

Graduate Seminar in Cultural History (Fall 2004)

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Course Description

This class introduces students to theories of, and contemporary work in cultural history. We will devote the first half of the semester to discussing exemplary works in cultural history, the second half to research and writing as students produce their own cultural histories. Although most readings are in European history, you may write on topics representing a geographic area of your own choosing

In addition to reading assigned books, taking an active part in discussion, and producing a final research paper (18-25 pages), students will be expected to write one short paper (4-6 pp.). The short paper is to be a critical review of an assigned reading; students who write those papers will take responsibility for initiating discussion that week. Short papers should not summarize the readings; they should raise historiographic, analytic, and/or interpretive issues relevant to course themes. Papers are due on the day you lead discussion.

During the second half of the semester, students will produce brief proposals of their research projects and share portions of their work with other students. Because dialogue is a fundamental part of the writing process, class participants should treat their peers' work with the same seriousness they bring to published materials; in other words, be prepared to pose thoughtful and critical questions about all writing presented in class. The workshop section of the course is predicated on the notion that we learn as much from editing and critiquing our peers as we do from experiencing that process ourselves.

A brief note on reading: As you read books for discussion, you should attend to several issues. What argument is the author making? How does she or he position her/himself in regard to other kinds of historical writing? Finally, and very importantly, what kinds of sources does she or he use? How does she or he use them?

Recommended books

William Strunk & E.B. White, Elements of Style **

Bruce Ross-Larson, Edit Yourself

** Every writer's library should include a copy of Strunk & White as well as a good thesaurus and dictionary. If you do not already own all three, please make sure you have acquired them before beginning work on your paper.

Class Schedule

Aug 25: Introduction to the course

Sep 1: A Few Basic Principles

- William Sewell, "The Concept(s) of Culture." Victoria Bonnell & Lynn Hunt (eds), Beyond the Cultural Turn (1999) pp. 35-61 [reserve on-line w/ password "culture"]
- Nicholas Dirks, Geoff Eley, Sherry Ortner, "Introduction." Dirks, Eley, Ortner (eds), Culture/Power/History (1994) pp. 3-45 [reserve on-line w/ password "culture"]
- Natalie Z. Davis, "City Women and Religious Change," Society and Culture in Early Modern France (1975) pp. 65-95 [reserve on-line w/ password "culture"]

Sep 8: Debating the Evidence

- Robert Darnton, "Workers revolt: the Great Cat Massacre in the rue Saint-Severin," The Great Cat Massacre (1984) pp. 79-104 [reserve on-line w/ password "culture"]
(Also available in Chandra Mukerji & Michael Schudson (eds) Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies (1991))
- Roger Chartier, "Text, Symbols, and Frenchness," Journal of Modern History 57 (1985) pp. 682-95 [JSTOR]
- Robert Darnton, "The Symbolic Element in History," Journal of Modern History 58 (1986) pp. 218-34 [JSTOR]
- Recommended Readings*
- Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight"
- Vincent P. Pecora, "The Limits of Local Knowledge," H. Aram Veesser (ed) The New Historicism
- Robert Darnton, "A Bourgeois Puts His World in Order: The City as a Text," The Great Cat Massacre (1984)

Sep 15: Microhistory

- Giovanni Levi, "Microhistory," Peter Burke (ed) New Perspectives on History Writing (2000)
- Alain Corbin, The Village of Cannibals (1992)

Sep 22: Popular Culture, Mass Culture

- Robin D.G. Kelley, "Notes on Deconstructing the Folk," American Historical Review 97:5 (Dec. 1992) [JSTOR]
- T.J. Jackson Lears, "Making Fun of Popular Culture," American Historical Review 97:5 (Dec. 1992) [JSTOR]
- Chandra Mukerji & Michael Schudson, "Introduction," Mukerjee & Shudson (eds) Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies (1991)
- Lawrence Levine, "William Shakespeare and the American People," Mukerjee & Shudson (eds) Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies (1991)

Sep 29: The Culture of Law

- Austin Sarat & Thomas R. Kearns, "The Cultural Lives of Law," Sarat & Kearns (eds) Law

in the Domains of Culture (2001) pp. 1-20 [reserve on-line w/ password "culture"]
Daniel Smail, The Consumption of Justice (2003)

Oct 6: Film & History

Natalie Davis, "Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead': Film and the Challenge of Authenticity," from Yale Review 76:4 (Sept. 1987) [reserve on-line w/ password "culture"]

Pierre Sorlin, "How to Look at an 'Historical' Film" (1980), Marcia Landy (ed) The Historical Film (2001) pp. 25-49 [reserve on-line w/ password "culture"]

Robert Rosenstone, "The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age" (1995), Marcia Landy (ed) The Historical Film (2001) pp. 50-66 [reserve on-line w/ password "culture"]

Oct 20: Proposals

Discussion of individual research proposals. Leave one copy of your proposal in my mailbox and make available two copies in graduate lounge by Monday Oct 18.

Nov 10: Research paper presentations

Discuss the first 5-6 pages of your research paper (introduction and/or scene setting). Leave one copy of your paper in my mailbox and make available two copies in graduate lounge by Monday Nov 8.

Dec 8: Research papers

Present final findings to the class. **Final drafts of papers due by 5 pm, Monday Dec 13.**