

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Professor Eric Foner
Office Hours: Thursday, 2 pm

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
Fall 2014; Thursday, 4:10-6pm
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 5, 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 11: 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 18: Slavery

Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone

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

September 25: 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

October 2: 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 9: Sexuality

Margot Canaday, The Straight State

*Robert Self, "Sex in the City: The Politics of Sexual Liberalism in Los Angeles, 1963-79," Gender and History, August 2008, 288-311

October 16: Politics

Ira Katznelson, Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time

October 23: 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 30: 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

*Chandra Manning, “Working for Citizenship in Civil War Contraband Camps,”
Journal of the Civil War Era, June 2014, 172-204

November 6: Society/ Culture

Michael Zakim, Ready-Made Democracy

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

November 13: 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

November 20: Globalizing U. S. History

Thomas Bender, A Nation Among Nations

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

December 4: Is Synthesis Possible?

Eric Foner, The Story of American Freedom