

Historiography and Historical Methods

Professor Andrew Robertson, et al.

Spring 2021

Course Description

Historiography is the study of the study of the history and theory of historical writing. Students enrolled in HIS699 will journey through American history guided by Professor Andrew Robertson and seven other professors (Zara Anishanslin, Ned Blackhawk, Kristopher Burrell, Sarah King, Lauren Santangelo, Nora Slonimsky, and Wendy Wall). Students will read and discuss historical interpretations of the American past as they have changed overtime in specific chronological periods—colonial/Revolutionary history, the early nineteenth century to Reconstruction, the Gilded Age to the Cold War, and the 1960s to the present. This course will also present lectures on the evolving historiographies of African American history, Native American history, and women's history by scholars specializing in those fields. The historical methods portion of the course will teach students to interrogate primary sources and to read secondary sources with a critical eye.

Course Readings

1. Cheng, Eileen Ka-May. *Historiography: An Introductory Guide*. New York: Continuum, 2012.
2. Foner, Eric and Lisa McGirr. *American History Now (Critical Perspectives on the Past)*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011.
3. Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards
- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page historiographical paper or project of appropriate rigor

Learning Objectives

1. Students will learn about the ways historians study the past by exploring analytical, theoretical, and methodological tools that historians employ and the schools of thought that justify the use of those tools.

2. Students will assess the strengths and weaknesses of these tools of history and analyze them through written exercises.
3. Students will become acquainted with debates about the study of history and how those debates have shifted over time.

Class Schedule

Week 1: February 4: Introduction to History and Historiography

Readings

- Gaddis, Chapters 1–5

Assignments

- Discussion Board One

Q&A Session One: Thursday, February 11 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week Two: February 11: Historical Methodology: Primary Sources

Readings

- Gaddis, Chapters 6–8
- McDowell, *Historical Research: A Guide to Writers of Dissertations, Theses, and Books*, Chapters 5 and 8 (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 2 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Two
- Short Paper One due February 17
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Two: Wednesday, February 17 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 3: February 18: Historical Methodology: Secondary Sources

Readings

- Cheng, Introduction, chapters 1–2
- Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method*, Chapter 3 (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Three
- Final Paper/Project Question due February 24
 - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final project or paper will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing.

Q&A Session Three: Wednesday, February 24 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 4: February 25: The History of American Historiography

Readings

- Cheng, Chapters 3–6

Assignments

- Discussion Board Four
- Short Paper Two due March 3
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Four: Wednesday, March 3 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 5: March 4: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Readings

- Foner & McGirr, Chapters 1–2

Assignments

- Discussion Board Five
 - Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due March 10
 1. Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor's feedback, AND
 2. Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final paper/project.
-

Week 6: March 11: The Nineteenth Century

Readings

- Foner & McGirr, Chapters 3–4

Assignments

- Discussion Board Six
- Short Paper Three due March 17
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Five: Tuesday, March 16 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 7: March 18: Gilded Age through the New Deal

Readings

- Foner & McGirr, Chapters 5–6

Assignments

- Discussion Board Seven
 - Short Paper Four due March 24
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
-

Week 8: March 25: The Twentieth Century: Post-WWII

Readings

- Foner & McGirr, Chapters 7–8

Assignments

- Paper/Project Preview due March 31
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper
 - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

Q&A Session Six: Wednesday, March 31 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 9: April 1: Historiography of Women's History

Readings

- Foner & McGirr, Chapter 15
- Cornelia Dayton and Lisa Levenstein, "The Big Tent of U.S. Women's and Gender History," *Journal of American History* 99, no. 3 (December 2012): 793–817 (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight
- Short Paper Five due April 7
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Seven: Wednesday, April 7 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 10: April 8: Historiography of African American History

Readings

- Foner & McGirr, Chapter 18

Assignments

- Rough Draft due April 14
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
 - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

Week 11: April 15: Historiography of American Indian History

Readings:

- Foner & McGirr, *American History Now* (chapter 17)
- Ned Blackhawk, "Recasting the Narrative of America: The Rewards and Challenges of Teaching American Indian History," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (March 2007): 1165–1170. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)

Assignments:

- Discussion Board Nine

Q&A Session Eight: Thursday, April 22 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 12: April 22: The Future of History

Readings

- Lara Putnam, "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast," *American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (April 2016): 377–402. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 12 module.)

Assignments

- Final Draft due April 28