

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Professor Eric Foner
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2-4 pm

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
Fall 2012; Tuesday, 4:10-6 pm
Email: Ef17

History G8500x

U. S. HISTORIOGRAPHY FOR PH. D. STUDENTS

“I doubt whether faithful history ever was or ever can be written. 300 years after the event it cannot be written without offending some powerful and popular individual family party, some statesman, some general, some prince, some priest or philosopher. The world will go on always ignorant of itself, its past history, and future destiny.”

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, August 31, 1809

“The past is the key of the present and the mirror of the future.”

Robert G. Fitzgerald Diary, July 1867

“The only obligation we have to history is to rewrite it.”

Oscar Wilde

This course is designed to acquaint first-year graduate students in American history with some current scholarly debates and categories of analysis, with recent methodological and interpretive innovations in the study of the American past, and with the scholarship of current Columbia faculty members and recent phds. The choice of readings is necessarily highly selective and personal.

For each week, one student will be assigned to prepare a brief response to the readings and four or five discussion questions for the class. These should be sent by email to participants and the instructor at least 24 hours before the class meeting. In addition, each student will write a 20-page historiographical essay examining the literature on a problem or question in American history. The paper is due at the final class meeting.

The readings below are all required. The books are available at Book Culture on 112th Street east of Broadway. Copies of the articles and book chapters are available either online via the library website (*), or on Courseworks (**). All books are also available in the Reserve Room in Butler.

The class will have an introduction to the Columbia Libraries on Friday, September 7, 10:00 am to noon, in 306 Butler Library to introduce you to resources for historical research at Columbia. All students are required to attend.

September 4: Is History Possible?

Joyce Appleby, et al, Telling the Truth About History

**Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," in White, Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism, 81-100

September 11: Slavery

Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone

*Walter Johnson, "On Agency," Journal of Social History, 2003, 113-34

September 18: Borderlands

Richard White, The Middle Ground

*Jeremy Adelman and Steven Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," American Historical Review, June 1999, 814-41

September 25: Gender

Nancy Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism

*Alice Kessler-Harris, "Treating the Male as Other: Redefining the Parameters of Labor History," Labor History, Spring/Summer 1993, 190-204

*Alice Kessler-Harris, "In the Nation's Image: The Gendered Limits of Social Citizenship in the Depression Era," Journal of American History, December 1999, 1251-79

October 2: Society/ Culture

Michael Zakim, Ready-Made Democracy

*Jürgen Kocka, "Losses, Gains and Opportunities: Social History Today," Journal of Social History, Fall, 2003, 21-28

October 9: Memory

David Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory

**Raphael Samuel, Theaters of Memory, vol. 1, pp. 3-48

*Aleida Assmann and Peter Novick, "Europe: A Community of Memory?," Bulletin of the German Historical Institute, Spring, 2007, 11-38

October 16: Political Economy

Judith Stein, Pivotal Decade

*Alice O'Connor, "The Privatized City: The Manhattan Institute, the Urban Crisis, and the Conservative Counterrevolution in New York," Journal of Urban History, January 2008, 333-53

October 23: Citizenship

Mae Ngai, Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America

*Oscar V. Campomanes, "New Formations of Asian American Studies and the Question of U. S. Imperialism," Positions, Fall, 1997, 523-50

October 30: The Environment

Thomas G. Andrews, Killing for Coal

*Richard White, "The Nationalization of Nature," Journal of American History, December, 1999, 976-86

November 6: No class: election day holiday

November 13: Politics

Sean Wilentz, The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln

November 20: Intellectual History

Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, American Nietzsche

November 27: Globalizing U. S. History

Thomas Bender, A Nation Among Nations

December 4: Is Synthesis Possible?

Eric Foner, The Story of American Freedom