

HISTORY AS A FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE

Prof. Eva Sheppard Wolf

Office Location: SCI 267

Office Hours: Mon. 2:00-3:30; Wed. 2:00-3:00; and by appointment

Email: shepwolf@sfsu.edu

Office Phone: 415.338.7544

Website: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/shepwolf>

This course is a graduate-level survey of recent developments in the research and writing of History as practiced by professional historians. Time limitations require that the course be selective rather than comprehensive, and students should bear in mind that the course will raise many questions that cannot be answered during a particular class meeting or possibly even during the semester.

Course Goals/ Student Learning Outcomes. In this course students will:

- Improve ability to read a history book at the graduate level.
 - Identify the book's purpose, its thesis, its organizational structure, and how those three elements relate to one another.
 - Identify the sources the author used and how those sources affect the book's organization and argument.
 - Identify the genre of History the book represents.
 - Identify the intellectual premises or theories upon which the book is based.
- Develop an understanding of how History, the scholarly subject practiced by professional historians, differs from history, or the past.
- Develop an understanding of recent trends in the practice of History by professional historians.
- Improve ability to participate in analytical discussions. See the detailed comments on this topic below on page 5.
- Improve ability to deliver a presentation. See the detailed comments on this topic below on pages 5- 6.

Course Requirements and Grading (grades kept on iLearn):

Six book reviews. Choose from books with asterisks, below.	40%
One historiographical final essay	20%
One mini-lecture	15%
Participation in discussions (including assignments due 8/30 and 12/6)	25%

Email: Please make sure your email is forwarded from your SFSU account to the account you check regularly, since I send important class messages by email. I check my email at least once a day M-F, but not on weekends.

Course Books. *Asterisks indicate books that may be chosen for book reviews.

1. John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 5th ed. Pearson, 2010.
- *2. R.R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution*. Princeton, orig. 1941.
3. E. P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*. Penguin or Vintage, 1963, 1968.
4. Callum Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*. Longman, 2005.
- *5. Thomas Laquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Harvard, 1990.
- *6. Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Foot-binding*. California, 2005.
7. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. 2nd. ed. Princeton, 2000.
- *8. Marial Iglesias Utset, *A Cultural History of Cuba during the U.S. Occupation, 1898-1902*. UNC, 2011. (An online edition is available through the library website if you don't want the paper copy.)
- *9. J.R. McNiell, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620–1914*. Cambridge, 2010.
- *10. Jonathan Eacott, *Selling Empire: India in the Making of Britain and America, 1600-1830*. UNC, 2016
- *11. Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran*. Duke, 2013.
- *12. Joshua Piker, *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler*. Harvard, 2013.
13. Jan Vansina, *How Societies Are Born: Governance in West Central Africa Before 1600*. University of Virginia, 2004.

Schedule

☆Stars indicate articles/sections for mini-lectures.

Aug. 23: Introductory Meeting

What's this class about? What is (H)istory? How do we do it?

Aug. 30: History and Historiography

Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, chaps. 1-3

Any article you like from the *American Historical Review*, 1895-1905 (JSTOR)

Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, Introduction, chap. 1, (iLearn) ☆

Leopold von Ranke, prefaces to histories of France and England (iLearn) ☆

R. G. Collingwood, "Positivism," in *The Idea of History* (iLearn) ☆

ASSIGNMENT DUE (counts as part of class participation): 1-page review of the AHR

article you read. Discuss the article's purpose, evidentiary base, and argument. Evaluate the article.

Sept. 6: Political History/Narrative History

R.R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled*

Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, chaps. 5-6

Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," in *The Content of the Form* (iLearn) ☆

Sept. 13: Social History/Marxist History

Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*

Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, chap. 8 ☆

Marc W. Steinberg, "The Re-Making of the English Working Class?" in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (Apr., 1991), pp. 173-97. (JSTOR) ☆

Sept. 20: Postmodernism (Erev Rosh Hashanah—class ends early)

Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, chaps. 1-8, conclusion ☆

Gabrielle Spiegel, "The Task of the Historian" AHR Vol. 114, No.1 (Feb., 2009):1-15. (JSTOR) ☆

Judith Surkis, "When Was the Linguistic Turn? A Genealogy," AHR Vol. 117, No. 3 (June, 2012): 700-722 (iLearn) ☆

Sept. 27: Cultural History/Gender

Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*.

Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, chaps. 7, 9 ☆

Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5. (Dec., 1986): 1053-1075. (JSTOR) ☆

Oct. 4: Feminism and History/Gender

Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Foot-binding*

Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, chap. 10 ☆

Laura Lee Downs, "Gender and history in a post-structuralist world," and "Conclusion," *Writing Gender History* (iLearn) ☆

Oct. 11: Postcolonialism and Subaltern Studies

Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, Introduction and chaps. 1, 2, 4, (optional: 5), 6, 7 ☆

Frederick Cooper, selections from *Colonialism in Question*, (iLearn) ☆

Oct. 18: Latin America/Imperialism.

Marial Iglesias Utset, *A Cultural History of Cuba during the U.S. Occupation, 1898-1902*

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd. ed., Introduction, chaps. 4, 8 (iLearn) ☆

Oct. 25: Ecology and History/Caribbean

J.R. McNiell, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean*

David S. Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Oct., 2003): 703-742 (JSTOR). ☆

Joyce Chaplin, "Ogres and Omnivores," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (January 2015), pp. 25-32 (JSTOR). ☆

Nov. 1: World History/Imperialism

Jonathan Eacott, *Selling Empire: India in the Making of Britain and America, 1600-1830*

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Two Histories of Capital," in *Provincializing Europe*. (Re-read)

Nov. 8: History of Sexuality/Recent vs. Medieval History

Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran*

James A. Schultz, "Parzival, Courtly Love, and The History Of Sexuality." *Poetica*, Vol. 38, No. 1/2 (2006), pp. 31-59. ☆

Nov. 15: Narrative, Redux/Colonial America/Native America

Joshua Piker, *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler: Telling Stories in Colonial America* (Harvard, 2013)

R. David Edmunds, "Blazing New Trails or Burning Bridges: Native American History Comes of Age," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Spring, 2008), pp. 4-15. ☆

Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, chap. 11

Nov. 29: Using Other Disciplines/Is it History?

Jan Vansina, *How Societies Are Born*

Michael McCormick, "History's Changing Climate: Climate Science, Genomics, and the Emerging Consilient Approach to Interdisciplinary History." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 42 Issue 2 (Autumn, 2011), pp. 251-273 (Academic Search Complete) ☆

Daniel Edelstein et al, "Historical Research in a Digital Age: Reflections from the Mapping the Republic of Letters Project," *AHR* April 2017 (iLearn) ☆

Dec. 6: Discussions of final papers.

Be prepared to give a 10-minute précis of your final paper, and bring a one-page handout. Counts toward participation.

Dec. 13: Papers Due. If you would like me to return your paper to you by mail, bring an appropriately sized, self-addressed envelope.

Evaluation

Attentive and critical reading of assigned materials is an essential first step for successful work in this course. Students should also come to class prepared to discuss larger issues of the discipline of history raised in the assignments. Questions and comments should be posed in a spirit of constructive criticism, i.e. analytical in substance and supportive and collegial in style.

All work will be evaluated on the basis of the effectiveness of the structure, style, analysis, and use of sources. Mini-lectures will be evaluated additionally on the effectiveness and clarity of the presentation. Guidelines for the book reviews are detailed below, and grading rubrics for the book reviews and mini-lectures can be found on iLearn.

Participation in seminar discussions is mandatory, not optional, and will be evaluated according to criteria listed below. Students should be prepared to play active roles in both initiating and guiding discussion during class meetings.

Unexcused or excessive missed classes or unfinished readings will result in significant penalization.

Assignment: Classroom Discussions

Students will be evaluated on both the quality and quantity of their participation in class. Our discussions will be guided by the questions of critical reading and analysis mentioned above and outlined below. When grading participation, I will keep the following questions in mind.

1. Are the points made substantive and relevant to the discussion? Are they linked to the comments of others?
2. Do comments show that the participant has been listening?
3. Do comments clarify and highlight the important aspects of earlier comments and lead to a clearer statement of the concepts being covered?
4. Is the participant willing to interact with other class members?
5. Do comments show evidence of analysis?
6. Do comments add to our understanding?
7. Is there a willingness to test new ideas?

Constructive class participation is an essential part of this seminar. If a particular student is not participating as actively as I think he or she should, then I will make a point of calling on the student in hopes of eliciting more class involvement.

When we discuss assigned books, we will focus on the questions in the seven-point guide under ‘Book reviews’ below. Read these materials carefully and be prepared to answer the questions in relation to the book under discussion.

Assignment: Mini-lectures

The purpose of this assignment is two-fold: to provide a way to explore more deeply the week’s readings, and to provide a means by which you can practice your skills as a lecturer. You will be graded both on the content and presentation of your talk.

Each mini-lecture will focus on the week’s collateral reading, which in some way amplifies or contextualizes the week’s main reading. While every student is required to read the collateral readings, one or possibly two students will be required to analyze the readings in depth.

In your twenty-minute mini-lecture, answer the following questions explicitly. A bit of a research may be required to answer these questions.

- a. Who is the author? (How) does the author’s identity help us understand the text?
- b. What is the purpose of the article?
- c. In what journal or place is this article published? What does that tell us about its purpose or audience?
- d. What is the thesis of the article and how is the thesis developed?

- e. What can we learn about the topic of the class meeting from this article?
- f. What insights about trends in History can be gained from this article?

Rehearse your mini-lecture. Rehearsal will allow you to improve your delivery and will help you see where you need to modify your presentation. Rehearsal will also help you keep eye contact with the audience. It is vital that you do not read your report. It will help your audience tremendously if you signpost—tell them what you will tell them, and then tell them what you have told them. Be prepared for questions from the class and from the instructor. Think ahead about the kinds of questions that relate your work to the theme of the class meeting and to the course generally. Finally, remember that both the class and the instructor are on your side; try to stay calm, relax, and don't rush through your presentation.

Assignments: Book Reviews

The purpose of this assignment is to help you better understand the week's reading and to help you practice your reviewing and writing skills.

Your reviews should be **no longer than 750 words** in length, typed and double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and 12-point font. Include a word count at the end of the review. All reviews must be turned in at the beginning of the class period on which they are due.

Begin your review with the author, title, and facts of publication, using a standard bibliographical form, e.g.:

Phythian-Adams, Charles. *Local History and Folklore: A New Framework*. London: Bedford Square Press, 1975.

Here are seven questions the answers to which *must* form the substance of your review, but you need not address these questions in the order listed below.

1. What is the author's purpose in writing the book?
2. What is the author's thesis?
3. How does the author organize his or her material? What is the logic behind the topics of the chapters and how do the chapters fit together to make a book? There is almost always a correspondence between the thesis of the book and its organizational logic; each points to the other. Thus, if you are in doubt about the thesis, pay attention to the organizational logic, and vice versa. In your review *include an explicit statement about the fit between the book's organization, its thesis, and its purpose*.
4. What theories guide the author's work? Sometimes you will have to dig out the answer to this question. Discuss leading and secondary ones, explicit and implicit ones.
5. What sources does the author use to develop the thesis of the book and why are they used? How do the sources fit with the thesis of the book? Discuss types of sources used, types not used, and the reasons for turning to some kinds of sources rather than others. *Include an explicit statement about the pertinence of types of sources in light of the author's thesis and theory*.
6. How well is the author's purpose accomplished? In this section, you have an opportunity to make an original, critical evaluation of the book. I do want to know what you think!
7. How does the book fit in with the issues raised and discussed in the course so far? As an artifact, what can it tell you about the scholarly culture and time from which it came?

Assignment: Historiography Essay

The purpose of this assignment is to provide students an opportunity to synthesize the various readings on the discipline of history. It is, in effect, a take-home final examination. You will write an approximately 4500-word essay (double spaced, 12-point font) on “New Perspectives in History.” In writing your essay, you should draw primarily on the required course reading and on the collateral reading listed in the syllabus, but should also consult additional readings as necessary.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance: Regular attendance is considered part of class participation. Poor attendance will be reflected in your participation grade.

Classroom Behavior: Please respect your peers and me by arriving on time and by putting your phone out of sight and earshot. Please use computers only for taking notes. Other uses distract your peers.

Disability Statement Policy: Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2472) or by email (dprc@sfsu.edu).

Email: Please make sure you have set up your SFSU email account to forward email to your most frequently used account, since I frequently make announcements by email.

Final Exam. I follow university protocol and will not reschedule or offer alternatives to the final examination. If you cannot come to class on the day of the exam, you must drop the course.

Grading Rubrics: Detailed grading rubrics for book reviews and mini-lectures are available on the course iLearn site.

Late Work: I will not accept late book reviews. You may turn in other late work with a penalty of .5 grade points per school day (M-F) late.

Plagiarism and Cheating: Since our goal is to seek truth, academic honesty is absolutely essential. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating, will be reported according to university guidelines. I will give a zero to any assignment which has been plagiarized.

No paper turned in for another class may be turned in for this one.

Sexual Harassment or Sexual Violence: As Academic Senate policy #F14-257 states, “SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students.”

To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

- The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/
- Counseling and Psychological Services Center - (415) 338-2208; <http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/>
- For more information on your rights and available resources: <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>

Grading scale: 93-96 A
 90-92 A-
 87-89 B+
 etc.

Important Dates and Deadlines for Fall 2017:

Labor Day; No Classes; Offices Closed	Monday, September 4
Last day for faculty to drop a student without a "W" grade.	Tuesday, September 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Last day for students to drop a class without a "W" grade.</u> • Audit Deadline • Last day to add a class with a permission number 	Wednesday, September 13
Deadline to file graduation application	Friday, September 29
Last day for students to change grading option (to or from Credit/No Credit)	Wednesday, October 18
Veterans Day; No Classes; Offices Closed	Friday, November 10
Withdrawal from Classes or University with Serious and Compelling Reasons; see your instructor.	Sept. 14-Nov. 17
Fall Recess (Thanksgiving)	November 20-25
Last day of classes.	Tuesday, December 12
Final Examinations	December 13-19
<u>Withdrawal</u> from Classes or University by Exception for <u>Documented Serious and Compelling Reasons</u> ; see your instructor.	November 18 – December 12
Grades Due by Faculty	January 2, 2018