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History 8020
Thursday 2-4:45
LeConte 102

Nineteenth-Century Research Seminar

This course is designed to support the work of producing a publishable historical article in nineteenth-century U.S. history, with particular emphasis on developing good writing skills. (We can take courage from William Zinsser's assertion that the principles of good writing *can* be learned!) The assigned reading, which is concentrated in the first half of the semester, should help to provoke our thinking and discussion about a range of issues and problems currently facing historians as writers: Why do we write history (as opposed to, say, historical novels)? Who is our audience and what are our goals? Is the state of academic historical writing really as dire as some critics argue? What is the relationship between historical "fact" and interpretation, or between narrative and analysis? Where are experiments in historical writing taking us? What, if anything, can historians learn from writers of fiction and creative nonfiction? In addition to discussion of relevant readings, there will be time set aside in each class for a writing workshop. During the workshop, we'll talk about the various stages of the research and writing process, from generating topics to making final revisions, share work-in-progress, and critique—constructively, of course—each other's work.

Over the course of the semester, students will be expected to turn in the following pieces of writing: intellectual autobiography, due Aug. 20; proposal, due Sept. 17; 3-page lead, due Oct. 29; first draft, due Nov. 20; final draft, due Dec. 11. Individuals will be responsible for distributing their writing (except the autobiography and final draft) to members of their writing group as well as to me.

Assigned Readings:

Catherine Clinton, *Fanny Kemble's Civil Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000)

Laura F. Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997)

Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)

James McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996)

James B. Stewart, *Follow the Story: How to Write Successful Nonfiction* (New York: Touchstone, 1998)

In addition, a small packet containing readings for the first two weeks is available at Bel-Jean.

Class Schedule

Weeks I-IV: What are we doing here?

August 16: Introduction

***Intellectual autobiography (no more than two pages, please!!) due August 20—please send as attachment to katclark@arches.uga.edu

August 23

Discussion: Gerda Lerner, “Why History Matters;” John Clive, “The Use of the Past;” Keith Jenkins, “Why bother with the past? Engaging with some issues raised by the possible ‘end of history as we have known it;” “Robert A. Rosenstone, “Experiments in Writing the Past—is anybody interested?” (All in Bel-Jean packet)

Writing workshop: *individual meetings on topics*

August 30

Discussion: Barbara Tuchman, “The Historian as Artist;” David Samuels, “The Call of Stories;” Kalle Philainen, “Narrative Objectivity Versus Fiction;” Bryant Simon, “Narrating a Southern Tragedy: Historical facts and historical fictions;” (all in packet); John Demos, *Unredeemed Captive* excerpt (handout).

Writing workshop: *individual meetings on topics*

September 6

Discussion: Sean Wilentz and Paul Johnson, *The Kingdom of Mathias*; H-net review and discussion.

Writing workshop: *on topics and ideas* (James Stewart, *Follow the Story* ch. 1-2)

Weeks V-X: War stories

September 13

Discussion: James McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword*, ch. 1-7, 15

Writing Workshop: *Proposals* (Stewart, ch. 3)

***Drafts of proposals due Monday, September 17, 5:00 PM

September 20

Discussion: McPherson, ch. 8-14

Writing workshop: *Proposal exchange*

September 27

Discussion: Catherine Clinton, *Fanny Kemble's Civil Wars*; Kim Edwards, "Icebergs, Glaciers, and Arctic Dreams" and Robin Hemley, "Sympathy for the Devil" in *Creating Fiction*.

***Final drafts of proposals due Monday, October 1, 5:00 PM

October 4

Writing workshop: *Research* (Stewart, ch. 4)

October 11

Discussion: Laura Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion*; Richard Russo, "Location, Location, Location: Depicting Character Through Place;" John Barth, "Incremental Perturbation;" Lans Samantha Chang, "Time and Order" (articles all in *Creating Fiction*.)

Weeks X-XVI: Writing Workshop

October 18

Writing Workshop: Beginning to write (Stewart, ch. 5; handouts from *Bird by Bird* and *On Writing Well*)

October 25 No class—Fall break

****October 29 Three-page "lead" due

November 1

Writing workshop: *On Structure; discussion of leads* (Stewart, ch. 6-7)

November 8

Writing workshop: *On Style* (Stewart, ch. 8-11; Jane Smiley, "What Stories Teach their Writers" and Alberto Rios, "Eleven Style Considerations" in *Creating Fiction*.)

November 15 No class—drafts

***November 20: First Drafts Due, Noon

November 22 No class—Thanksgiving

November 29

Writing workshop: *Revision and Conclusions* (Stewart, ch. 12-13)

***December 11: Final Drafts Due, 5:00 PM