

HIST 275 The Craft of History – short web version
Spring 2020, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Department of History

M W, 2:30pm-3:45pm

Professor Siddique

What questions, problems, and concepts lie at the heart of modern historical inquiry? This course provides history majors with an introduction to philosophies of history, historical methodologies, and general schools of historiography. We will consider how historians pose questions, and how they find, select, evaluate, interpret, and analyze evidence in order to propose answers to these questions. Finally, we will reflect upon the purposes and goals of both studying and writing history.

Our inquiry is grounded in an exploration of the five key, interconnected concepts that are foundational to the practice of modern historical scholarship in the West:

- (1) *Contingency*: What does it mean to think of events as contingent, meaning dependent upon prior conditions? How do historians explain things in a manner that emphasizes the contingency of human behavior and action?
- (2) *Power*: What is power, how does it shape the social order, and how has its configuration manifested itself in different times and places? How have historians conceptualized the workings of power, as well as the mechanisms through which it manifests itself and changes?
- (3) *Context*: How do we recover the specific configurations of time, place, and meaning in which events occur? How do these configurations change over time, and what practices of writing, reading, and research are necessary for us to understand both the nature of these changes and the causes that produce them?
- (4) *Knowledge*: How have modes of knowing changed over time, and how have historians recovered past practices of knowledge creation, storage, and dissemination? What frameworks and approaches are necessary to recover both textual and non-textual knowledge practices?
- (5) *Animality*: How do we write historically about the experiences and agency of non-human actors? Is it even possible to do that? Does the effort to incorporate the non-human into historical explanation require a fundamental rethinking of the conceptual groundwork of historical practice that we have explored in this course?

The course is divided into five units, each devoted to one of these themes. In each unit, we will read historical scholarship that exemplifies engagement with the questions, problems, and issues raised by the theme. At the same time, as the course proceeds, we will also reflect on how works read earlier in the semester compare and contrast with one another in relation to these themes. The course materials will allow us to examine the multifarious ways in which historians have addressed the challenge of writing about the core themes of the discipline.

Syllabus:

Introduction:

Wednesday, January 22:

Peter Burke, “Western Historical Thinking in a Global Perspective – 10 Theses,” in Jörn Rüsen (ed.), *Western Historical Thinking: An Intercultural Debate* (2002) [Moodle]

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “A Global and Multicultural ‘Discipline’ of History?,” *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), 101-109 [find on JSTOR]

Unit 1: Contingency

What does it mean to think of events as contingent, meaning dependent upon prior conditions? How do historians explain things in a manner that emphasizes the contingency of human behavior and action?

Monday, January 27: Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” (1852) [Moodle]

Wednesday, January 29: Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (1962, 1996), preface, introduction, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16

Monday, February 3: Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry*, 26 (2000), 821-865 [find on JSTOR]; and William H. Sewell, Jr., “Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology,” in Terrence J. McDonald (ed.), *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (1996) [Moodle]

Wednesday, February 5: Martin L. Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (1997), preface, introduction, chapters 1, 4, 5, conclusion

Monday, February 10: Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (2017), introduction, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 14; *Unit #1 paper topics distributed; paper will be due Monday, February 17*

Unit 2: Power

What is power, how does it shape the social order, and how has its configuration manifested itself in different times and places? How have historians conceptualized the workings of power, as well as the mechanisms through which it manifests itself and changes?

Wednesday, February 12: E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), preface, chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6

Tuesday, February 18: E. P. Thompson, *Making*, class 2, chapters 11, 12, 14, 15, 16

Wednesday, February 19: Joan Scott, “Women in *The Making of the English Working Class*,” in *Gender & the Politics of History* (1988) [Moodle]

Monday, February 24: Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (1995), introduction, 27-37, 106-123, 147-155, 157-237, 280-351

Wednesday, February 26: Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (2007), introduction, chapters 1, 4, 6, epilogue

Friday, February 28: *Unit #2 paper topics distributed*

Monday, March 2: Meeting with Katherine Freedman, UMass Amherst's History Librarian (more information to come)

Wednesday, March 4: Meeting with Blake Spitz, Archivist in UMass Amherst's Special Collections and University Libraries (more information to come)

Unit 3: Context

How do we recover the specific configurations of time, place, and meaning in which events occur? How do these configurations change over time, and what practices of writing, reading, and research are necessary for us to understand both the nature of these changes and the causes that produce them?

Monday, March 9: Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, 8 (1969), 3-53 [find on JStor]

Wednesday, March 11: Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," *Past & Present*, 129 (1990), 3-78 [find on JStor]

Monday, March 16 and Wednesday, March 18: No classes, Spring Break

Monday, March 23: Jacob Soll, *Publishing the Prince: History, Reading, and the Birth of Political Criticism* (2005), entire.

Welcome back from spring break! There are only 10 class meetings left in the semester; now would be a great time to check on whether you are on track to complete the required 10 pre-meeting discussion board postings by the end of the semester!

Wednesday, March 25: Andrew Sartori, "The Resonance of 'Culture': Framing a Problem in Global Concept History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 47 (2005), 676-699 [find on JStor]

Monday, March 30: Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and His Ideas* (2012), prologue, intro, chapters 1, 4, 5; *Unit #3 paper topics distributed; paper will be due Monday, April 6 via email by 5pm EST*

Unit 4: Knowledge

How have modes of knowing changed over time, and how have historians recovered past practices of knowledge creation, storage, and dissemination? What frameworks and approaches are necessary to recover both textual and non-textual knowledge practices?

Wednesday, April 1: Mary Poovey, "Figures of Arithmetic, Figures of Speech: The Discourse of Statistics in the 1830s," *Critical Inquiry*, 19 (1993), 256-276 [find on JStor]

Monday, April 6: Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (1986), chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8

Unit #3 paper due via email by 5pm EST

Wednesday, April 8: Pamela Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (2004), introduction, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4

Monday, April 13: Rudolph T. Ware III, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (2014), introduction, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4

Wednesday, April 15: Rian Thum, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* (2014), introduction, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, conclusion

Friday, April 17: Unit #4 paper topics distributed; paper will be due on Friday, April 23 via email by 5pm est

Monday, April 20: No Class, Patriot's Day

Unit 5: Animality

How do we write historically about the experiences and agency of non-human actors? Is it even possible to do that? Does the effort to incorporate the non-human into historical explanation require a fundamental rethinking of the conceptual groundwork of historical practice that we have explored in this course?

Wednesday, April 22: Richard Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers: The Past and Future of Human-Animal Relations* (2005), entire

Friday, April 23: Unit #4 paper due via email by 5pm EST

Monday, April 27: Bathsheba Demuth, "The Walrus and the Bureaucrat: Energy, Ecology, and Making the State in the Russian and American Arctic, 1870-1950," *American Historical Review*, 124 (2019), 483-510 [use Google Scholar to find and access]

Wednesday, April 29: Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (2013), introduction, chapters 1, 2, 4

Later: Unit #5 paper topics distributed; the paper will be due during the exam block time scheduled for this class (there is no final exam).