

Introduction to History  
History 691P  
Prof. Bruce Laurie  
Prof. Daniel Gordon

This course is an introduction to the varieties of history. The material is organized as a series of dilemmas that every historian faces: whether to focus on continuity or change, whether to study one's own country or a foreign country, whether to write about the distant past or the recent past, and so forth. Students who develop their own approach in full awareness of its alternatives are more likely to do outstanding work than students who believe there is only one way to think about the past.

Each week we will read a common set of readings, listed in bold letters below. These readings are available on the library's electronic reserve system: password Voltaire. But three books, on order at the Amherst Bookstore (previously called Atticus), are also required: Anderson, Imagined Communities; Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the French Revolution; and Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life.

Students must participate in class discussion and write three papers. Two of these papers (5-7 pages each) will be based on the recommended readings that appear each week, or other readings approved in advance by the instructors. The third paper (12-15 pages) will be about a great historian or great moment in history—see topics at end of syllabus. For the shorter papers, you will sign up early in the course and make oral presentations in connection with the papers. The longer paper is due December 16. We will discuss writing strategies—sources, structures, and themes—in the first few classes and throughout the semester.

Sept. 14 Introduction.

**G.M. Teveleyen, "Clio, a Muse;" John P. Diggins, "The National Standards;" and Richard Pells, "American Historians Would Do Well to Get Out of the Country."**

Sept. 21. Continuity or Change?

**Fernand Braudel, extracts from On History (University of Chicago Press, 1980). Peter Baehr, "Identifying the Unprecedented: Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Critique of Sociology," The American Sociological Review (Dec., 2002).**

Paper 1. The Impact of the American Revolution. Charles and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*; Richard Hofstadter, "The Founding Fathers" in *The American Political Tradition*; Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*.

**J.D. Kovach**

Paper 2. Women and the American Revolution. Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters* (1996 ed.), Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic*. **Tara Stever**

Paper 3. The Legacy of Slavery. Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*; Orlando Patterson, *Rituals of Blood*. Alternatively, Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under our Feet*; David Blight, *Race and Reunion*

Paper 4. The Annales School. The works of Braudel, Marc Bloch, and Lucien Febvre; for praise of the school, see Peter Burke, *The French Historiographical Revolution*; for criticism, see François Furet, “Beyond the Annales” in *In the Workshop of History*

Sept. 28. The Familiar or the Exotic? Time.

**Timothy Garton Ash, extract from History of the Present (Random House, 1999).**

**A. Leo Oppenheim, extract from Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization (University of Chicago Press, 1964).**

**Guest Faculty, Audrey Altstadt**

Paper 1. Uses of Presentism. Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson*, and its critics.

Paper 2. Uses of Presentism. Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundation of Black America*; Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together*.

Paper 3. Uses of Presentism. Compare at least two biographies of Jefferson, Lincoln, Kennedy, etc., written at least a generation apart. **John Zavisza and Christian Collins.**

Paper 4. The Exotic. Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* and other books. Or, Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* and other writings.

Oct. 5. The Familiar or the Exotic? Space.

**Gary Wills, extract from Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence (Doubleday, 1978)**

**Louis Dumont, extract from Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications (University of Chicago Press, 1970).**

**Guest Faculty, John Higginson**

Paper 1. Comparison as a Bridge Between the Familiar and Exotic. Carl N. Degler, *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and The United States*; Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* **John Diffley**

Paper 2. More Comparison. James Q. Whitman, *Harsh Justice* and “Two Concepts of Privacy” **Caitlin Shuster**

Paper 3. Writing About One's Own Tradition. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, and its critics **Meghan Gelardi**

Paper 4. Writing About the Other. Works of Louis Dumont or Jonathan Spence or Anthony Pagden **Katie Patt**

Oct. 12. Science or Literature?

**T.H. Buckle**, extract from History of Civilization in England and **T.B. Macaulay**, “History,” both in The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present, ed. Fritz Stern (Meridian Books, 1956).

**Clifford Geertz**, “Thick Description,” in The Interpretation of Cultures (Basic Books, 1973).

**V.O. Key**, extract from Southern Politics in State and Nation (Vintage Books, 1949).

Paper 1. European positivism and Max Weber. H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society* and other writings by or about Weber **Noel Hudson**

Paper 2. Durkheim. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* and other writings by or about Durkheim.

Paper 3. The New Political history and its Discontents. Samuel P. Hays, *American Political history as Social Analysis*; Lee Benson, *Toward the Scientific Study of History*; Richard L. McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy* **J.D. Kovach**

Paper 4. American History in the Impressionistic Style. Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*; John Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics*; Eric Foner, *Free Labor, Free Soil Men*. **Lora Sandhusen**

Paper 5. European History as Literature. Writings of Macaulay or Simon Schama. **Bridget Gurtler**

Oct 19 . Macro-History or Micro-History?

**J.R. McNeill and William H. McNeill**, extract from The Human Web: A Bird’s-Eye View of World History (W.W. Norton, 2003)

**William Hinton**, extract from Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village (Vintage Books, 1966).

Paper 1. Big Pictures. William McNeill, *The Rise of the West*; David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*; Immanuel Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture*. **Kathryn Merriam and Jayne Bernhard**

Paper 2. More Big Pictures. Alexander Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange* and Jared Diamon, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. **Meghan Gelardi**

Paper 3. Small Pictures. Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou*; William A. Sheridan, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*; Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Revolution*. **Caro Pinto**

Paper 4. Small Pictures. The World of Carlo Ginzburg. **Carrie Barske**

Oct. 26. Social or political?

**Karl Marx, extract from The German Ideology in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker (W.W. Norton, 1978).**

**Raymond Aron, extract from “Marx” in Main Currents of Sociological Thought (Basic Books, 1965)**

**Alexis de Tocqueville, extracts from Democracy in America, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Library of America, 2004).**

Paper 1. Classic works of Social History. The writings of E.P. Thompson, Natalie Zemon Davis, R. and H. Lind, Middletown, Sean Wilentz, Chants Democratic.

**Michael Shapiro**

Paper 2. Classic Works of Political History. The writings of Quentin Skinner, John Pocock, and Richard Pipes. **Katie Patt and Matthew Watson**

Paper 3. Theoretical Defense of Political History. Keith Baker, Inventing the French Revolution and Tony Judt, “The Clown in Regal Purple.”

Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform

Nov. 2. Professional History or Public History?

**Hayden White, extract from Tropics of Discourse (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978)**

**J.G.A. Pocock, extract from Machiavellian Moment (Princeton,**

**Barbara Tuchman, extract from The Guns of August (Macmillan. 1962)**

**Guest faculty, Marla Miller**

Paper 1. The work of Thomas Cahill: How the Irish Saved Civilization, The Gift of the Jews, etc. **Christian Collins**

Paper 2. Popularizing the Complex. A.N. Wilson, Jesus; Dava Sobel, Galileo’s Daughter or Longitude; Jason Goodwyn, Lords of the Horizon. **Peter Wong**

Paper 3. Bridging the Academy and General Public. Daniel Goldhagen, Hitler’s Willing Executioners, and its critics. **Noel Hudson and Amanda Geno**

Nov. 9, “History Writing” or “Historically Informed Writing”?

**George Orwell, “Why I Write” (1946); extract from Homage to Catalonia (1938);**

**“Politics and the English Language” (1946)**

**Walter Lippman, extracts from his writings**

**Guest faculty, Sigrid Schmalzer**

**Historians’ Brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in Lawrence v. Texas (2003)**

Paper 1. History and Theater. Arthur Miller The Crucible; Jack Beeson, Lizzie Borden.

## **Caitlin Shuster**

Paper 2. History and the Novel. Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men*, Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*. **Carrie Barske**

Paper 3. History and Film. D.W. Griffith, *Birth of a Nation*; A Resnais, *Last Year at Marienbad*; films by Oliver Stone, John Sayles. **Yveline Alexis and John Zavisza**

Nov. 16. Sources of Identity: Nation, Religion, Race, or Gender?

**Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (Verso, 1983—or other editions)**

**David R. Roediger, extract from The Wages of Whiteness (Verso, 1991)**

**Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” (1986)**

**Max Weber, extracts from The Protestant Ethic and The Sociology of World Religions**

**Guest faculty, Heather Cox Richardson (to be confirmed)**

Paper 1. Nationalism. Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question”; Anthony Marx, *Faith in Nation*; Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*; Carlton Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism*  
**Michael Shapiro**

Paper 2. Gender in History. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*; Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*; Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife*.  
**Bridget Gurtler**

Paper 3. Gender in Victorian England. Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience*; George K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family*. **Jessica Lemieux**

Paper 4. Race and its Variants. Works by Roediger. Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*; Matthew Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*. **Yveline Alexis and Caro Pinto**

Nov 23. Resistance or Conformity?

**James C. Scott, extract Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance (Yale, 1986)**

**Eugene Genovese, extract Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (Pantheon)**

**Readings by Goldhagen, Hillberg, Browning on Nazism (add to reserve)**

Paper 1. The Thesis of the Middle Ground. Richard White, *The Middle Ground*.  
**Tara Stever and Jayne Bernhard**

Paper 2. The Elkins Thesis. Stanley Elkins, *Slavery, and its critics*. **Peter Wong and Amanda Geno**

Paper 3. Moral Economy. E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd”; Peter Linebaugh, *London Hanged*; Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra*.

## **Lora Sandhusen**

12. Great Moments in History.

### **Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the French Revolution**

Papers:

1492--Samuel Elliot Morrison, **Kathryn Merriam**--Francis Jennings

The Reformation—works of Steven Ozement, **Jessica Lemieux**--Hegel, Philosophy of History

The French Revolution—works of Furet, Tocqueville, Michelet

The Cold War—Melvyn Leffler, William Appleman Williams, John Lewis Gaddis 1989, —Timothy Garton Ash, Charles Maier (Dissolution), **John Diffley**

13. Great Historians.

### **Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life**

Papers:

Hannah Arendt

Philippe Aries

Bernard Bailyn

Marc Bloch

Asa Briggs

Jacob Burckhardt

Natalie Ziemon Davis

M.I. Finley

Michel Foucault

Friedrich Engels

Eugene D. Genovese

Elie Halevi

Richard Hofstadter

Christopher Hill

E. J. Hobsbawm

Reinhart Koselleck

C.L.R. James

A.O. Lovejoy

Machiavelli

T.B. Macauley

Edmund Morgan

E.P. Thompson

G. M. Trevelyan

Thucydides

C.V. Wedgwood