

## Historical Thought & Methods: Approaches to Writing, Thinking, and Questioning History

**I. OVERVIEW:** To the Greeks, history was an acquired knowledge; not a memory recalled from the past, but an investigation that pieces together a past. But what was history to women, children, Native Americans and African-Americans? What about the people long thought to have no history, how have historians dismissed or embraced their truths and fictions? This class has two aims: first, to introduce students to methods and approaches commonly used in the study of history. Second, to give students an opportunity to construct thematic research-based essays grounded in uncommon questions by communities that were once written out of the history textbooks.

**II. ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is mandatory. More than one *unexcused* absence will negatively affect your grade. If you are not here, you cannot participate. If you cannot participate, I cannot evaluate your work. Family and medical emergency are the only exceptions to this rule. Students should NEVER miss class without letting me know.

**III. PARTICIPATION:** Since this is a discussion-based section, its success—that is, how much we learn from each other—depend entirely on preparation. For the sake of you and your fellow classmates, plan accordingly; do the required reading by giving yourself enough time to complete it. This will help you lighten the load of the course as you get in the habit of reading quickly but intelligently. That means you should decode whole passages by either annotating the text with thoughts, comments and questions or take notes.

**IV. DISCUSSION:** Students are expected to post a brief response (2 paragraphs, approximately 250 words) to the assigned readings each week. These responses must be posted on the course's online portal for your colleagues to read and engage ahead of class. Please submit all reflections by 9pm the night before class meets. Please do not summarize readings. Focus on providing a critical reflection in which you raise questions, identify themes and analyze contexts and quotations. You may want to bring your reading reflections to class as I will call on you to present your ideas and expand on your post during discussion. In the weeks ahead, you will be paired with a classmate to present the week's reading to the class. In 7 minutes, discuss the argument, elaborate on what you believe/think are the big concepts, and then provide your critique and suggestions.

**V. CELL PHONES & LAPTOPS:** Be considerate of others by turning off cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices during class.

**VI. PLAGIARISM:** Please refer to Hamilton College's students' manual for the policy on plagiarism and academic integrity.

**VII. EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE:** Please allow at least 24 hours for any responses to questions or scheduling meetings with me via email.

**VIII. CLARIFICATIONS & COMPLAINTS:** I will not discuss grades with you before or after classes. If you want to discuss grade, come to office hours. Bring me your original paper/exam with my comments. If you want me to reconsider a grade or would like it to be changed type a **one page defense of your work** with a suggestion of the grade you think you deserve instead. After considering your defense, any re-evaluation I issue afterward is final.

**IX. COLLEGIALITY:** This class is about discussion and sharing perspectives and ideas. Please bring a positive attitude, be respectful and polite. Above all, remember that this is your classroom. You are responsible for our mutual development and articulation of ideas. Please create an environment in which you and your classmates are comfortable enough to conduct a healthy debate. Never hesitate to contact me about any issues you have with this class.

**Requirements/Grades:**

**Participation (20%)** represents a substantial portion of the grade, and will be evaluated in terms of preparation, participation, active listening, collaboration, and overall contributions to the class experience during the term. Needless to say, if you do not attend a class it is impossible for you to contribute to it. In addition to general participation, you will also **lead discussion** once and give **Two oral presentations (20%)** during the course of the term. Each student will write a **major research paper of approximately 20 pages (40%)**, based on substantial research in primary or secondary sources. Various preparatory **writing exercises (20%)** through the semester will help students develop a topic, a bibliography, and an argument in advance of the final paper itself.

**PAPER ASSIGNMENT:** Below are topical questions for Seminar Papers. Students are to select a topic of interest to research that fits under the umbrella of one of the following questions. Students can select a question outside of these five:

1. Objectivity vs. Neutrality?
2. What was the problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century?
3. Is Gender a Useful Category of Historical Analysis?
4. Is the United States an Empire?
5. Was the Slave a Worker?

**Books:** Selections will be taken from the following books and articles:

1. Said, Edward W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
2. Scott Wallach, Joan. 1996. "Gender: a useful category of historical analysis". *Feminism and History* / Edited by Joan Wallach Scott.
3. Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1995. *Silencing the past: power and the production of history*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press.
4. Barbara Fields. "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America" in Woodward, C. Vann, J. Morgan Kousser, and James M. McPherson. 1982. *Region, race, and Reconstruction: essays in honor of C. Vann Woodward*. New York: Oxford University Press

5. Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
6. Du Bois, W. E. B. 1996. *The souls of Black folk essays and sketches*.
7. Carr, Edward Hallett, and Richard J. Evans. 2001. *What is history?* Basingstoke: Palgrave.
8. Butler, Judith. 1999. *Gender trouble feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
9. Mintz, Sidney Wilfred. 1985. *Sweetness and power: the place of sugar in modern history*. New York, N.Y.: Viking.
10. James, C. L. R. 1963. *The Black Jacobins; Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Vintage Books.
11. Kessler-Harris, Alice. 1981. *Women have always worked: a historical overview*. Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press.
12. Eric Arnesen "Whiteness and the Historian's Imagination" & "Assessing Whiteness Scholarship"
13. Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing like a state: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
14. Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 1991. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

**Week 1: What is History?**

**Week 2: Why is America Exceptional?**

**Week 3: Is Gender a Useful Category of Analysis?**

**WRITING: PAPER TOPICS** due by this date. We will have one-on-one meetings this week about your paper. Please sign-up for office hours.

**Week 4: Racism and Racecraft in US history**

**Week 5: Is there a difference (Women's, Feminism and Feminist Histories)?**

**WRITING: PAPER PROSPECTUS** due this week. We will meet for one-on-one advising. Please sign-up for office hours.

**Week 6: Objectivism vs. Relativism: The Objectivity Question and the End of History**

**Week 7: What Was the Problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century?**

**Week 8: What is/was nationalism?**

**WRITING: BIBLIOGRAPHY** and optional **OUTLINE** due today. Submit electronically

Advanced Seminar  
Historical Thoughts & Methods  
and in hard copy.

WORKING SYLLABUS  
Fall 2016

**Week 9: What is Power, Ideology and Culture?**

**Week 10: Capitalism & Slavery: Was the Slave a Proletarian?**

**Week 11: Who is the Subaltern from the West?**

**Week 12: Was there a Europe before Africa?**

**\*WRITING: ROUGH DRAFT** of Paper due today. Submit electronically and in hard copy.

**Week 13: Historians and Civic Responsibility: Public vs. Academic History?**

**Week 14: History as a Question of Scale?**

***FINAL DRAFT of PAPER due today***

**\*BONUS:** An extra 5 points will be awarded to students who worked with a writing consultant from the writing center. Signature and proof of edit draft(s) must be presented for credit.