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HSTA 502.01: Readings in Modern American History

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HSTA 502: Readings in Modern American History

Professor Jeff Wiltse

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Office hours: W: 1:30-3:00; F: 10:00-11:00, or by appointment

Course Description and Learning Objectives

This graduate colloquium explores classic and recent scholarship in United States history from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Through this course, students will learn:

- Major historiographical problems that have shaped the study of modern American history
- A variety of methodological approaches to studying the past
- New scholarly trends
- How to assess historical scholarship and write historiographical essays

This course is designed to provide graduate students a solid historiographical foundation for further study of and research in modern American history.

Readings

The following books are required reading:

Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*

William Cronan, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*

Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830-1910*

Michael Willrich, *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago*

David Kenney, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*

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

James Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government*

Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal*

Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*

Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*

Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*

Robert Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s*

In addition, you will read several articles that are available as pdf files on the course Moodle page. These readings are identified by an “(x)” in the course schedule below.

Course Requirements and Grading

Students must come to class each week prepared to discuss and critique the assigned reading(s). Active participation in class discussions is essential to the success of this course. Merely getting to the end of the readings is not sufficient preparation for class. You must take time to think critically about the

readings and organize your thoughts ahead-of-time. Read for argument/interpretation and the author's position within the historiography, not just for content. I strongly encourage you to take notes on the readings—both marginal notes and separate notes on a computer or traditional paper. Doing so will help you organize and clarify your thinking about the readings and serve as a useful reference in the future. Formal course requirements:

1. Three 6-7 page, double-spaced historiographical essays. The essays will be due Thursday, October 4; Monday, November 5; and Thursday, December 13. For each essay, I will provide you a broad question that pertains to the scholarship studied for that unit. In answering the question, you must draw on all the scholarship assigned for that unit. Your essay should not be a collection of individual reviews but should synthesize the readings—assess them in combination with one another—to answer to the question.
2. Craft two substantial discussion questions for each class meeting and post them to the course Moodle page by Wednesday 10:00 pm. These questions should raise a variety of debatable issues—analytical, interpretive, historiographical, methodological, etc. They must do more than ask the class to repeat or summarize the content of the readings. Please put considerable thought and time into crafting these questions. As a general rule, multi-sentence questions that include some explanatory framing elicit better discussions than simple, single-sentence questions. Try to craft questions that grapple with the larger stakes of the scholarship, assess the interpretative conclusions, engage with the important historical substance of each work, and/or compare the work under consideration with other scholarship studied in the course. Students must read and consider everyone's questions in preparation for class.
3. A 5-6 page historiographical review of three books listed as additional scholarship for one of the course meetings. The review should summarize and assess the topic, arguments, significance, and contribution of each book. It should also relate the books to one another and to the assigned reading(s) for that week. Your essay should provide answers to these historiographical questions: What are the primary questions and problems that scholars working in this subfield are addressing? What are the important interpretive conclusions and what are the points of interpretive disagreement? You will email your review to the class at least two hours before the relevant class meeting begins. You will also give a fifteen-minute oral presentation at the beginning of class that encapsulates the key points from your written review. I expect these presentations to be insightful, carefully organized, and clearly articulated. You must select the three books in consultation with me.

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Historiographical Essays	60 percent
Review and In-Class Presentation	15 percent
Class Participation	25 percent

An A = High pass, B = Pass, and C = No Pass

Academic Honesty

You must practice academic honesty. The work you submit in this course must be your own. When you use the words or draw on the ideas of others, acknowledge it in footnotes. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, ask me before submitting any written work.

DSS Accommodation and Drop Deadlines

If you have a documented learning disability, please contact me so we can arrange suitable accommodation for you. The last day to drop this course using Cyberbear is September 17. The last day to drop with instructor and advisor signature is October 29. A WP or WF will appear on your transcript for courses dropped after this date. December 7 is the last day to drop by petition.

Course Schedule

Thur, Aug. 30: Course Introduction

(x) Thomas Bender, "Wholes and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History," *Journal of American History* 73 (June, 1986): 120-36.

Thur, Sep. 6: The Classic Organizational Synthesis

Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 1-223.

(x) Louis Galambos, "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History," *Business History Review* 44 (Autumn 1970): 279-90.

Additional Major Interpretive Histories:

Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*

Jackson Lears, *The Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*

Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture & Society in the Gilded Age*

Rebecca Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865-1905*

William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*

Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*

Thomas Bender, "Wholes and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History," *Journal of American History* 73 (June 1986): 120-136.

Thur, Sep. 13: Business and Industry

Cronan, *Nature's Metropolis*

Additional Scholarship on Business and Industry:

Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*

Glenn Porter, *The Rise of Big Business, 1860-1920*

Maury Klein, *The Genesis of Industrial America, 1870-1920*

Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*

Richard Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-193*

Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate, 1870-1920*

David Noble, *America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism*

Additional scholarship on the history of the American West:

Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"

Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*

Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*

Elliot West, *Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado*

Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*

Louis Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show*

Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*

Thomas Andrew, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*

Annw Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860*

Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek*

Stacey Smith, *Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction*

Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest*

John Mack Faragher, *Eternity Street: Violence and Justice in Frontier Los Angeles*

Thur, Sep. 20: The New Synthesis

Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders*, 1-8, 270-518.

Social History Scholarship:

Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America*, 3-81.

Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category for Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (Dec 1986): 1053-75.

Robin D.G. Kelley, "We are Not What We Seem: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993): 75-112.

Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and Law in the North American West*

Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*

Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*

Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920*

George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*

Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America*

Native American History scholarship:

Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*

Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*

Frederick Hoxie, *The Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*

Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire*

Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*

Peter Cozzens, *The Earth is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West*

Frederick Hoxie, *This is Indian Country: American Indian Activists and the Place They Made*

Louis Warren, *God's Red Son: The Ghost Dance Religion and the Making of Modern America*

Thur, Sep. 27: Progressivism

Willrich, *City of Courts*

(x) Daniel T. Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History* 10 (December 1982): 113-32.

Additional Scholarship on Progressivism:

David Huyssen, *Progressive Inequality: Rich and Poor in New York, 1890-1920*

Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*

Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*

Maureen Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progresses and Progressivisms, 1890-1920s*

Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916*

(x) Richard L. McCormick, "The Discovery the Business Corrupts Politics," *American Historical Review* 86 (April 1981), 247-74.

(x) Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society," *American Historical Review* 89 (June 1984), 620-47.

Thur, Oct. 4: No class

Historiographical Essay #1 Due by 5:00 pm

Thur, Oct. 11: The Great Depression and New Deal

Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 1-380.

Scholarship on World War I and the 1920s:

Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America, and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931*

Christopher Cappaloza, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*

David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*

Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*

Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s*

Julia Ott, *When Wall Street Met Main Street: The Quest for an Investors' Democracy*

Thur, Oct. 18: America in Crisis

Katznelson, *Fear Itself*

Additional Scholarship on the New Deal:

Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War*

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*

David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*

William Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940*

Neil Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*

Jason Scott Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933-1956*

Jennifer Klein, *For All These Rights: Business, Labor, and the Shaping of America's Public-Private Welfare State*

Barton Bernstein, "The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform," in Bernstein, *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, 263-88

Thur, Oct. 25: War and the Liberal State

Sparrow, *Warfare State*

Additional Scholarship on World War II and the Cold War:

John Morton Blum, *V was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II*

John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*

David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*

John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*

Cambell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*

Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*

Thur, Nov. 1: Postwar Assault on New Deal Liberalism

Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*

Additional scholarship on neo-liberalism:

Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression*

Wendy Wall, *Inventing the American Way: The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement*

Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-1960*

Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise*

Nancy Maclean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*

Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*

Mon, Nov 5: Historiographical Essay #2 Due by 5:00 pm

Thur, Nov. 8: Postwar America

Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*

Additional scholarship on postwar America:

Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*

Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement*

Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*

Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*

Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*

Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*

Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*

Adam Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism*

Thur, Nov. 15: The State and Social Identity

Rothstein, *The Color of Law*

Additional scholarship on government policies and social engineering:

Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America*

Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*

David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*

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

Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*

Thur, Nov. 22: No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

Thur, Nov. 29: The Pivotal 1970s

Cowie, *Stayin Alive*

Additional scholarship on the 1970s:

Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*

Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*

Joseph McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike that Changed America*

Nancy Maclean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace*
Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*

Thur, Dec. 6: The Conservative Shift in American Politics

Self, *All in the Family*

Additional scholarship on the rise of modern conservatism:

Kevin Cruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*

Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*

Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*

Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*

Dominic Sandbrook, *Mad As Hell: The Crisis of the 1970s and the Rise of the Populist Right*

Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s*

Thur, Dec. 13: Historiographical Essay #3 Due by 5:00 pm