically analyze competing narratives, and productively question received knowledge about the world around you.

Writing is central to the historical discipline. This class therefore focuses on developing strong writing skills, and fulfills a Communications B requirement. The course will emphasize written projects in lieu of traditional exams. To that end, all assignments will prepare students for a 10-12 page term paper that will make a historical argument based on original research and in conversation with existing scholarship.

Credit Hour Policy and Course Attributes

This is a fifteen-week, in-person, three-credit course. The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities. These include regularly scheduled seminar attendance, reading, writing, and other student work as described in the syllabus. The weekly breakdown is approximately as follows:

Seminar Attendance	Readings	Written Assignments	Research Assignments
2 Hours	2 Hours	3 Hours	2 Hours

Breadth – Humanities

Level – Intermediate

L&S Credit – Counts as Liberal Arts and Sciences credit in L&S

Prerequisites

Communications A course or equivalent. Not open to students with credit for HIST SCI 211.

Course Objectives

In completing this course, students will:

- Develop the habit of asking questions, including questions that may generate new directions for historical research. We will learn to pose historical questions through engagement with primary sources, secondary literature, and/or broader ethical, theoretical, or political questions.
- Find and vet sources, learning the logic of footnotes, bibliographies, search engines, libraries, and archives, and consulting them to identify and locate source materials.
- Evaluate sources to determine the perspective, credibility, and utility of source materials.
- Plan further research, drawing upon preliminary research to develop a plan for deeper investigation.
- Develop and present historical arguments, using sources appropriately to create, modify, and support tentative conclusions and new questions, and communicate findings effectively through formal and informal written and oral presentations tailored to specific audiences.

Course Materials

All course materials are freely available on Canvas or linked through other sites. You are not required to purchase anything for this course.

Academic Integrity and AI Writing Programs

Plagiarism – that is, the use of another's words or ideas or copying the work of others without proper acknowledgement – will not be tolerated. This includes the use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT. Engaging in behaviors that violate UW policy and academic honesty may lead to

severe consequences, including failing the course. That said, because we will be working with multiple sources, both primary and secondary, we are also susceptible to committing unintentional acts of plagiarism. This is easily avoided by the proper use of citations. If you are concerned that you might be unintentionally plagiarizing or are unclear on how to avoid it, please reach out to me to discuss citations and how to use sources appropriately. For further information about what constitutes plagiarism, please visit the [UW Academic Misconduct website](#).

AI writing aids are not capable of generating high-quality academic scholarship. Even if the suspected use of AI-assisted writing is not specifically flagged, grades will reflect that reality.

History Lab

I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the History Lab, the History Department's in-house writing center. Our graduate student staff offers expert, one-on-one advising for your projects (both in person and virtually). Regardless of the stage of your project – choosing a topic, conducting research, outlining, drafting, revising – the History Lab staff will be able to help. Please visit the [website](#) for instructions on how to schedule an appointment or to find tips, guides, and other resources to help with assignments.

McBurney Accommodations

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Grading Scale

- 92.5%-100% A
- 87.5%-92.49% AB
- 82.5%-87.49% B
- 78.5%-82.49% BC
- 70%-78.49% C
- 60%-69.99% D
- 0%-59.99% F

Course Structure and Assignments

We will use a variety of in-class and take-home writing assignments to prepare you to produce a term paper on some aspect of the US immigration experience. Our weekly seminars will also

feature discussions of the assigned readings. **Please complete each set of readings and assignments in advance of the date under which it is listed in the syllabus.**

The grade breakdown will be as follows:

- 15 in-class writing and presentation exercises: 15%
- Weekly take-home assignments: 20%
- Oral presentation on final paper topic: 10%
- Final paper rough draft: 10%
- Final paper: 25%
- Attendance & Participation: 20%

Weekly readings will consist of a combination of secondary and primary source materials. These will be directly incorporated into our in-class activities, so be sure to have read and taken notes on them before showing up to seminar. Additionally, some in-class work will involve reading short selections from other works. This will also be where we assess the oral communication component of Communications B.

Take-home writing assignments will consist of varying tasks designed to hone specific skills needed to write effective academic history. All assignments will have specific instructions issued a week in advance. **All written assignments must be submitted on Canvas before 11:59 pm on the date stated. Late submissions will be deducted a full letter grade per day late.** Furthermore, **please submit all work as Word documents.** Microsoft Word is freely available to UW students through this link: <https://it.wisc.edu/services/microsoft-365/>

The term paper is the most important element of this course. This will ultimately be a 10-12 page paper answering a research question that you have crafted on the history of American immigration. This may sound intimidating, but don't worry; we'll be gradually working up to it over the course of the semester.

Participation grades are separate from in-class assignments, and reflect a student's engagement and comportment during seminar. This is also where you will be graded on attendance. You may miss **one** class without penalty, equivalent to 1/15 of the attendance portion of your grade. Any subsequent absences will only be excused on the basis of documented illness, participation in a university-sponsored event, or other well-founded reason.

Participation Grades, Conduct, and Comportment

The historical discipline is built upon arguments that rely on well-sourced information that can be openly and civilly debated. Disagreements are a natural part of that process, but keep in mind that you are debating ideas, not people. This is particularly important to ensure collegiality in a seminar setting. Attendance and participation in each seminar will be noted and graded on a full/half/no credit basis.

Full Credit	Half Credit	No Credit
Student has come prepared, having completed the	Student has completed the assigned readings.	Student has not completed the assigned readings.

assigned readings and taken notes for further discussion.		
Student is respectful, willing to engage in conversation, and asks questions or offers observations that encourage substantive discussion	Student engages in conversation superficially, is only partially on-topic, or merely repeats previous observations.	Student is disrespectful to others, does not engage with the material, or does not respond to questions.

Week 1 (9/4): Introductions

- Read:
 - Short article on immigration in the news
- Write (due 9/10):
 - 1-2 page reflection on your personal experience with immigration

Week 2 (9/11): Colonial-Era Migration

- Skills task: Framing Historical Questions
- Read:
 - Carl Bon Tempo & Hasia Diner, *Immigration: An American History* (2022), Introduction and Chapter 1
 - Benjamin Franklin’s letter to Peter Collinson on German immigrants (1753)
- Write (due 9/17):
 - 1-2 page exercise on identifying questions for further historical investigation
- Do:
 - Begin brainstorming potential term paper topics

Week 3 (9/18): Mass Migration Under Sail

- Skills task: Using Sources, Part 1
- Read:
 - Michael Kaelin, “Emigrant Letter Writers as Immigrant Regulation Agents: A Reconsideration of Epistolary Practices among 19th Century German and Irish Americans” *Yearbook of German American Studies* 57 (2022): 13-30.
 - Selections from Kamphoefner et al, *News from the Land of Freedom* (1991)
- Write (due 9/24):
 - Source analysis of letters from *News from the Land of Freedom*

Week 4 (9/25): Mass Migration Under Steam

- NOTE: WE WILL BE MEETING AT MEMORIAL LIBRARY FOR THIS SESSION
- Skills task: Accessing the Archive
- Read:
 - Selections from the Kilkelly Letters
 - [\(Listen\) Robbie O’Connell & Finbar Clancy, “The Kilkelly Letters”](#)

- Raymond L. Cohn, “Nativism and the End of the Mass Migration of the 1840s and 1850s,” *Journal of Economic History* 60 (2006): 361-383.
- Write (due 10/1):
 - 2 page paper on comparative immigrant experiences (source selection exercise)
- Do:
 - Begin searching for paper sources

Week 5 (10/2): The Groundwork for Regulation

- Skills task: Historiography and Historical Debates
- Read:
 - Note: Please be sure to read Hirota first, then Carper
 - Hidetaka Hirota, “‘The Great Entrepot for Mendicants’: Foreign Poverty and Immigration Control in New York State to 1882” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 33 no. 2 (Winter 2014): 5-32.
 - Katherine Carper, “The Migration Business and the Shift from State to Federal Immigration Regulation,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 11 no. 3 (September 2021): 340-360.
- Write (due 10/8):
 - 3-4 page historiographical analysis

Week 6 (10/9): Beginning the Regulatory Era

- Skills task: Using Sources, Part 2
- Read:
 - Paul Kramer, “Imperial Openings: Civilization, Exemption, and the Politics of Mobility in the History of Chinese Exclusion, 1868-1910,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (July 2015): 317-347.
 - Selection of “Immigrant Voices from Angel Island”
- Write (due 10/15):
 - 2 page annotated bibliography

Week 7 (10/16): Eastern European, Mediterranean, and Asian Immigrants

- Skills task: Crafting Historical Questions
- Read
 - Mae Ngai, “The Strange Career of the Illegal Alien: Immigration Restriction and Deportation Policy in the United States, 1921-1965,” *Law and History Review* 21 (2003): 69-108.
- Write (due 10/22)
 - 3-4 page draft proposal for final paper
- Do:
 - Mandatory 10 minute meeting with me to finalize paper topic (must be completed by 10/19)

Week 8 (10/23): The Ascendance of “Scientific Racism”

- Skills task: Proper Citation and Attribution

- Read:
 - Excerpts from Alan Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the Immigrant Menace* (1994)
 - Excerpts from Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (2001)
- Write (due 10/27):
 - Draft thesis statement and introductory paragraph for peer review

Week 9 (10/30): The Depression

- Skills task: Organizing an Effective Historical Paper
- Read:
 - Excerpts from Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (2011)
- Write (due 11/5):
 - Final version of project proposal

Week 10 (11/6): World War II and Ideological Imperatives

- Skills task: Topic Sentences and Paragraphs
- Read:
 - Excerpts from Meredith Oyen, *The Diplomacy of Migration: Transnational Lives and the Making of U.S.-Chinese Relations in the Cold War* (2015)
- Write (due 11/12):
 - 2 page paragraph exercise

Week 11 (11/13): Braceros, the Cold War, and Latin America

- Skills task: Drafting a Paper
- Read:
 - Excerpts from Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom* (2016)
- Write (due 11/19):
 - Final paper outline

Week 12 (11/20): An Age of Reform?

- Skills task: The Editing Process
- Read:
 - Philip Wolgin, "Re-Forming the Gates: Postwar Immigration Policy in the United States through the Hart-Celler Act of 1965," in Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, ed., *Wanted and Welcome? Policies for Highly Skilled Immigrants in Comparative Perspective* (2013)
- Write (due 11/26):
 - First draft (minimum five pages) of your final paper

Week 13 (11/27): Comparative Ways of Writing About History

- Read:

- [Read or listen]: [JFK Presidential Library: JFK and A Nation of Immigrants](#)
- Write (due 12/3):
 - 1-2 pages on immigration in the news
- Do:
 - Enjoy Thanksgiving break!

Week 14 (12/4): “New” Debates in the Late 20th Century

- Skill task: Advanced-Stage Editing
- Read:
 - Sarah L. Townsend, “Undocumented Irish Need Apply: Ethnic Whiteness, Immigrant Rights, and the Campaign for US Diversity Visas in the 1980s,” *Radical History Review* (2022): 125-140.
- Write:
 - Make sure you’ve started the final draft of your papers
- Do:
 - [in class] 7-8 minute oral presentations on paper topics

Week 15 (12/11): Contemporary Immigration

- Skill task: Presenting a Final Product
- Read:
 - Russell Kazal, “Rethinking the History of Multiculturalism: New Perspectives on American Pluralist Ideologies,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 43 (2024): 5-40.
- Write:
 - Keep working on the final versions of your papers!
- Do:
 - [in class] 7-8 minute oral presentations on paper topics

Final Paper Due Friday, December 13, 11:59pm (via Canvas)